

WORK AND THE WORK OF ART:
AGNES MARTIN, 1959–1964

by

SIWIN LO

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 2013

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

(Art History and Theory)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

August 2015

© Siwin Lo, 2015

Abstract

Agnes Martin's grids confound easy classification. Each is a six-foot square consisting only of horizontal and vertical lines arranged in stable, rhythmic patterns that emphasize no one portion of the canvas over another. In 1960, the grid emerges from the wall, from the canvas, and from Martin's own hair and clothing. The artist herself retreats, sheathing herself in the very same graphic strategy that she commits to in the decades of painting to come. Yet, there is ample visual evidence that she was already exploring aspects of this final form in two 1959 works, both *Untitled*, that demonstrate Martin's exploration of detail's relationship to viewing distance and an awareness of the grapheme's ability to testify to the labour of artwork.

An examination of this rigorous disciplinary process offers a means of considering artistic labour as a form of resistance to the elision of human labour time inherent in capitalist modes of production. By addressing abstract labour under capital through an analysis of the painterly abstraction of Martin's artistic practice, this study aims to demonstrate the critical potential of formal analysis by means of two major interventions into recent Marxist theory. The first addresses a lacuna within Marx's own definition of the work of art. The second involves a repurposing of Italian feminist theory on housework to address the slippages of meaning within *artwork* that can act as potential moments of resistance to the logic of industrial capitalist production.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Siwin Lo.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Preface	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Introduction	1
Inconsistency and Contradictions: Early Life	4
Two Photographs: Martin in the Studio.....	9
Literature Review: Grids as Form, Forms of Work	11
The Art Worker of the 1960s	17
The Grapheme and the Abstraction of Work	20
Conclusion.....	32
Figures	35
Bibliography	39
Appendices	42
Appendix 1: List of Occupations.....	42
Appendix 2: Betty Parsons Gallery Records	44

List of Figures

Figure 1. Agnes Martin in her studio, 1955. Photograph by Mildred Tolbert35

Figure 2. Agnes Martin in her studio, 1960. Photograph by Alexander Liberman36

Figure 3. Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1959.37

Figure 4. Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1959.....38

Acknowledgements

I offer my gratitude to the faculty, students, and staff of the University of British Columbia's Department of Art History, Visual Art, and Theory. I am deeply thankful for the thoughtful counsel and generous support of both my advisors, Dr. John O'Brian and Dr. Jaleh Mansoor. In addition, I owe particular thanks to Dr. T'ai Smith, Dr. Charlotte Townsend-Gault, Dr. Maureen Ryan, and Dr. Katherine Hacker. Finally, I thank my interlocutors and fellow graduate students, Vanessa Parent and Margaret Stern, for your insights, suggestions, and conversations.

This research was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Ian Wallace Award in Art History, and the Hugo E. Meilicke Memorial Fellowship.



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Work and the Work of Art: Agnes Martin, 1959–64

I want to talk to you about the work, artwork. I will speak of inspiration, the studio, friends of art and the artistic temperament but I would like you to know that I am speaking all the time about the work.

—Agnes Martin

Introduction

Agnes Martin's grids confound easy classification. Each is a six-foot square consisting only of horizontal and vertical lines arranged in stable, rhythmic patterns that emphasize no one portion of the canvas over another. Yet Martin did not always produce grids. Indeed, two works from 1959, both *Untitled*, suggest that Martin's concerns with the hand-drawn line and its disappearance at a distance predate her self-confessed arrival at the grid in 1960. An examination of this rigorous disciplinary process offers a means of considering artistic labour as a form of resistance to the elision of human labour time inherent in capitalist modes of production. This analysis proceeds both formally and historically; first, I will describe two of Martin's previously unexamined works from that pivotal moment before the grid, 1959, then I will discuss how this visual evidence supports a labour-reading of Martin's process.

Reticent and even evasive in interviews, Martin seems unwilling to attribute her arrival at the grid to anything less than esoteric inspiration. In a 1989 interview conducted by the Smithsonian Institute, she states that “when I first made a grid I happened to be thinking of the innocence of trees and then this grid came into my mind and I thought it represented innocence, and I

still do. I thought, this is my vision.”¹ However mysterious the conditions of this vision may be, her statements do confirm the importance of this break from her practice before the grid, which she never thought of as being successful. “I painted all kinds of things in those twenty years [before], I can tell you,” says Martin in the same interview, “but I never felt really satisfied with my work until after I went to New York and started the grid.”²

In contrast to her guarded statements about her artistic practice, Martin speaks readily about her experiences with non-artistic labour. Before moving to New York in 1957, Martin alternated working odd jobs and painting, depending on the state of her finances at the time. “You see,” she says in a later interview, “I would paint until I ran out of money and then I would take a job.”³ This separation of the work of artwork from work for other purposes is a recurring theme in Martin’s lectures and interviews. She frequently comments on the counterintuitive relationship between work that is related to art and work that is not, in that the latter could become a means

¹ Oral history interview with Agnes Martin, May 15, 1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

of determining one's suitability to the former.⁴ It might be inferred that, for Martin, these two conceptions of work are distinct and incompatible. For example, when asked to provide biographical information for an unspecified exhibition catalogue, Martin submitted a list of 35 occupations she held throughout her life, to be published in its entirety or not at all (see Appendix 1). In the note preceding the list to Arne Glimcher, Martin's gallerist at the time, she confesses that she knows that the list is not what the organizers of the exhibition wanted, but insists on publishing it despite that knowledge. Notably absent are the terms "artist", "painter," or any other mentions of her artistic practice.

By addressing the abstraction of labour under capital through an analysis of the painterly abstraction of Martin's artistic practice, this study aims to demonstrate the critical potential of formal analysis by means of two major interventions into recent Marxist theory. The first addresses a lacuna within Marx's own definition of the work of art. The second involves a repurposing of feminist theory on housework to address the slippages of meaning within artwork that can act as potential moments of resistance to the logic of industrial capitalist production.

⁴ "We, each of us, is born to a certain function. Sometimes our function is hidden from us by prejudice and fear. When an artist becomes aware of his exact function, that is when he knows, suddenly, exactly what he will do and how he will do it, we say that he has attained to his vision. If this happens when he is very young we say that he is a genius [...] It is sometimes baffling to the rest of us that we have to do so much work that is unrelated to artwork. But looking back we can see the positive aspect of all our actions. Without vision that is without exact awareness of our function we are contented. You can see that discontent is a positive state of mind urging us on to discover our function." Agnes Martin. Lecture given at Yale, April 5, 1976, in *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*, 84-85.

Inconsistency and Contradictions: Early Life

Martin's decades-long commitment to the grid takes on additional significance when taking into account her tumultuous early life, full of various stops and starts. Agnes Bernice Martin was born in 1912, in a rural Saskatchewan town close to the Alberta border. Shortly after Martin's birth, the township was incorporated as Macklin, Saskatchewan. Newcomers to the isolated and climatically unforgiving prairies, Malcolm Martin, Agnes's father, managed a grain elevator while Agnes's mother, Margaret Martin, worked on the homestead and raised their four children, of which Agnes was the third eldest. By 1915, Malcolm left the family and the homestead to Margaret under dubious circumstances.⁵ In the 2015 book, *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art*, biographer Nancy Princenthal notes that here, as well as at many other points in Martin's life, records are scarce and recollections often contradictory. Sometimes, Martin's statements contradict the records, at other times, they contradict other recollections. Princenthal describes the often frustrating experience of encountering these tangles as dead ends poetically when she states that "to sift through these account is to find a scanty residue, with faces of pride, bafflement, and narrative ingenuity put in the service of reshaping misfortune."⁶ According to her best estimates, the family left Macklin and moved first to Lumsden, Saskatchewan, in 1917 to reside with Agnes's maternal grandparents, before they relocated to Vancouver in 1919 and settled at 1147

⁵ Nancy Princenthal, *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art* (Thames and Hudson: New York, NY, 2015), 22.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

Faithful Street.⁷ A few years later, Martin graduated from King George High School in 1928, and won medals in competitive swimming at the provincial level.

According to Princenthal, “for some time in these years, Martin was going back and forth between Vancouver and Bellingham, swimming in Canada, attending school in the United States, and living a rather uprooted life—another pattern that would be sustained for many decades.”⁸ Here too, the available records and recollections criss-cross and contradict, though it is clear that it was during the early years of the 1930s that Martin began teaching, a vocation that she engaged in periodically until she was able to paint full time. In 1933, Martin enrolled in the Washington State Normal School, where she studied for three years before obtaining a teaching certificate and teaching in state for four years.⁹ Martin left Washington State for New York City in 1941, where she enrolled at Teachers College.¹⁰ She only attended one semester before she moved to Taos, New Mexico, where she stayed for a decade. Martin enrolled at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque in 1946, then the Summer Field School the following year. Until this point, Martin’s only recorded instance of formal art education was a single course at Teachers College. In contrast, the curriculum at the Summer Field School focused exclusively on pro-

⁷ Ibid., 24. At the time of writing, there is no Faithful Street in Vancouver.

⁸ Ibid., 30–31.

⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰ Ibid., 36. Princenthal notes that “some details of Martin’s account are slightly fudged. She enrolled not at Columbia, but at Teacher’s College, which is affiliated with Columbia but is a separate institution,” likely referring to Martin’s statements in the Smithsonian oral history interview, where she claims to have attended Columbia University during these years.

ducing artworks, with an emphasis on landscape painting.¹¹ It was in New Mexico that Martin made her earliest presently extant paintings, ones that survived destruction by Martin's own hand, often by fire.¹²

Martin's inability to stay in one place continued through the early 1950s, though in a more limited fashion. She returned to New York in 1951, and finished her studies at Teachers College in 1952. It was during this stint in New York that Martin became acquainted with the teaching of Zen practitioner Daisetz Suzuki through his lectures at Columbia University, as well as the composer John Cage, who lectured at Teachers College. She returned to New Mexico in 1953, but maintained connections to New York through her friends and supporters, including Louis Ribak and Beatrice Mandelman, a gallerist and artist who were well acquainted with the likes of Stuart Davis, Willem de Kooning, Arshile Gorky, and Jackson Pollock¹³—the latter of which was represented by Betty Parsons. Born into a wealthy and influential New York family, Parsons opened her eponymous gallery in 1947, and represented abstract paintings such as Ad Reinhardt and Barnett Newman in addition to Jackson Pollock, all artists that would be immensely influential to Martin. While it is not completely clear how Martin and Parsons were introduced to each other, according to Princenthal Martin used Parsons as a reference when she applied for a Helene Wurlitzer Foundation grant in 1954, and Parsons made trips to New Mexico

¹¹ Ibid., 46–47.

¹² Ibid., 52. “Martin’s retrospective evaluation of the artwork she made during her initial years in New Mexico was categorical: “At Taos I wasn’t satisfied with my paintings and at the end of every year I’d have a big fire and burn them all.”

¹³ Ibid., 58.

in the summers of both 1956 and 1957.¹⁴ By then, the Parsons had convinced Martin to move back to New York.

Upon her arrival in 1957, she soon settled into a tight artistic community known as the Coenties Slip near today's Wall Street in Lower Manhattan. Martin rented a loft at 27 Coenties Slip from fellow artist Jack Youngerman. When that building was torn down in 1960, Martin, Youngerman, and Ann Wilson moved to the neighbouring 3–5 Coenties Slip, where Ellsworth Kelly had resided since 1954.¹⁵ With Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns around the corner on Pearl Street,¹⁶ the Coenties Slip functioned as the core of a loosely associated alternative to the New York School's hub in Greenwich Village,¹⁷ which centered around Clement Greenberg and Willem de Kooning, respectively. From her position within the Coenties Slip, Martin was an insider in the developments and diatribes within modernist painting. For instance, her neighbours Jack Youngerman, Ellsworth Kelly, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns were included in Dorothy Miller's pivotal exhibition *Sixteen Americans* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1959, which also featured the stripe paintings of Frank Stella.¹⁸ Martin would show annually at Betty

¹⁴ Ibid., 62–63.

¹⁵ Princenthal, *Agnes Martin*, 68.

¹⁶ Oral history interview with Agnes Martin.

¹⁷ Dorothy C Miller Papers, Subject Interest Material, DCM IV.2.9. Museum of Modern Art Archives.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Parsons Gallery until her departure for Robert Elkon Gallery in 1962, who continued this tradition until Martin left New York in 1967.¹⁹

No longer limited by her previously precarious employment situations, Martin's works between 1957 and 1964 became more ambitious in scale and in the amount of human time required to execute them. She began to move towards a square format by 1960, settling on six-foot-squares by 1964.²⁰ Concurrently, Martin embarked on a process of distillation. In 1957, Martin was working in a range of sizes, even producing multimedia works such as *Water* (1958), a square canvas incorporating bottle caps and wire on a grey ground, and *Kali* (1959) a "construction" made of wood, boat spikes, and paint.²¹ After 1959, she limited herself to canvas and her paintings show a progressively spare formal vocabulary; she first removed curvilinear forms, then blocks of colour, and finally, by 1964, coloured grounds. After that date, having purged her works of any other features, Martin does not abandon her six-foot-squares until age physically prevented her from manipulating such large canvases herself.²²

¹⁹ Artist File, "Agnes Martin: General." Museum of Modern Art Archives.

²⁰ Betty Parsons gallery records and personal papers, ca. 1920–91, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute. See also: Appendix 2.

²¹ Exhibition files for *Agnes Martin*, November 6, 1991–January 31, 1992. Whitney Museum of American Art Archives.

²² Oral history interview with Agnes Martin.

Two photographs: Martin in the studio

Two photographs attest to transitions happening in Martin's life, and by extension, transitions in the way she approached her newly secure identity as an artist. In the first, a 1955 photograph taken by Mildred Tolbert (Fig. 1), Martin stands smiling in her studio in front of several paintings featuring organic, biomorphic forms. While the full paintings are not visible in this image, we see enough of them to understand that they are wider than they are tall and have limited pictorial depth. Martin stands in the foreground, her hair in a long braid, smiling at the camera. She wears a tidy striped apron with square neckline and pipe-trimmed pockets with a simple short-sleeved top underneath. This feminine and wholesome picture of Martin in her studio in New Mexico gives little clues into the ways in which her practice would change after she moves to New York to paint.

The second photograph of Martin in her studio was taken in 1960 by Alexander Liberman, then art director of *Vogue* magazine, and shows a very different Martin in front of a large square canvas (Fig. 2). In this photograph, Martin faces away from the camera, her hands in front of her, as if contemplating her own work. In front of her hangs a large canvas, its surface divided into subtle stripes. Behind it, the rectangular pattern of the paint-splattered brick wall foreshadows the gridded paintings that Martin is now known for. Gone is the quaint apron, though her hair remains in a plait, its folded pattern echoing that of the quilted suit that Martin wears. It is as if Martin had turned away from the earnest smile and curvilinear forms of the first photograph, eschewing the organic in favor of ponderous right angles. In 1960, the grid emerges from the wall, from the canvas, and from Martin's own hair and clothing. The artist herself retreats,

sheathing herself in the very same graphic strategy that she commits to in the decades of painting to come.

Literature Review: Grids as form, forms of work

Literature on Martin has changed many times at the level of methodology over the last half-century.²³ Much of the writing produced on Martin during the 1960s and 1970s aimed at “claiming” Martin for either painting or for newer, emergent artistic strategies such as Minimalism. These shifts in attitude and approach towards Martin can sometimes be seen within the writing of a single scholar. For instance, Douglas Crimp’s earliest descriptions of Martin’s grids read largely as mathematical lists of each grid painting’s dimensions and the intervals at which lines intersect, with little or no attention paid to the various effects produced at different viewing distances. The following passage illustrates the reading that Crimp advocated in 1971, approached Martin’s canvases as logical systems:

Like Reinhardt, Agnes Martin is an artist closer in spirit to her own generation ... than her paintings might indicate at first. Perhaps it is a constructive misreading of Martin that makes her so nearly paradigmatic for Opaque painting. Her systems of vertical and horizontal coordinates consisting of graphite lines, her standard six-foot-square format, and her expunging of colour can easily be taken as exemplary of conceptual structure, neutral shape, and material surface.²⁴

In “Back to the Turmoil,” included in *Agnes Martin* (2011), a collection of essays published by Dia Art Foundation, Crimp disavows his 1973 writings on Martin’s works in favour of

²³ In addition to the polemical debate about Martin as Expressionist painter or as Minimalist discussed here, there have been numerous studies examining Martin’s artistic output through Zen Buddhism, queer theory, connections to weaving, to name a small sample of approaches. Dia’s 2011 anthology of essays on Martin, titled *Agnes Martin*, offers a snapshot of the diversity of approaches taken by scholars in recent years.

²⁴ Douglas Crimp, “Opaque Surfaces,” in *Arte come rate* (Milano: Centro Comunitario di Brera, 1973); reprinted in *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon, 2000), 257–60, quoted in Douglas Crimp, “Back to the Turmoil,” in *Agnes Martin*, 66.

one that emphasized the subjective experience of the viewer. Crimp admits that his initial desire was to “claim Martin for Minimal and Conceptual Art,”²⁵ rather than consider her as part of the Expressionist generation that included her friends and colleagues, Ad Reinhardt and Barnett Newman.²⁶ This need for prioritizing the rationality of the grid over its sensory effects or the process of its making could be understood as a means of downplaying the painterly grapheme, which in 1971 carried too much of the heroic and bombastic from which the new generation of artists wanted to break away. As such, Martin’s sparse works, despite being oil on canvas, became the ground for a discursive tug-of-war. Crimp’s shift from one side to the other is symptomatic of the persistence of this polemic: In 1971 Crimp describes Martin’s works mathematically, using conceptual language to claim Martin for a particular movement. Forty years later in 2011, Crimp disavowed his earlier classification, explicitly corroborating Martin’s now irrevocable status as a painter within the modernist canon.

Part of this shift can be attributed to the critical attention paid to systemic strategies within modernist painting and toward the use of the grid more specifically. Rosalind Krauss’s 1979 article, “Grids,” proposes an understanding of the grid as a uniquely modern form, one that “announces, among other things, modern art’s will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse.”²⁷ Krauss traced the proliferation of grids in art history, from the hidden grids of the Renaissance, to Malevich and Mondrian, and finally, to Reinhardt and Martin. For her, the grid

²⁵ Crimp, “Back to the Turmoil,” 66.

²⁶ Lynne Cooke, “... in the classic tradition...” in *Agnes Martin*, 15–16.

²⁷ Rosalind Krauss, “Grids,” in *October* 9 (Summer 1979): 55.

performs spatially and temporally. Spatially, “it is what art looks like when it turns its back on nature,”²⁸ which is to say that is it the antithesis to mimesis. As such, it operates as the opposite term to the desire for pictorial depth and realism that had driven painting for so many centuries. That is, rather than as a tool for depicting or conveying another space, such as in the case of linear perspective, the grid draws attention to the surface of the painting itself, preventing the illusory recession that pictorial space requires. To adopt the grid as a formal strategy is to disavow those desires within historical painting in favor of the goals of abstraction—to paint without reference to the natural world.

Temporally, Krauss argues that the grid is the declaration of twentieth-century modernism, ubiquitous yet completely absent in the previous century. As a blockade from the past and as its own monument to presentness, the grid, for Krauss, draws attention to the twentieth-century’s disavowal of religion while maintaining systems of secular belief. Krauss suggest that the power of Martin’s work lies in “the grid’s mythic power ...it makes us able to think that we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time providing us release into belief (or illusion, or fiction).”²⁹ In other words, the grid is a powerful form because of its ability to contain two contradictory systems, producing a tension between the rationalism implied by the mathematically determined form and the histories and desires it calls up. According to Krauss, these tensions are repressed by the grid and this repression is a fundamental operation of the grid-form. This dual tendency of the grid to exist as abstract form while drawing at-

²⁸ Krauss, “Grids,” 50.

²⁹ Ibid., 54.

tention to a repressed, less-rationally determined element is particularly useful for understanding Martin's early grid paintings, where the repressed term is the unpredictability of the artist's hand.

Indeed, the tension between Martin's emphasis on the rational and regular grid, the hand-drawn quality of their lines at a close viewing distance, and the atmospheric effects produced when moving away from the canvases is the object of investigation in Rosalind Krauss's 1992 essay, "The /Cloud/." Drawing from Hubert Damisch's *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward A History of Painting*, Krauss argues that the emergence of the atmospheric effect when moving away from one of Martin's canvases—in this case, *Red Bird* as described by Kasha Linville—is the product of a tension between the tangible trace of Martin's artistic labour of drawing lines, and the disappearance of this tangibility as the eye can no longer register these lines at a distance.

For Krauss:

The optical, here marked as /cloud/, emerges within a system defined by being bracketed by its two materialist and tactile counter terms: the fabric of the grid in the near position and the wall-like stele of the impassive, perfectly square panel in the distant view. This closed system, taken as a whole, preserves [...] the drive toward the "objective", which is to say, the fundamental classicism of its *Kunstwollen*.³⁰

The disappearance of the artist's hand is echoed by Martin's hesitance to speak to her own subjective input in the process of art making. Indeed, some scholars, such as Jaleh Mansoor and Anna Chave, have postulated that it is Martin's unease with the authorial function that makes

³⁰ Rosalind Krauss, "The /Cloud/," in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Barbara Haskell (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992): 164–65.

the grid a possible form for her practice. In her own writings, she limits discussion to the expressive aspects of making art but at the same time rejects the individuating and heroic aspects of the artist function. Is, as Mansoor argues, Martin's rigid adherence to the grid-form an act of self-inscription rather than self-effacement, one that internalizes the horizons of *both* feminism and modernism?

In the 2011 article that foregrounds these two terms, "Self-Effacement, Self-Inscription: Agnes Martin's Singular Quietude," Mansoor investigates the relation between artist and artwork through a textual mode. Noting that Martin's arrival at the grid comes immediately before the publication of Roland Barthes's 1967 "Death of the Author" and Michel Foucault's 1969 "What Is an Author," Mansoor's analysis points out the double-bind of the grid as an authorial strategy: "Her refusal to share the Abstract Expressionists' faith in the pure presence of the grapheme, combined with her equally strong resistance to seriality and chance (that is, the total negation of subjectivity through inscription), foreshadows Barthes's statement 'The hand, cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not expression), traces a field without origin... language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins.'"³¹ Mansoor argues that Martin's use of a mediating object—such as a ruler or a piece of string—to ensure that her lines are straight and evenly spaced intervenes in the discourse on authorship, chance, and agency brought to bear by Marcel Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages*, precisely in that she does not let go of this "helper" object. Duchamp allowed the string to fall, and committed to whatever its resulting

³¹ Jaleh Mansoor, "Self-Effacement, Self-Inscription: Agnes Martin's Singular Quietude," in *Agnes Martin*, ed. Lynne Cooke (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 161.

shape would be; Martin manipulated the string, but always drew alongside it, constantly negotiating the relationship between the grapheme and its guide. In other words, Martin's strategy does not break nor conform to the two most vocal strategies of authorship in advanced painting in the mid-twentieth century: on one pole, chance, on the other, Abstract Expressionism.

Mansoor's analysis focuses largely on one aspect of Martin's process—her use of the mediating object in the construction of the grapheme, while largely ignoring the effects of each painting's relation to viewing distance, which was the focus of Krauss's 1992 article. Rather than looking towards a point of connection between these two arguments, this study proposes that by looking at Martin's process through the lens of labour, rather than through the lens of semiotics or authorship, that we might understand what brought Martin to the large-scale grid form after 1960. This involves an extension of Krauss's 1979 reading of the grid, whereby the term repressed—but also revealed—by the rational organization of the grid as structure is that of the artist's work involved in the production of the grid.

The Artworker of the 1960s

While an in-depth labour reading of Martin's early grids has not been published at the time of writing, the question of labour as it relates to emergent forms of artistic practice in the 1960s has been. Currently, Julia Bryan-Wilson's *Artworkers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* is considered a milestone for the historical understanding of labour theory within art during the second half of the twentieth-century. Bryan-Wilson looks specifically at the movement of artists declaring themselves "artworkers" which began in the late 1960s and gained momentum in the 1970s, a decade or more after Martin's first grid works. While Martin herself was never affiliated with the activist groups that Bryan-Wilson focuses on, her description of certain artist's processes of art production as radical practice is useful as a starting point for proposing a new reading of Martin's process.

Bryan-Wilson explores how artists and critics such as Carl Andre, Robert Morris, Lucy Lippard, and Hans Haacke defined their identities as artists by associating themselves with the language of working-class activism, and against the museum, which they saw as the primary arbiter of value and wealth.³² It is important to note that these artists rejected the Abstract Expressionism of the 1940s and 1950s in favor of pioneering new strategies—the very same polemic that shaped Douglas Crimp's early writings on Martin.

³² Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Artworkers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 11.

Bryan-Wilson's insights on the relationship between art and work are useful for setting out a foundation for reading Martin's early grids with an eye on labour theory developed through the artworker movement. The difference between *work* and *labour* set out in *Artworkers* is particularly useful for this study. According to her,

While *labour* and *work*, as near-synonyms, are used somewhat interchangeably, it is important to recognize that they are not exact equivalents. Instructive evidence of the distinction between the terms that operated in the late 1960s and early 1970s can be found in mainstream and scholarly texts on employment, trends in the workplace, managerial styles, and human production, from sociological studies, government reports, and congressional testimonies to trade paperbacks and business handbooks. In these texts *work* and *labour* are by no means transposable. *Work* refers to jobs and occupations in the broadest sense; *labour* designates organized labour or union politics. Two books from the era illustrate the point: one, *Work in America*, is a governmental report assessing employment trends, productivity, and worker satisfaction; the other, *Labour in America*, brings together conference papers proclaiming the urgency of unionization and the possibilities of raising class consciousness.³³

A reading of Martin's process as *work* informed by theory concerning non-industrial forms of labour promotes the expansion of the concerns of *labour* to include work conducted outside the factory—such as housework and artwork. Following Bryan-Wilson, this study will use the term *work* to refer to the tasks and actions engaged in by groups or individuals, and use the term *labour* to refer to organized political actions and the theory that comes out of those struggles. Thus, a *labour* reading of Martin's grids would be one that draws upon the histories of of worker's struggles and theory written about current or historical organization of workers, and the *work* of painting would refer to the specific task of applying paint engaged in by the artist. The phrase, *work of art*, can be used to describe both a process as well as the object produced by

³³ Bryan-Wilson, *Artworkers*, 32.

that process. In the case of Agnes Martin, as I have established above, each is the result of the other. The grid is composed of hand-drawn lines; these hand-drawn lines form a grid.

This reading of Martin's process requires two interventions into Marx's own approach, which tends to prioritize the issues of industrial labour at the expense of non-industrial forms of labour. These interventions are especially important as many contemporary Marxist theorists and collectives reproduce this emphasis on industrial labour in their approaches. The first intervention addresses a lacuna within Marx's own definition of the work of art. According to Michael Heinrich, "a work of art is a product of labour, but unlike normal commodities, it is a unique object, something that exists only once."³⁴ Martin painted a century after the publication of *Capital*: a century that witnessed the emergence of photography, the readymade, cinema, and the beginning of Minimalist strategies such as seriality. Yet rather than adopt these methods of mass production, she maintains her allegiance to a manual method of production. The second involves a repurposing of feminist theory on housework to address the slippages of meaning within *artwork* that can act as potential moments of resistance to the logic of industrial capitalist production.

³⁴ "The price that a buyer is prepared to pay for it is a collector's price, which hasn't the slightest to do with the labour expended by the artist." Michael Heinrich, *Introduction to the Three Volumes of Marx's Capital*, 43. While this issue of pricing is a problem when addressing works of art through a Marxist lens, this study will not address the pricing of Martin's works then or now. I am focusing on her process of making and how it ramifies on labour as described by Marx, rather than on markets, distribution, and the like.

The Grapheme and the Abstraction of Work

By 1959, two years after relocating to New York's Coenties Slip, Martin had eschewed representational works, and was working on larger canvases, but had not yet committed to the six-foot-square grid. Yet, there is ample visual evidence that Martin was already exploring strategies that she will use in her 1964 works, such as *Red Bird*, which have received much critical and historical attention. Her preparatory experimentation can be found in two under discussed 1959 works, both *Untitled*, that demonstrate Martin's exploration of detail's relationship to viewing distance and an awareness of the grapheme's ability to testify to the labour of artwork.

Viewed from afar, *Untitled* of 1959 (fig.3), the sixty-nine and a half inches square format indicative of what Martin was moving towards at the time, we first register two lighter grey squares, floating just off of the grey surface. The edges of these diaphanous shapes are not lined, and the lighter wash of the background recedes from the plane, giving the sense that a portal has opened in the wall of the gallery space, with two quivering curtains inviting our entrance. Moving closer, a tiny yellow dot near the centre of the painting appears. Like a firefly darting between screen doors, it does not belong to the fragile architecture of the painted squares, but rather, seems about to disappear if not watched carefully. At a closer distance, it becomes an effort to draw our attention away from the small dot, even as we are invited to examine the effects of the two greys and the interplay of diluted pigment on textured canvas. This level of intimacy can only last so long, and, moving backwards, our attention is drawn to the distance at which the yellow dot once again disappears. Pacing backwards and forwards, the viewer is able to summon

or dissolve this ephemeral mark, all the while being called forth and pushed away by the very same painterly mark.

The other *Untitled* (fig. 4) is purged of colour. At a distance, the stark graphite lines seem more akin to razor-wire than to the delicate, textile-like curtains of the other *Untitled*. Smaller, and rectangular in form, the thick application of paint cracking over time, this work imparts nothing of the quixotic, atmospheric effects of the later grids, nor does it invite the spectral back-and-forth of its contemporary. Moving towards the canvas, the variable applications of paint become obvious. Thick, almost *impasto* at the bottom, more sparse at the top, and incised while wet with imperfect pencil lines, *Untitled* reveals itself as a study of the interaction between paint and line. The building up of layers of oil allows for the graphite to act in an almost sculptural manner, the whiteness of the paint makes perceptible the variances in Martin's application of the paint.

At this intimate distance, knuckle-marks and fingerprints also become visible. The question-marked shaped prints signalling the presence of Martin's labour, made palpable through the traces of the human body in paint. More direct evidence of the artist's hand can hardly be thought of. As each print almost perfectly fits within the rectangles of the grid, it seems that Martin was using her hands to push the white paint into thicker areas, to emphasize the relief-effect of each incision. Moving even closer, the texture of the canvas support itself can be seen in through the graphite lines as they cut through the heavily applied paint. The lines can then be thought of as not only drawing, or even drawing on painting, but as a sculptural intervention by one means of mark making into another, a process of subtraction rather than addition.

Here is Martin's clever inversion of figure and ground; at a distance, the white acts as a ground for the intersecting graphite lines; up close, the lines recede as the viewer understands that they are carved into the paint. The ground is pushed forward, ahead of what acted as "figure," destabilizing the relation at the same time that we become aware of the human labour implied by the traces of her hand. Martin's manually drawn lines seemed to emerge from the surface, but instead collapse this perception of depth when, viewed up close, they are understood as being in direct contact with the canvas support. That the reversal of the figure and the ground happens in relation to the viewer underscores the fallibility of vision as well as the illusory and often arbitrary distinctions between such categories.

This reading, emphasizing the traces of the artist's hand, extends and intervenes in Krauss's observations regarding the grid and, more specifically, her reading of Linville's account of *Red Bird*. Krauss, in her analysis, focuses on conditions of viewing where the traces of Martin's hand disappear and reappear depending on the viewer's distance from the picture plane. However, as this analysis of Martin's *Untitled* paintings 1959 proposes, if these lines are to be understood as an intentional reversal of the figure and ground, and as direct evidence of the work of the artist, then the effervescence of these traces into the "atmospheric" effect described by Krauss can be understood as the optical synthesis of this expended labour time. As such, the atmospheric effect is an abstraction that occurs as a condition of distance from the picture plane, just as the ability of each line to testify to the moment of its making is a condition of intimacy

with the picture plane. This abstraction is neither merely conceptual nor metaphorical, but rather results from conditions of viewing.

Each line, when viewed up close, is individual, but at the further distance, the lines blur and cohere; the particular allows for this undifferentiated human labour to be seen, while distance abstracts it—renders it ghostly, perhaps invisible. Therefore, the culmination of Martin’s lines at the point of their dissolution can be understood to be homologous to the disappearance of the individual’s labour under capitalism. As Kasha Linville puts it, “as you step back even further, the painting closes down entirely, becoming completely opaque.”³⁵ There is a significant connection here between the corporeally produced lines and the elision of their individual traits at the further distance, where the surface becomes inaccessible, even stone-like. In capitalist production, to quote Marx himself, “the differentiated forms of labour vanish, they differ from each other no longer, but are all reduced to the same human labour, abstract human labour” (128/52).

In other words, the abstraction brought about by the culmination of the lines at a distance is not unlike the ways in which the way in which Marx describes the vanishing of individualized labour under the wage. Note here Heinrich’s distinction between “mental abstraction” and “real abstraction”:

Normally, abstractions are constituted in human thought. We refer to the commonalities among individual examples and then establish an abstract category, such as “tree.” But in the case of abstract labour, we are not dealing with such a “mental abstraction” but with a “real abstraction” by which we mean an abstrac-

³⁵ Kasha Linville, “Agnes Martin: An Appreciation,” in *Artforum* (June 1971): 72.

tion that is carried out in the actual behaviour of humans, regardless of whether they are aware of it.³⁶

Here, “mental abstraction” refers to an intellectual understanding or concept of something that exists in the material world. However, in the case of labour under capitalism, the work that is carried out by individuals is made abstract through the money-form. The expenditure of time, expertise, and effort by a specific person when carrying out a task is qualitatively distinct from that of any other, yet when a person performs tasks in exchange *for* money (or other commodities), that labour is brought into a relationship of equivalence *with* money. For instance, when two workers perform different tasks for the same hourly wage, the distinctiveness of their actions and experiences is flattened when they exchange this labour for money. The wages attest only to the fact that the labour has been exchanged, but do not reflect the nature tasks performed or to the individual skills and attributes of the workers. Hence, the exchange of labour for wages is a *real abstraction*, whereby the hourly wage is exchanged for the expended labour time of the worker while having no connection to that time other than this exchangeability.

In the case of Martin, how she defines her artistic work in relation to her non-artistic work in the List of Occupations (Appendix 1) provides a model for understanding the way in which participation in non-artwork implicates upon the status of the artist. If, as Martin recounts in an interview, she would paint until she ran out of funds and take a job until she was able to

³⁶ Heinrich, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, 49.

paint again,³⁷ these jobs, in so far as they enable her paint, are necessary for the reproduction of Martin as an artist as well as a worker outside of art. That the list excludes mention of her artistic activities implies that, to Martin, they are considered to belong to a different category than to her artwork. Perhaps Martin is suggesting that these jobs were crucial in that they provided her with the resources to dedicate herself to painting, but beyond that, they are interchangeable. By demanding that the gallery publish this list in lieu of a conventional biographical statement, Martin's list operates within the exhibition much as the occupations operated within Martin's biographical trajectory—as a condition that must be satisfied in order for her artwork, in both senses of the phrase, to become accessible.

Martin's list points to this discrepancy between the expectations of artwork and non-artwork. Like the incised lines that expose the canvas support while, at a distance, emerging as a figure, the list lays bare the work that Martin performed in order to support her production of artwork. In the case of the list, Martin unveils the often ignored labour that artists engage in that is so often seen as outside or irrelevant to the production of artwork, and makes the recognition of this labour a condition for the viewing of the objects of artwork. It is not insignificant that many of the occupations listed are traditionally gendered female, and involve tasks central to the reproduction of the workforce, such as teaching, cooking, farming, and child care. This is especially courageous as association with reproductive labour could be potentially more threatening to a female artist than to her male counterparts. While all artists engage in reproductive labour to

³⁷ Oral history interview with Agnes Martin, May 15, 1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

various degrees, reproductive labour's historical association with the feminine exacerbates the ways in which the artist's role is more precariously occupied by women in our current patriarchal society.

Indeed, as Julia Bryan-Wilson notes, “the history of Western art is marked by the unstable distinction between artistic, “creative” production and the economics of “true” labour. The social value of making art has been in flux since the Renaissance, when the “author” of a work as a concept was born.”³⁸ In order to generate class consciousness, those who engage in artwork, like those who engage in other kinds of *work*, need to find the means of defining their activities as legitimate alternatives to working under industrial capitalism. For Bryan-Wilson, the association of *art* with *work* during the 1960s called into question the art's connection, or perhaps, lack thereof, to its wider economic and social environment. This autonomy would operate as a potential site for resistance: “What makes the coherence of the phrase *artworker* challenging—even oxymoronic—is that under capitalism art also functions as the “outside,” or other, to labour: a nonutilitarian, nonproductive activity against which mundane work is defined, a leisure-time pursuit of self-expression, or a utopian alternative to the deadening effects of capitalism.”³⁹ In other words, artists are expected to be productive, to participate in systems of monetary value and exchange *all the while* being expected to perform the opposite of industrial productivity. The expectation of art is that it will provide something that is outside the realm of industrial production, an expectation that downplays the same labour producing this “release” or “leisure.”

³⁸ Bryan-Wilson, *Artworkers*, 26.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

Yet Bryan-Wilson's analysis overlooks the fact that the expectation to labour not for exchange but for "pleasure" exists in its most widespread manifestation in the home, and does not engage with the gender associations of various forms of work, and the paradoxical relationship between reproductive labour and artistic production. However, certain movements have sought to correct for this prevalent blindspot in Marxist theory. Since the 1970s, Italian feminist theorist Silvia Federici has identified problems with Marx's strict attention to waged, contractual, and industrial forms of labour.⁴⁰ She believes that the discursive overemphasis on labour conditions relating directly to the production of commodities has inhibited the revolutionary potential of Marxist theory, and argues that unwaged labour be examined more closely.

Federici's emphasis on reproductive labour runs counter to the position espoused by the recent publication, "A History of Subsumption," by the Leftist publisher and journal *Endnotes*. In their overview of the approaches towards historicizing the encroachment of capitalism into all forms of life from *Théorie Communiste*, Jacques Camatte, Fredric Jameson, Mario Tronti, and

⁴⁰ "Marx ignored women's reproductive labour because he remains wedded to a technological concept of revolution, where freedom comes through the machine, where the increase in the productivity of labour is assumed to be the foundation for communism, and where the capitalism organization of work is viewed as the highest model of historical rationality, held up for every other form of production, including the reproduction of the workforce. In other words, Marx failed to recognize the importance of reproductive work because he accepted the capitalist criteria for what constitutes work, and he believed that waged industrial work was the stage on which the battle for humanity's emancipation would be played." Silvia Federici, "The Reproduction of Labour Power in the Global Economy and the Unfinished Feminist Revolution," in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 95.

Antonio Negri, the writers of *Endnotes* explain⁴¹—and in doing so, replicate—Marx’s preoccupation with industrial labour. While the reproduction of labour power is mentioned, the means by which the working class is reproduced is dealt with abstractly, without a mention of bodies, child-raising, education, or gendered labour. Labour that happens outside of “the working day” or in the home is noticeably absent, as with the work of the artist.

By working toward expanding the idea of work beyond that of industrial production, Federici seeks out avenues in which lived, human labour resists reduction to abstract labour. By demonstrating the ways in which a vast number of workers are compelled to work without wages, Federici and the international Wages for Housework movement aimed to reveal how “the obstacle to revolution is not the lack to technological know-how, but the divisions that capitalist development produces in the working class.”⁴² Expanding the definition of labour to include all work exposes the reliance of waged work on the unwaged as well as the arbitrary nature of these distinctions. Under this logic, the reproduction of the workforce is reliant upon the definition of housework as “non-productive”, which is enforced through the expectation that women perform these types of work out of emotional obligation, rather than under coercion or for financial compensation.

⁴¹ Endnotes, “The History of Subsumption,” in *Endnotes 2* (April 2010), under “History of Subsumption,” <http://endnotes.org.uk/en/endnotes-the-history-of-subsumption> (accessed November 20, 2014). *Endnotes* is a collectively produced online publication by the group Endnotes.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 93.

In the essay, “Why Sexuality is Work”, Silvia Federici describes the way in which women are asymmetrically expected to perform sexual and domestic duties without pay. According to Federici,

Sexuality is the release we are given from the discipline of the work process. It is the necessary complement to the routine and regimentation of the workweek. It is a license to “go natural,” to “let go,” so that we can return more refreshed on Monday to our job. “Saturday night” is the irruption of the “spontaneous,” the irrational in the rationality of the capitalist discipline of our life. It is supposed to be the compensation for work and is ideologically sold to us as the “other” of work: a space of freedom in which we can presumably be our true selves—a possibility for intimate, “genuine” connections in a universe of social relations in which we are constantly forced to repress, defer, postpone, hide, even from ourselves, what we desire.⁴³

To follow Federici, sexual liberation has contributed to the overall pressures placed upon women because “now [women] are expected to have a waged job, still clean the house and have children and, at the end of a double workday, be ready to hop in bed and be sexually enticing ... For women the right to have sex is the duty to have sex and enjoy it.”⁴⁴ Notice that with both sex and art, there is an expectation that those engaged in it enjoy it or are otherwise receiving psychological or emotional gratification for their efforts. The very “non-utilitarian” aspects of both are lauded as a possible escape from the strains of “productive” labour, yet they nonetheless produce affects and experiences that can be traded as commodities. More importantly, both spaces are presented as refuges from capitalist rationality and order. In these situations, those performing this refuge are subjected to the pressure of providing an affective release, not only for the other participant but for themselves.

⁴³ Silvia Federici, “Why Sexuality is Work,” in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, 23.

⁴⁴ Federici, “Why Sexuality is Work,” 25.

Federici's criticism of the notion of labouring out of love does not imply a recommendation that women seek work outside of the home. In the 1975 essay, "Counterplanning from the Kitchen," she argues against the notion that women's entry into the workplace should be considered a feminist victory, as women are expected to perform housework regardless of whether they take a job outside of the home, since "[g]etting a second job has never released us from the first."⁴⁵ By calling for wages for housework—and by extension, remuneration for all the hours in which the worker serves capital—Federici draws attention to the true length of the working day, and to the reliance of waged labour on the unwaged. She points out that for many women, working outside of the home means more housework, as many of the avenues of employment available for women are extensions of the work expected of them in the home, such as cooking and cleaning. The performance of housework for a wage during one part of the day and then without the wage for the remainder underscores the arbitrary distinction between what can be considered "productive" and "nonproductive"—the tasks performed are the same, but for the fact that the former is conducted for another rather than for one's own.

For her, "[t]his ideology that opposes the family (or the community) to the factory, the personal to the social, the private to the public, productive to unproductive work, is functional to our enslavement in the home, which, in the absence of a wage, has always appeared as an act of

⁴⁵ Silvia Federici, "Counterplanning from the Kitchen" in *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, 31.

love.”⁴⁶ That “love” here stands in place of a wage is problematic as it obscures the reliance of unwaged workers on their waged partners, and undermines their ability to organize, and to bargain collectively for fair working conditions, wages, or other rights.

The disempowerment of workers understood to be working out of “love” rather than for financial remuneration has connections to the way in which artwork is defined in opposition to “productive” waged labour. While this comparison is limited by the fact that housework, unlike artwork, is expected of a large segment of the population regardless of their desire for such work, their shared exclusion from the wage is nonetheless valuable as a means of undermining the arbitrary distinctions that enable capital to function. Indeed, Martin’s gestures on and off the canvas seem to suggest a certain mirroring between the ways in which certain forms of labour are veiled in art and under capitalism. Her list operates as a means of critiquing how so much of the waged work that enabled her to produce art are ignored, or deemed irrelevant to her art production. That much of this work is gendered female and reproductive in nature attests not only the avenues of employment available to women at the time, but to the multiple ways in which some forms of work are valued at the expense of other forms. The value of an artwork, even when monetized, remains conceptually separate from the waged-labour that enabled its production. Likewise, when the value of reproductive labour without pay is expressed in terms of *love*, the material needs of those who perform it are rendered invisible, and often, inconsequential.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 35

Conclusion

As fragile moments in Marx's model of value, reproductive labour and the labour of art are potential avenues out of capitalist modes of labour. Returning to the matter of viewing distance and Martin's paintings, the connection between abstraction of labour from the worker in Marxist theory and the abstraction of the painted grid is apparent. Quite literally, when the viewer stands in the position of the artist, traces of her labour are visible; stepping away, the limitations of the human eye at a distance make the same traces vanish. The paintings' opacity at a distance is an objective one, determined by biological and physical constraints. The blurring, then solidification of each grid happens not in the imagination of the viewer, but, like "real abstraction," occurs due to constraints between the particular and the whole.

Martin, unable to paint herself out of the work, nonetheless haunts it by making intimacy the axis on which the work functions. Traces of her are left in the materiality of the painting, yet are not reducible to quantities of oil, graphite, and canvas. Similarly, the ephemeral effects produced by her works, as established above, are not imaginary, but are not comfortably material or immaterial. Only possible in the most ideal of viewing conditions and wholly absent in most reproductions, both aspects of Martin's grid paintings attest to the irreproducibility of lived, human labour. Yet by demanding that the viewer acknowledge her labours outside the rarified realm of art, Martin draws attention to the forms of work that made her artistic production possible. As such, her gestures both on and off the canvas can be understood as interventions into the conceptions of value that undergird artwork as well as work under capitalism. Martin's list makes visi-

ble capital's privileging of waged work and its reversal under the conceit of artwork, where waged work is often ignored to preserve the distinction between the work related to art and work outside of art.

At the end of "The /Cloud/," Rosalind Krauss concedes that a visual analysis of Martin's grids may be "impossibly outmoded, formalist, determinist, empty,"⁴⁷ but an investigation of the elision of the time of labour in the disappearance of the artist's hand intervenes in such an objection. As this study demonstrates through looking carefully at some of Martin's early grid paintings, the labour of producing art occupies a place outside of that of other types of production not only for the producer, but for the viewer as well. This position is diametrically opposed to that of artists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles, who also investigate the nature of work in their practices, albeit to collapse the distinctions between the labour of producing art and the labour that supports the apparatuses of art. Future research into the role of time and labour in abstract painting comparing the work of Martin and other female painters working in New York in the 1950s and 1960s, such as Yayoi Kusama, may provide support for the ability of painting to aggregate and communicate the duration of its own making, perhaps in a way that a durationally contingent medium such as performance is unable to do. Furthermore, by acknowledging the true extent of labour conducted by artists and other workers, this analysis aims to challenge the prevalence of unpaid intern labour in the art world.

⁴⁷ "To say all this is, of course, impossibly outmoded, formalist, determinist, empty. But the /cloud/ remains bracketed within its peculiar system; and it is what Agnes Martin painted for these last forty years. She destroyed all the rest." Krauss, "The /Cloud/," 165.

Between the thickly laid paint of one *Untitled* of 1959 and the gauzy forms of the other *Untitled* of the same year, Martin develops a way to locate the process of her making of the work in relation to the canvas. It resides neither in the process of drawing the line, nor in the whole grid when viewed from a distance, but in the viewer's attention to their own experiential oscillation between the two. She may not have produced her grid yet in 1959, but she was aware of the brackets that would come to define it. And these brackets would hold her practice for another four decades, until age and illness forced her to leave them.

Figures



Figure 1. Agnes Martin in her studio, 1955. Photograph by Mildred Tolbert



Figure 2. Agnes Martin in her studio, 1960. Photograph by Alexander Liberman

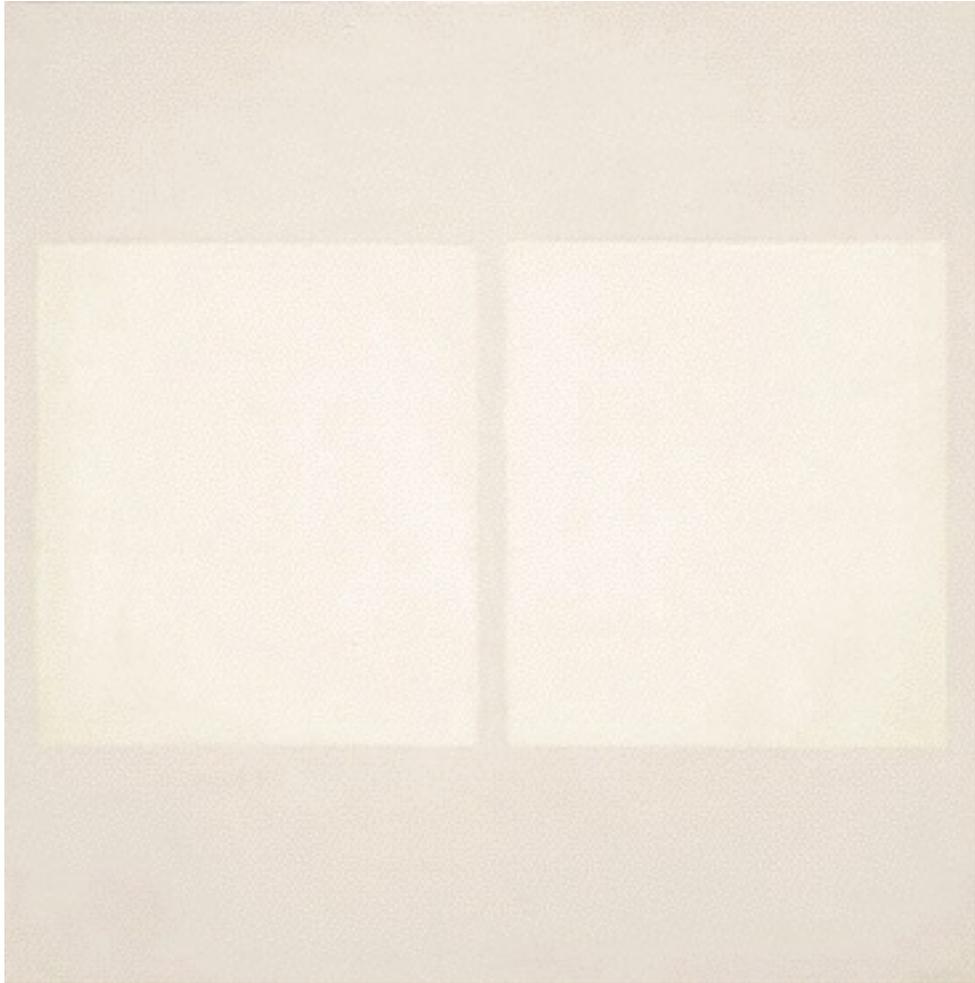


Figure 3. Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1959. Oil and graphite on canvas. 69 1/2" x 69 1/2".



Figure 4. Agnes Martin, *Untitled*, 1959. Oil and graphite on canvas. Approximately 24" x 48".

Bibliography

- Alloway, Lawrence. "Agnes Martin." *Artforum* 11, no 8 (April 1973), pp. 32–37.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.
- . *Writing Degree Zero*. Translated by Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1968.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Das Kunsterwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch, 2010.
- Bryan-Wilson, Julia. *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.
- Buchloh, Benjamin H.D. "Kelly's Matrix: Administering Abstraction, Industrializing Color." In *Ellsworth Kelly: Matrix*. New York: Matthew Marks Gallery, 2003.
- Chave, Anna. "Agnes Martin: 'Humility the beautiful daughter...All of her ways are empty'". In *Agnes Martin*, edited by Barbara Haskell, 131–53. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1992.
- . "Minimalism and Biography." In *Art Bulletin* 82, no.1 (March 2000): 194–63.
- Cooke, Lynne, Karen Kelly, and Barbara Schröder, ed. *Agnes Martin*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. London: Verso, 2013.
- . *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.
- Crimp, Douglas. "Opaque Surfaces," in *Arte come rate*. Milano: Centro Comunitario di Brera, 1973; reprinted in *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer, London: Phaidon, 2000: 257–60.
- . "Back to the Turmoil," in *Agnes Martin*, 66.
- Damisch, Hubert. *The Origin of Perspective*. Translated by John Goodman. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.
- . *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Federici, Silvia. *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*. Oakland: PM Press, 2012.
- . *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body, and Primitive Accumulation*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004.

- Fer, Briony. "Drawing Drawing: Agnes Martin's Infinity." In *3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kenz, and Agnes Martin*, ed. Cather de Zegher and Hendel Teicher. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006. 185–95.
- . *The Infinite Line: Re-making Art after Modernism*. New York: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: And Archeology of the Human Sciences*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1971.
- . "What Is an Author?" In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.
- Fried, Michael. *Art and Objecthood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Glimcher, Arne and Agnes Martin. *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*, edited by Arnes Glimcher. London: Phaidon, 2013.
- Greenberg, Clement. *Art and Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.
- . "Modernist Painting" (1965). Reprinted in *The New Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock, pp. 100–110. New York: Dutton, 1966.
- . *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Vol. 2. Ed. John O'Brian. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Heinrich, Michael. *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, translated by Alexander Locascio. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2012.
- "History of Subsumption." *Endnotes 2* (April 2010). <http://endnotes.org.uk/en/endnotes-the-history-of-subsumption> (accessed November 20, 2011).
- Joseph, Branden. *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-garde*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007.
- Judd, Donald. "In the Galleries: Agnes Martin." *Arts Magazine* 39. no. 4 (January 1964), pp. 33–34.
- Krauss, Rosalind. "Grids," in *October* 9, Summer 1979: 51–64.
- . "The /Cloud/." In *Agnes Martin*, edited by Barbara Haskell. 155–66. New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1992.
- . *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985.
- . *Under Blue Cup*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011.
- Linville, Kasha. "Agnes Martin: An Appreciation." *Artforum* 9, no. 10 (June 1971): 72–73.
- Lippard, Lucy. "Top to Bottom, Left to Right," in *Grids grids grids grids grids grids grids grids grids*. Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, 1972. n.p.

- Mansoor, Jaleh. "Self-Effacement, Self-Inscription: Agnes Martin's Singular Quietude." In Cooke, 2011.
- Michelson, Annette. "Agnes Martin: Recent Paintings." *Artforum* 5, no. 5 (January 1967): 46.
- Oral history interview with Agnes Martin, May 15, 1989, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
- Parsons, Betty. Betty Parsons gallery records and personal papers, ca. 1920–91, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute.
- Pollock, Griselda. "Agnes Dreaming: Dreaming Agnes." In *3 x Abstraction: New Methods of Drawing by Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, and Agnes Martin*, ed. Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005. 159-82.
- Princenthal, Nancy. *Agnes Martin: Her Life and Art*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2015.
- Wilson, Anne. "Meeting of Streams: Agnes Martin. A Background History of the Coenties Slip Years 1955 to 1967," unpublished manuscript, Whitney Museum of American Art Archives, 1992.

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Occupations

Please publish all or none:

I have worked:

1. as a playground Director
2. as a tennis coach
3. started two successful businesses
4. on a farm—milking
5. three times at the wheat harvest
6. managed cherry pickers
7. for a mining Co. managed Indians horse packing supplies
8. taught three years in country schools
9. as a cashier
10. in a factory
11. in a hamburger stand
12. as a receptionist
13. in a butcher shop
14. in a nursery
15. in a cafeteria
16. as a baker's helper
17. as a waitress many times
18. as a dishwasher three times
19. as a janitor once
20. as a cook once

During the War

21. helping Spanish and Indians get in touch with relatives in the army (Red Cross)
22. visited spruce logging operations for the government
23. at Swan Island (liberty ships) child care center
24. running an elevator
25. in a parking garage
26. packing ice cream
27. managed five Hindus, baling straw

As a disciplinarian

28. worked with deprived boys
29. on school buses
30. with 60 boy waiters
31. house mother on campus
32. chaperone traveling University students
33. with criminal boys
34. individual child care, 2 girls, one boy age 4-5-6

35. also raised rabbits and ducks

Transcribed from Agnes Martin to Arne Glimcher. Undated facsimile of original letter, in *Agnes Martin: Paintings, Writings, Remembrances*, 243.

Appendix 2: Betty Parsons Gallery Records

③ Agnes Martin	Size	Med.	Price	Disposition
Terra Vita	70x70	oil	1200.	
Bones	70x70	"	1200.	
The River	65 1/4 x 65 1/4	oil	1000.	
Fidelite	32x32	"	450.	
Brooklyn Bridge	70x70	"	1000.	
The Pool	22x48	with Tonerlay on paper & canvas	600.	
Reflection				
Water	65 1/4 37x34	wood & metal construction	450 700.	
The Road	70x70	oil	1200.	
City				
Geometric	25x25	oil	350.	returned to Studio 1/19/60
Night Harbor	25x25	"	350.	
The Forest	25x25	"	350.	returned to Studio 1/19/60
Sealbirds	50x50	"	700.	

Artist's Files, "Agnes Martin." Betty Parsons gallery records and personal papers, ca. 1920-91, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute.

from sec 11 file

AGNES MARTIN		Size	Medium	Price	Disposition
W.T. Dancer #1 1958	48 x 72	oil	650.		
Thru This Rain 1958	70 x 70	oil	750. 1500		
✓ Prospect 1958	25 x 25	oil	175. ³⁰⁰		Sold - Mr. Elkon
✓ David 1958	25 x 25	oil	175.		Sold to Mr. AL Witzel - Oct. 3-58
✓ Black & White 1958	25 x 25	oil	175.		Sold B. Parsons 4-29-58
Imprint 1958	25 x 25	oil	175. ³⁰⁰		
✓ The House 1958	25 x 25	oil	175.		Sold Mrs. S.E. Wimer - Dec 17
✓ American 1958	25 x 25	oil	175.		Sold A.M. Prince MD. Dec 6 ⁵⁸
✓ Unbeckoning Grass 1958	40 x 40	oil	800. ¹²⁰⁰		Sold to Martin Berrier
Monument to Mountains	48 x 71 (1959)	oil	650.		
Pacific Marine #4-'57	82 x 50	oil	750.		
Heather 1958	70 x 70	oil	750. ¹²⁰⁰		
✓ The Field 1957	50 x 82	oil	750.		
Stones 1958	70 x 70	oil	750		
The Spring #1 1958	70 x 70	oil	750		
Beckoning GRASS '58	70 x 70	oil	700		
IN THE DESERT '57	40 x 50	oil	750		

Artist's Files, "Agnes Martin." Betty Parsons gallery records and personal papers, ca. 1920-91, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute.

Agnes Martin ⁽²⁾	Size	Medium	Price	Disposition
RAIN - 1958	40x40	oil	450	Sold BR. V. de Swanson Dec. 13-58
Bench	48x38	oil	450	
Harbor #1 - 1957	50x40	oil	450	Sold - Dec 5-59 Stalin via Schuyler
DRIFT of Summer 1957	38x38	oil	450	Sold Feb 26-59 Ed. H. Witzel
WATER Sign 1957	50x40	oil	450	
The Spring #2	50x50	oil	500	
WHEAT 1957	50x50	oil	500 600	
Harbor #3 1957	50x50	oil	500	
Mourning Dove	48x72	oil	700	
WATER Light 1955	48x72	oil	700	
DESERT 1957	65x65	oil	600	
Dancer #2 1956	48x72	oil	650	
RAIN (Study) 1958	25x25	oil	300 175	Sold - Friedrich Brossio
White - (Study) 1957	25x25	oil	175	Sold - Tony from the 12/21/58
Seeds - 1959	24x18	watercolor	100	Sold - Sue Hillco - 2/27/59
Shade - 1959	28x22	watercolor	125	Sold - L. Schwaabauer
DESERT RAIN - 1958	25x25	oil	175	Sold - James Reginald

Artist's Files, "Agnes Martin." Betty Parsons gallery records and personal papers, ca. 1920-91, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute.