

WE ARE A CELL AREN'T WE?: ART & LANGUAGE AND THE  
DOCUMENTA INDEX

by

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## ABSTRACT

In 1972, "Documenta 5" was held in Kassel, West Germany, an exhibition of 160 artists under the theme "Questioning Reality: Today's Imagery." A section of this thematic exhibition presented conceptual art, including an installation called *a Survey of the Art & Language Institute (1968-1972)*. This work comprised: eight filing cabinets containing writing by or published by the Art & Language group; photostats pinned to the walls listing relations of compatibility between each of the texts; posters with texts concerning the work and a lattice displaying the compatibility-relations between most of the texts. The texts in the files and on the poster discussed art practice using an obtuse language culled from analytic philosophy and information theory--the idiom associated with Art & Language.

This is the first of several works by Art & Language which have come to be called indexes, this one now known as the *Documenta Index*. The group was formed as the Art & Language Press in 1968 by four art teachers and students in Coventry, England: Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell. After 1969, they published *Art-Language*, a journal analyzing "the language-use of the art society," and quickly positioned themselves in the vanguard of conceptualism. Through recruiting new members and by extended associations with international artists, dealers, critics and curators, Art & Language became notables in the "art society" they critiqued, extending their influence, expanding their numbers to 10, and re-naming themselves, for "Documenta 5", the Art & Language Institute.

The *Documenta Index* represents a major shift in their programme, mixing the idea of text-based art theory with an attempt to out-manuever an international exhibition by calling for extended audience participation. The *Index* also marked out external and internal problems with organizing and presenting group work--and attempted to negotiate an analytical standing for the association in the art market and social world of the early-seventies. It is the formation of the group, the formulation of its programme and its address to--and assumptions about--spectators which forms the

major material for the study, with particular attention to the English art-college origins of the group and the aesthetic and social politics of the trans-Atlantic environment they came to operate within.

By looking at the way in which the group constituted itself and was regarded by others, a picture emerges of how the *Documenta Index* came to exist, and why the type of openness in argument it presented—the dedication to pursue questions rather than resolve them in plastic form—both challenged and went unengaged in the atmosphere of the early-seventies. In conclusion, the contradictory aspects of the *Index* and the exhibition it was produced for are understood as representing both the possibilities of openness and the difficulties of presenting critical thought and a critical identity in the form of art.

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## CHAPTER ONE. "DOCUMENTA 5" AND THE SURVEY BY THE ART & LANGUAGE INSTITUTE

*We are a cell aren't we? (Isn't this a hard to express thing? You've still got interpretation and degrees of one-sidedness. This must have been faced once before.)*

Art & Language, 1974.

*And I thank you for those items that you sent me,  
The monkey and the plywood violin.  
I practiced every night, and now I'm ready,  
First we take Manhattan, then we take Berlin.*

Leonard Cohen, "First We Take Manhattan," 1988.

For 100 days through the summer of 1972, "Documenta 5" was open in Kassel, West Germany, with Harald Szeemann as head organizer of an exhibition of over 160 artists under the theme "Befragung der Realität: Bildwelten heute" ("Inquiry into Reality: Today's Imagery").

<sup>1</sup> As the fifth in a line of contemporary art exhibitions held in Kassel since 1955, this version was noteworthy for displaying contemporary art under thematic sections rather than by formal genre.<sup>2</sup> In some ways, this was the result not just of curatorial choice, but was forced upon the organizers by the plethora of non-traditional practices at the time. In the next year Lucy Lippard published, *Six Years*, a book chronicling the development of such work, listing in an ungainly title the following categories of work illustrating "the dematerialization of the art object": "so-called conceptual or information or idea art . . . such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art."<sup>3</sup> We could add the phenomena of body art, installation, and performance art to the list.<sup>4</sup> Under these (and other) names, all the above had achieved prominence in the art world and none fitted neatly into *beaux arts* categories. Aware of such movements, "Documenta 5" used the thematic approach to include them along with the current crop of marketable and renown examples of modernist practice from Western Europe and the USA.

In another move concurrent with contemporary visual culture, "Documenta 5" also included multi-media and popular imagery--political propaganda, film and video, images of utopia and science fiction, art works by the insane, professional graphic design and advertising.

In reassessing the exhibition, it is clear that several aspects of sixties cultural theory had been persuasive enough that the art establishment--as represented by one of its most prestigious international exhibiting organizations--attempted to re-formulate its policies. Each of the admitted categories was considered part of the Befragung, fine art being seen as an element in Bildwelten ranging from high art objects to the design of currency and popular religious iconography. Though the art, conceptual and otherwise, was sedulously kept apart from the popular elements, the sort of levelling projected by the administration intended to pay some attention to the discourses concerning notions of expanded reality and the blurring of generic and cultural boundaries afloat in previous decades.<sup>5</sup> As Georg Jappe wrote in a 1971 preview: "For the first time 'Documenta' is not a judgment day, establishing world ratings, but a value-free thematic exhibition."<sup>6</sup>

Though his enthusiasm may sound overly optimistic, Jappe's exposition of the planning of the exhibition is germane to a discussion of the works presented. He described how Szeemann, with associates Jean-Christophe Ammann and Arnold Bode, planned "Documenta 5" to be "divided into three large categories: (1) 'Reality of Representation', (2) 'Reality of the Thing Represented', (3) 'Identity or Non-Identity of Representation and the Thing Represented'."<sup>7</sup> While the section titled "Realismus" fulfilled the first category with works of super-realist painting and sculpture, and the section "Individuelle Mythologien: Selbstdarstellung-Prozesse" stressed "the Thing Represented" in fetishes of artistic presence and material manipulation, the section exemplifying the category "Identity or Non-Identity of Representation and the Thing Represented" was placed under the rubric "Ideen" and featured work by 38 artists associated with "so-called conceptual or information or idea art."<sup>8</sup> Half of the first floor of the prime exhibition venue, the neo-classical Museum Fridericianum, was given over to "Ideen," with conceptualism making a splashy, if characteristically visually understated debut in a multi-media, putatively universal display (fig. 1). This was the first occasion when such "idea-art," as a segregated category, was represented in an international exhibition along side other avant-garde, popular and traditional *beaux arts* production.<sup>9</sup> Even so, the curators of the "Ideen" section, Dusseldorf art

entrepreneur Konrad Fischer and Münster-based curator Klaus Honnef, used the section to parlay a broad notion of idea as art.

Fischer and Honnef admitted works such as the blanched canvases of Robert Ryman, the geometrical abstractions of Agnes Martin and a stone circle by Richard Long in company with the texts, schemes and photographic documentation more commonly associated with conceptualism. While the distinction between "stylistic conceptual art" and "theoretical conceptual art" would have to wait for Joseph Kosuth in 1975 for open announcement,<sup>10</sup> the "Ideen" section of "Documenta 5" displayed evidence of a similar basis for differentiating between types of conceptual practice. Given the overall theme of identity or non-identity associated with the "Ideen" arena, it could be maintained that Ryman and Martin represented painting that did not identify with traditional painterly concerns, or that Long's transplanted stones simultaneously represented both their original locale and were now non-identical with that location since he had formed them into the human-generated geometrical figure of a circle and placed them in an acculturated gallery setting.<sup>11</sup> Whether these deviations from protocol made such works conceptual depended upon their formal non-identity with conventions of painting and sculpture, and such exotic variations on traditional material-object-based media were here held to be idea-based in character. Contesting, or at least shivering the boundaries of art decorum with systematic intent formed the criteria for inclusion, the "Ideen" section representing a set of more-or-less tentative approaches to re-constituting art practice and theory.

However equivocally the "Documenta 5" curators treated the matter, debates over the level or kind of conceptualization involved in art work and its products were a major part of the conceptual art movement. The loosening of identity between artist and art object resulted in a stress upon the problematic of the ideational component of artistic production. While photographs documenting performances or simple nominations of certain things as art were blithely shown as conceptual art works, certain artists (critics being unusually silent or acquiescent in the debate) composed texts and analyses which aimed to clarify the question of what was conceptual art. One position is stated by Sol LeWitt's 1967 declaration that:

When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes the machine that makes the art.<sup>12</sup>

That the artist might as well act as commercial orderer, as administrator, sustained LeWitt's discourse, which could be said to represent not conceptualism *per se*, but a continuation of minimalism. That movement's preference for standard-issue components and non-studio fabrication meant that the "idea becomes the machine" without the consumption of the product necessarily being considered: the artist 'industrialized' art production by becoming the aesthetic equivalent of a contractor.

By contrast, in 1969 Daniel Buren called for a different type of investigation, centred not on the artist's relation to production, but on the "VISUALITÉ de la peinture elle-même . . . la peinture crée elle-même un mode, un système spécifique, que ne dicterait plus le regard, mais qui soit 'produit pour le regard'."<sup>13</sup> For Buren, the artist acted as the self-conscious agent of a socially sanctioned idea of visibility and fine art, the process of ordering merely reproducing ideological relations which sustained art as a privileged category of institutionalized labour and consumption. Where LeWitt appeared to consider production as paramount, Buren indicated that the artist was not just the realiser of procedure but was, in presenting art for consumption, the carrier of the prerogative which characterizes art as a social amenity and status object. These views lead to these artists producing identifiable but intentionally disparate works for "Documenta 5." LeWitt programmed a wall-drawing for technicians to reproduce, while Buren placed his trademark stripes behind and around other artists' work, announcing in the catalogue that:

De plus en plus le sujet d'une exposition tend à ne plus être l'exposition d'oeuvres d'art mais l'exposition de l'exposition comme oeuvres d'art. Ici, c'est bien l'équipe de Documenta, dirigée par Harald Szeemann, qui expose (les oeuvres) et s'expose (aux critiques).<sup>14</sup>

Though these two artists represent but a sample of arguments held throughout the late-sixties and seventies, they do mark out a distance from the modified conventions of painting and

sculpture represented by Ryman, Martin and Long. To some extent analyzing working procedure, LeWitt separated his work from the trace of the artist's hand, while Buren, in considering the presentation of art, critiqued its function as ideological tool. While these approaches can be generalized into representing the two most important strands of conceptual art, as Benjamin Buchloh contends,<sup>15</sup> it is a third strand, that represented by the Art & Language group, to which I want to contrast them.<sup>16</sup>

Art & Language were represented in the "Ideen" section at "Documenta 5," but what they presented was neither a production-oriented argument about method nor was it a succinct example of institutional critique. Yet their work, named in the catalogue as a *Survey by the Art & Language Institute (1968-1972)*, definitely addressed questions of production and consumption in institutional space. What most clearly differentiated Art & Language from other conceptual art was that their work privileged textual production. Where LeWitt and Buren wrote occasional texts that accompanied their works, writing texts had become the *form* of conceptual art for the artists grouped under the Art & Language label. Though their (typically individualized) earlier work had used sculptural and painterly supports in conjunction with texts, after 1969 their work had become exclusively textual, providing less a series of critical objects illustrating concepts than an ongoing investigation of the realms that regulate concepts and art work—their own and their peers.

In contrast to LeWitt's claim, for Art & Language the "execution" of texts was primary rather than "perfunctory." Rather than describing how they produced works in a novel or different way, the group analyzed the claims and implications of making objects altogether. Against Buren's claim to visibility, Art & Language promoted textuality, ideologically locating their conceptual art by proposing that "it is not beyond consideration that an art form can evolve by taking as a point of initial enquiry the language-use of the art society."<sup>17</sup> This meant that, rather than showing (or showing up) through visual means the functions of art, Art & Language would analyze the moves of the art realm. They could, at least theoretically, avoid the vicissitudes of production and consumption by manipulating text rather than solid-state

materials and by distributing the results in multiple forms that had minor distinction as visual objects. Also, as a group, they could present their writings as part of a group-sustained inquiry, less a promotion of an individual subject and more an aspect of a projected and consensual meeting of minds.

For their "survey" in "Documenta 5," they went another step and produced a way of presenting their texts which re-formed their writings into what was called a "programme map" or "index."<sup>18</sup> In this way they emphasized the identity of their writings with their shared set of concerns and sought to render their work non-identical to the hybrid forms of visual representation assumed by most other work in "Ideen" and associated with conceptualism as a style of art. This strategy also, and obliquely, commented on the remainder of the "Documenta 5" exhibition, for the hermetic qualities of the resulting installation shut out other claims--'hijacking' the overall theme by making the Art & Language Institute the source of both Ideen and a Befragung of their own concerns.

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*The problem with indexes is to sort out how you can derive a basis of teleology from the sets of beliefs which are indexed in the index itself, with respect to coming across sets of beliefs 'in the world' as it were, which is where the 'phenomena' aspect of propositions or sets comes in, in relation to the index.*

Art & Language, 1974.

Within the "Ideen" section, in a single, square gallery, accessible only through a room of mostly wall-based art, the Art & Language Institute work was installed (fig. 2). Signage at the gallery entrance listed ten names as responsible: Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin, Ian Burn, Harold Hurrell, Joseph Kosuth, Philip Pilkington, Mel Ramsden and David Rushton. Each artist had published in the journal *Art-Language*, at the time the major production of the entity Art & Language. In the gallery were sited four square plinths with two standard, grey-coloured, lockable Kardex filing cabinets<sup>19</sup> on each plinth, the four plinths located equidistant from each other and from the walls (fig. 3). Each cabinet was placed at a standard reading height, each cabinet holding six file drawers, the drawer end of the cabinets alternately facing opposite

ends of the plinths. The drawers bore alphanumeric reference labels (or citations) and short titles indicating their contents. The square room, combined with the disposition and dimensions of the cabinets, made for an elegant, symmetrical display, echoed by the symmetrical format of a spread of photostats that covered the four walls with each typewritten and enlarged sheet containing a series of alphanumeric references separated into three categories. The photographic documentation of the installation shows another element—a stack of newsprint posters casually laid across the top of one of the cabinets (fig. 4).

An invitation to examine the file drawers was not explicit and the relations between the photostats and the filed contents were unclear. If slid out, the drawers encased pages in transparent plastic envelopes layered upon each other in a series of overlapping, shingle-like steps (fig. 5). The top drawer of each cabinet was labeled "Key and Index," (fig. 6) and, if fully opened with the leaves of plastic envelopes parted, the following text could be read:

#### Key

'(+)' suggests that the document or document section(s) at the top is compatible with the ones cited below it. The string following this symbol is interpreted as indicating 'history' which instantiates the possibilities inherent or implied by the documents cited below it. '(-)' suggests that the document or document section(s) at the top is incompatible, does not instantiate the ones cited below it.

'(T)' suggests that the documents below are in a different space, involve non-commensurable points of reference with respect to the documents cited at the top i.e. where '(+)' and '(-)' indicate/represent transformation in space (ethical, logical, etc.) '(T)' indicates transformations of (logical, ethical) space.<sup>20</sup>

If the spectator comprehended this set of distinctions regarding compatibility-relations, the function of the photostats may have been a bit clearer, for their three categories corresponded to the "Key" and its "(+)," "(-)" and "(T)" groupings while the photostats' alphanumeric citations were arranged in the order listed on the drawer labels. Filing down the drawer past the "Key," an "Index" file listed 107 titles giving the alphanumeric references that provided access to drawer contents and photostated relations. (For a transcription of the "Index," see the "Appendix 1.") If, by following the "Index"—or by simply opening up other drawers and separating their leaves—the visitors sought out the contents, they would find essays and writings under the titles given in the

"Index" file. The majority of the texts, some unpublished, were written by Art & Language Institute members, while those from outside the group had appeared in *Art-Language* or in other journals associated with the group.<sup>21</sup> The dates of composition and/or publication of the texts marked the "survey" dates indicated in the catalogue entry: 1968 to 1972.

Picking up the poster, one side was labeled, *Alternate Map for Documenta (Based on Citation A)*, and presented a grid-matrix of reference marks and the "(+)," "(-)" and "(T)" symbols which, in graphic form, reproduced the photostat compatibility-relations for the first 86 citations in the index (fig. 7).<sup>22</sup> Below the grid was a shortened version of the "Key" distinctions given above. Flipping the poster over, there was a history of the group given amid discussions of indexing using a dense language culled from Anglo-American analytic philosophy and information theory (fig. 8). (These texts were indexed in the cabinets and photostats as well.) The lead text, under the title *Documenta Memorandum (Indexing)*, begins: "Indexing problems are quite interesting. They are coincident with the difficulties encountered in mapping the space in which our conversation takes place." The text goes on to claim: "What we've been concerned with is a method of indexing in which we can sort out some modalities associated with what we learn from one another," and indirectly includes a suggestion to "Consider figuring out something for yourself."

After describing problems regarding "formal and structural properties of these items," the text states, "But the index itself can be used," and this promises that amid the arcane terminology and quasi-analytical distinctions, some address to index functioning and procedure might occur. At one point, summing up the reasons for indexing and the possibilities these might serve, the artists allege a priority: "It is appropriate to consider the index/map as permitting certain kinds of idiomatic talk. What we want to do is to search the 'work' we can get hold of in such a way that some of the modalities in the conversation might be revealed." In these terms, the work was *by* and *for* the Art & Language Institute and represented a type of therapeutic or logofeedback device for their "conversation." To whom and when the revelation of its significance might take place was not indicated except in the implication that the group would continue its searching and talking. However, if the itinerant spectator had delved this far, the notion that



some sort of participation on his/her part was called for may have occurred. Even so, in reference to the tools provided, the form or procedure for participation was all but transparent.

Thus the "survey" amounted to a presentation of Art & Language-associated texts, a system for categorizing them, and some finding-aids obliquely describing the system used and the items categorized. This is the first of several works by Art & Language from 1972 to 1974 which have come to be called indexes, this one now known as the *Documenta Index* or *Index 01*.<sup>23</sup> Though the description just given is prolix and conditional, a briefer, more assuming one would tend to understate the requisite strangeness and complexity of the work. I say requisite because both the *Index*'s relations with Art & Language's already complex textual "conversation" and its incompatibility with other works of art were the result of circumstances understood and programmed into the work by the group. The strangeness was calculated and foregrounded through the density of the textual accompaniment, while the physical characteristics of the *Index* cabinets, files and installation continued this alienating atmosphere. Furthermore, the isolation of the work from others was a precondition of its design, the formality of its presentation unprecedented in "Ideen" and the strictness of its ordering representing an overt attempt to differentiate the Art & Language Institute from the rest of its seemingly kindred conceptual partners. The *Index* was also--and above all--a move to consolidate a new position for the group in the conceptual art movement and in the contemporary art world.

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The preceding unqualified statements represent the main claims I will further adumbrate and argue concerning the Art & Language Institute and the *Index*, but I do not want to leave the question of the "Documenta 5" viewing-public quite yet. In order to better understand the context for the public and to assess some claims previously made for the *Index* and for Art & Language, let us linger in the Museum Fridericianum installation awhile. One of the major attributes of the systematic quality of the *Index* was that of an order--imposed and opaque--which both (or alternately) calculated a rational appearance and suggested levels of difficulty and

impenetrability to its audience. The first difficulty would have to be the obstacle (for the viewer) of putting together the pieces into a system comprehending that order. The visual quality of symmetry and the correspondence of citations between file drawers and photostats reproduced the signs of an ordering system without permitting access to the function of that system. What position spectators should have taken in relation to the relationally inter-connected parts was never articulated or addressed.

Secondly, the poster and the "Key" and "Index" files, supposedly finding-aids providing access, merely reproduced the system with additional none too helpful information (i.e., the titles given in the "Index" file) or else they 'explained' the system in terms which defied application for the non-Art & Language Institute member. The work could certainly be simply 'looked at' as a rather bizarre amalgam of bureaucratic procedure and conceptual art bafflegab, but was it to be used, admired for its systematic character, or walked away from as another in a series of avant-gardist affronts to the viewing public? What matter the "compatibility" or "space" of these texts, and what was the "conversation" about that the *Index* held such authority? This set of questions conditions all characterization of the *Index*, both as installed art work and as an Art & Language "programme map." The detailing of them—and partial answers to their queries—involves the inter-face between the *Index* and the public, the history of Art & Language and the matters of where the art came from and what its language signified.

In one of his many texts regarding the group, Art & Language 'court scribe' Charles Harrison stated that the project of conceptual art manifest in the *Index* was "the pursuit . . . of a public which was intellectually and not just culturally franchised."<sup>24</sup> In less general terms, Harrison claims that the spectator was expected to read the material in the drawers and, as the perpetrators of the *Index* had done, to compare and think about the writings and the relations they might have with each other and with notions of art and the art world. Now this is a plausible account when qualified by Harrison's admission that "the public imagined within Art & Language was not a mere extension of some collective self-image, neither was it the public

conceived as a form of everyman,"<sup>25</sup> but his equivocation about the 'public' is a sort of non-identification of the circumstances of the presentation of the *Index*.

Harrison skips the pragmatics of persuading gallery-goers to become the searching and reading public he projects. After all, even if one figured out the procedure, the time involved in participation would preclude viewing the rest of "Documenta 5." The *Index*, also, in the context of an international exhibition frequented mainly by German-language speakers, addressed its public in an idiosyncratic, specialized English. The idiosyncratic aspect of Art & Language's language is hinted at in the poster texts' mentions of "our conversation," "idiomatic talk" and "what we learn from one another"—phrases which suggest that the group's identity, verbal habits and inter-relations preceded the accessibility of its writings. Not only were linguistic differences and conceptual competences not addressed by the group but the public appearance of impenetrability—forgiven by Harrison since "Art & Language was no freer than any other exhibitor from the urge to upstage"<sup>26</sup>—belied notions of public participation, stressing instead how ordered the presentation could be.

This tension between the work as a compilation of relations within the Art & Language Institute and the hints that these relations might be accessible to the spectator remains a major problem. Still, the call for uninitiated accessibility is virtually excused from almost all avant garde production, and Art & Language is no exception.<sup>27</sup> It remains important, however, how Harrison's more fully developed notion of a public for the *Index* is framed as resulting from:

a form of coincidence between attention to the materials of presentation and attention to the form of the work, such that neither was in the end left as the remainder of the other. The coincidence was largely achieved in part by conceiving of the spectator as a reader and potential interlocutor—and thus as the type of an engaged and intellectually versatile public quite distinct both from that constituency of detached and self-sufficient beholders which was predicated in mainstream Modernist art and theory, and from that constituency of professional and knowing curators which had identified itself with Minimalism.<sup>28</sup>

This passage, like much of Harrison's writing, possesses a clarity in diction while it obfuscates his intended arguments and down-plays his sarcasm. While the first part compliments Art & Language on the elegance and neat fit of the *Index* to their intentions, the next portion defies the

particulars of the situation. A discriminating audience was "conceived" to be able to negotiate the system of the *Index* and capable of joining the Institute's "conversation," but it would only have been polite to tell them so at the time. The various parts of the *Index* were in no way inviting or usefully instructive.<sup>29</sup> Harrison implies a form of participation by the public as "interlocutors," yet the *Index* installation stood mute, isolate and complete unto itself, demanding strenuous decipherment rather than "intellectually versatile" dialogue, if it was really designed to be user-friendly at all.

Harrison's further claim about the beholder and the "knowing curators" is part of his overall aim to represent conceptual art--as practiced by Art & Language most notably--under the theme of "the Suppression of the Beholder."<sup>30</sup> The quotes I use come from a book Harrison published in 1991 entitled *Essays on Art & Language*. His monograph attempts an overview of the group in the light of a convoluted and particular view of modernism that involves the "the Suppression of the Beholder" as an antidote to the formalism of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. The centre of this argument as it applies to the *Index* is that Art & Language had people read rather than look at art work, "with the intention not so much of frustrating the beholder's activity as displacing it with intellectual speculation and pre-empting it with irony."<sup>31</sup> The "knowing curators" are those who turned the initial constestation of formalism (or "abstractionism" as Harrison calls it) into minimalism's "gallery-led sense of epoch--philosophically primitive if commercially astute."<sup>32</sup> These ideas of an inchoate public and an opportunistic *cognoscenti* are linked for Harrison, since he views Art & Language as supreme agents contesting the New York-based domination of art theory in the sixties and seventies.

"Abstractionism" arose in New York's nexus of commercial galleries and compliant artists under the by now familiar conditions of American economic, cultural and political hegemony, and Harrison sees the beholder as epitomizing the American imperialist in the scopic regime. The idea of an "intellectually and not just culturally franchised" public of the *Index* is brought in to oppose the "properly positioned and solitary spectator"<sup>33</sup> of American art theory in a pitched battle which does not take into account the composition or competence of the specific audience

which encountered the *Index*. While it is not my intention to re-constitute the public of "Documenta 5" as it encountered the work, it is surely dubious to claim that the *Index* found a specific audience based upon a theoretical position regarding the functioning of the post-war art world. Harrison may qualify his account by saying that the Art & Language Institute project "sought" or "conceived" rather than located a public, but this turns the onus back onto the group's intentions, which, as illustrated in the *Index* installation and poster texts, gave no quarter to notions of accommodating any but the most *au courant* participant. (The best candidates being actually a "constituency of professional and knowing curators" aware of Art & Language Institute texts.) Even then, the work enabled the agent to participate on the *Index*'s terms alone, following the order prescribed in the apparatus, emphasizing that order as a hermetic system reflecting the Art & Language Institute's reading and enforcing protocols of participation on that basis.

Harrison's *Essays on Art & Language* is a revisionary text, aiming above all to enhance the reputations of the individuals who currently make up the group: Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden, and Harrison himself as "General Editor." In contrast to Harrison, it is the contradictory aspect of the *Index* which concerns me, for, in appearing to organize access to their writings, the group confounded that access and adopted an autocratic position in relation to any possible community of readers--something the group historian mythologizes into a claim of precedence. Yet precedence, except in the most impacted art historical texts, does not offer adequacy of explanation for why a certain work or set of works was produced. In raising this criterion, I follow Baldwin, Harrison and Ramsden, for they, in 1981, reformulated the question of causality in relation to art works, coming up with the following interrogation: "What must the world be (or have been) for this stuff to be (or have been) *produced*?"<sup>34</sup> It is this question, above all, that I wish to put to the *Index* and the circumstances under which it was produced and received. That the territory outlined contains the very areas Harrison treats--the hegemony of New York art, the intransigent English art world, the role of reading and looking, the projections of Art & Language, the formation of the group itself, the use of militant irony in conceptual art--does not mean that his interpretation is adequate. Leaving aside claims of precedence, I intend to

examine Art & Language as both a group developing towards a particular identity and as part of conceptualism--a movement arising from dissatisfaction with the art of the mid-sixties but also an artistic phenomenon implicated in the world that spawned it. The aim is not to propose an alternate theoretical position to Harrison; rather, I wish to add some historical understanding to his critical part in Art & Language.

Harrison has, tirelessly, represented Art & Language when few others were concerned about the work they have done, but, like the group itself in 1972, his partisanship has occluded his critical and historical vision. That is, Harrison avoids the complications of Art & Language's relations with each other and with the world it maneuvered within, leaving out specifics and imposing a theoretical position in place of an adequate recognition of Art & Language's place in the art world. As Michael Archer mockingly wrote in a review of *Essays on Art & Language*:

All this simplification makes it easier of course. There are no aporias, no cul de sacs; A[rt] & L[anguage] is the road block placed four-square across Greenberg's modernist highway.<sup>35</sup>

Against this method of road-blocking, I want to open up the questions begged by the conditions prompting the formation of the group, the formulation of its trademark "conversation" and its projection of a community concomitant with the collaborative exercise of the Art & Language Institute. It seems to me that there are many "aporias" and "cul de sacs" to explore, ones that lead to doubts regarding the conclusion--Harrison again--that "the *Index* was the summary work of conceptual art."<sup>36</sup> These paths lead instead towards the conclusion that the *Index* stands as a symptomatic sign of conceptual art's predicament and fate since the seventies. It is not only that the *Index* was an imposing system and a difficult work, but that the space it "mapped" was a territory of pitfalls, refusals and resistances that points to the difficulties of mounting critique in the form of art. To continue the metaphor for the motoring public, that sign would read, "Obstruction Ahead."

## Notes

1. See Harald Szeemann, et al., *Documenta 5* (Kassel: Documenta, 1972). The exhibition ran from June 30 to October 8, 1972. The English translation is the official one as reprinted in the exhibition announcement illustrated in Theo Kneubühler, "Konzept der 'documenta 5'," *Werk* 58:6 (June 1971), 421.
2. By contrast, "Documenta IV," organized by Arthur Bode and presented in 1968, had stuck quite strictly to formal categories, showing almost exclusively the paintings and sculpture associated with high abstraction and pop art. The only substantial deviation was the inclusion of some minimal art and kinetic works shown under the generic rubric "Environments." See *Documenta IV* (Kassel: Documenta, 1968), 3 volumes.
3. The full citation is Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1971: a cross-reference book of information on some esthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmented text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focused on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mentions of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art, occurring now in the Americas, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with occasional political overtones)*, edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard (New York: Praeger, 1973).
4. These additions are all given entries in the *Oxford Dictionary of Art*, Ian Chilvers and Harold Osborne, eds. (Oxford University Press, 1988).
5. The near-ubiquitous thought of Marshall McLuhan can be seen in this *mélange*, but also significant in the German context was the work of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer and their followers, Jürgen Habermas and Hans-Magnus Enzensberger. For example, although not altogether in line with Frankfurt School thinking, the overall theoretical text opening the "Documenta 5" catalogue borrows their terminology in the title, "Kritische Theorie des ästhetischen Gegenstandes," *Documenta 5*, section 1.
6. Georg Jappe, "What is Reality: The Theme of Documenta 5," *Studio International* 182 (July/August 1971), 2.
7. Jappe, 2.
8. See the groupings in the *Documenta 5* catalogue: Jean-Christophe Ammann, "Realismus," section 15; Harald Szeemann, "Individuelle Mythologien: Selbstdarstellung-Prozesse," section 16; Konrad Fischer and Klaus Honnert, "Ideen," section 17. The accounting of the participants in the "Ideen" section includes the ten members of the Art & Language Institute listed in note #19.
9. Previous large-scale exhibitions of conceptual art, such as "When Attitudes Become Form" (Kunsthalle Bern and Institute of Contemporary Art, Bern and London, 1969) or "557,087" (Seattle Art Museum, 1969), displayed examples of conceptualism as an oddity unto themselves. The 'questioning' of conceptualism was assumed in these cases, as if actual comparison or reference to 'fine art' would contaminate their stature.
10. Joseph Kosuth, "1975," in Gabriele Guercio, ed., *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings 1966-1990* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 130. First published in *The Fox* 1:2 (1975).
11. In the introductory essay to "Ideen," Klaus Honnert and Gisela Kaminski do not mention Long, Martin or Ryman, preferring to meander around the origins and development of conceptual art. See *Documenta 5*, section 17: 1-9. Fischer did not contribute a text, but there is a loose correlation of artists in "Ideen" not mentioned by Honnert and those exhibited by Fischer in his Düsseldorf gallery and in museum shows he curated. Among those: Buren, Ryman and Long, Hamish Fulton, Brice Marden, Blinky Palermo. This may account for a split in curatorial criteria, with Fischer's preference running to more traditional sorts of objects. See the listing of Fischer's exhibits in, "Konrad Fischer Interviewed by Georg Jappe," *Studio International* 181 (February 1971), 68.
12. Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* V:10 (Summer 1967), 80. One might also cite Lawrence Weiner's dictum in his 1968 *Statements*: "1. The artist may construct the piece. 2. The piece may be fabricated. 3. The piece need not be built. Each being equal and consistent with the intent of the artist the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership." Quoted in *Documenta 5*, 17:5.

13. Daniel Buren, "Mise en garde," *Konzeption/Conception* (Leverkuzen: Städtisches Museum, 1969), unpaginated. Reprinted in facsimile in Christian Schlatter, *Art Conceptuel Formes conceptuel/Conceptual Art Conceptual Forms* (Paris: Galerie 1900/2000, 1990), 413. Emphasis in original.
14. Daniel Buren, "Exposition d'une exposition," *Documenta 5*, 17:29.
15. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 105-143. This is a revised version of the text commissioned for *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective* (Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1989), 41-50.
16. Though the group's history will be discussed later, it is useful to indicate the various names associated with the group. The Art & Language Press was the publisher of most of the group's texts, including the journal *Art-Language*, which they edited. In exhibitions from 1969 to 1972, work was usually presented under the group name Art & Language, or sometimes, Art-Language, with the individual contributions or collaborations named. The Art & Language Institute was a new name for the group, used during 1972, most notably at "Documenta 5." For general purposes, I shall refer to them as Art & Language, using only Art & Language Institute when discussing events and exhibitions related to the 1972 grouping. The use of other nominations by quoted authors and institutions will retain their nominations, and *Art-Language* will always refer to the journal and its contents.
17. "Introduction," *Art-Language*, I:1 (May, 1969), 10.
18. See Art & Language, *Documenta Memorandum (Indexing)*, offset poster issued by Paul Maenz, Cologne, 1972. Texts reprinted in *The New Art* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1972), 16-19.
19. Such a filing system is used primarily for record-keeping in such tasks as inventory control, for it provides a more compact and easily accessible storage system than catalogue cards or hanging files. (For example, some years ago, the author worked as a library assistant using a Kardex system to manage serials and legal decisions in a university law library.)
20. "Key," as transcribed by the author, Zürich, Switzerland, April, 1992. For more information, see "Appendix A."
21. Several articles by Art & Language Institute members had appeared in *Studio International*, where Art & Language member Charles Harrison had worked as Assistant Editor. Essays from *Analytical Art*, a student journal edited in part by Art & Language Institute members Philip Pilkington and David Rushton, were also included. See "Appendix A."
22. The number of citations here is some 21 short of the total number of citations of indexed material, but it does correspond to the contents of the first six cabinets. Suggestions for this shortfall include a late expansion of the number of texts to provide two more cabinets worth, or may indicate that work on the compatibility-relations was not complete by the time the poster went to press.
23. These names are given in Charles Harrison, "Indexes and other Figures," in *Essays on Art & Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 61. (Hereafter cited as Harrison, 1991.) For the purposes of this paper, the work will be called the *Index* or the *Documenta Index*. As reformed after 1975, the group continued (and continues) to occasionally preface titles of their paintings with the word index. For examples, see *Art & Language: The Paintings* (Brussels: Société des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1982), and, for an account of the 1991 series, "Index (Now They Are)," Charles Harrison, "The Critic's Part," *Kunst und Museenjournal* 3:4 (1992), 13-17.
24. Harrison, 1991, 61.
25. Harrison, 1991, 81.
26. Harrison, 1991, 67.
27. As Terry Atkinson put it in 1990: "As I recall, in thinking about the time, about the emergence of conceptual art, we didn't worry at all about a public, or 'publics', in any explicit sense of talking about a concept of 'the public' or about 'a set of publics'. But we did worry about how we could get a hearing." See, *An Evening Forum at the Vancouver Art Gallery With Terry Atkinson, Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace and Lawrence Weiner* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1990), 16. (Hereafter cited as *An Evening*).



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28. Harrison, 1991, 67.
29. It should be added that for *Index 05*, in 1973, Art & Language provided instructions for using the index. See the card reproduced in Harrison, 1991, 80.
30. The second chapter of Harrison's *Essays on Art & Language* is sub-titled "Conceptual Art and the Suppression of the Beholder," Harrison, 1991, 29.
31. Harrison, 1991, 56.
32. Harrison 1991, 40.
33. Harrison, 1991, 32.
34. Art & Language, "Manet's *Olympia* and Contradiction: A Reply to T.J. Clark and Peter Wollen," in *Manner<sup>SM</sup>: A Theory of Culture* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1982), 24.
35. Michael Archer, "Hello, Terry Speaking," *Art Monthly* 146 (May 1991), 8. Many of the specifics involved in the history of Art & Language were previously discussed in Charles Harrison and Fred Orton, *A Provisional History of Art & Language* (Paris: Eric Fabre, 1982). (Hereafter cited as Harrison and Orton.) This is a less ambitious, but still problematic history of Art & Language, and provided a good deal of the information used in this paper. In the present context it is also significant that in the *Provisional History* and in the bulk of the discussion of the *Index* in *Essays on Art & Language*, the emphasis is on the importance of the *Index* for the organization of Art & Language. The passages I have quoted above represent the only occasions when a concept of a public is raised. Such a concept does not merit mention at all in the *Provisional History*.
36. Harrison, 1991, 75.

## CHAPTER TWO. GROUP FORMATION

*The fog bank is a macroscopic aggregate. There is no theoretical primacy here for the macroscopic aspect. That is, its importance or unimportance is shown up by raising and answering internal questions to the framework.*

*There is no rhapsody here.*

Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, *Air-conditioning Show / Air Show / Frameworks* 1966-67.

The years of the *Index* (1968 to 1972) delimit the period following the formation of the Art & Language Press at Coventry, England in May 1968 up to the opening of "Documenta 5" in June 1972. Founding members, as much as formation announced a corporate identity, were Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell. And, though all had produced art as individuals, members had worked and exhibited together in various forms of collaboration since 1964. Thus, although Art & Language marked a different level of involvement and identification for the personnel, there were infra-group precedents for its constitution. Proto-Art & Language also had a geographically important identification with the Coventry School of Art, where Atkinson and Bainbridge—and later Baldwin—taught. The importance of the art college connection is not just a meeting point but lies in the fact that the members represented part of the first wave of working-class born individuals to attend and become employed by post-secondary institutions such as art colleges.<sup>1</sup> Attitudes to art education in the period also have importance to the development of the group.

As well, as seen in the *Index*, there is a didactic component inherent in Art & Language, redolent of their pedagogical locus and employ. In a broad sense, their subsequent work represented a significant re-education that speaks of the frustrations and lacunae they experienced in their coming to art practice. Questions of working-class artists and British art colleges may appear as distant from the machinations of the *Index* at "Documenta 5" as the provincial city of Coventry is from the geography of Kassel and the art world centres of Paris, New York and even London. Yet, it is that very distance—and the placement of the formation of Art & Language in Great Britain—that conditioned the writings contained in the *Index* and the systematic aspect of its organization. The circumstances of group formation were critical to the

indexing process, for Art & Language's privileging of "conversation" and text was based in its members understanding of talking and writing as a means of addressing the problems of art practice. If we are to grasp their address to practice, we need to look at the social and political conditions effecting their gathering together as a group in Coventry in 1968.

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The four founding members of Art & Language grew up and came to art practice in post-war Great Britain amid the process of reconstruction and social re-positioning that brought the welfare state, a consumer society and significant alterations in cultural forms and communities. Having come through the war due in part to the 'pull together' pluckishness of Churchillian urging and the promises of "cradle to the grave" universal social programmes contained in the 1942 Beveridge Report,<sup>2</sup> the country had, in many ways, re-drafted its social contract on a model of "consensus" in place of political conflict.<sup>3</sup> Institutional reaction ranged from the establishment of the National Health Service to the nationalization of coal and steel industries, along with an expansion of educational access and the sort of social reforms represented by relaxations of legal restrictions on sexual practices, gambling and censorship.<sup>4</sup> Alternating Labour and Conservative governments, up to Margaret Thatcher in 1979, kept up such policies, with the Conservatives recognizing a mixed economy and promoting reform of social institutions while Labour pushed for increased industrial development and technological change in place of greater worker control over production.<sup>5</sup>

With occasional announcements of the "affluent society" by the Conservatives and the coming of a "classless society" from Labour, the notion of national unity rather than class struggle and regulation headed the political agenda. The 1957 declaration of Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan that, "most of our people have never had it so good,"<sup>6</sup> was probably true at the time, but this claim followed almost a decade of war-time footing followed by another decade of post-war rationing and privation which prolonged the overall social discipline of the war (minus falling bombs and death tolls). "Consensus" was the political by-word for this discipline, but

geographical and class disparities continued in Britain. Though national goals for near-complete employment were kept until 1970, the British economy was in the midst of re-structuring from which it has never recovered. With independence to India and other colonies, and with the Marshall Plan bolstering European reconstruction while Great Britain had to deal with American loan agreements and repayments, the economic and political power of the former-Empire slipped inexorably towards the United States.<sup>7</sup> Though the prerogative of the "special relationship" sustained Great Britain's posture as a diplomatic world power, military and technological agreements effectively made the United Kingdom a client-state of American foreign and trade policies. Popular culture, in the form of music, publications, television and films, also brought increased penetration of American products and an awareness of the 'Americanization' of British life.<sup>8</sup>

Former colonial supply relationships were replaced by international competition with American and European firms, while the colonial-based provision of raw materials was mainly re-routed to North American (and later Asian) production. As Europe re-grouped into an economic community, fantasies of national trade power and French recalcitrance isolated Great Britain from the continent; embroiling the nation in questions of economic community effects on sovereignty and trade union rights.<sup>9</sup> The changing economic situation meant particular problems for Northern England (and Scotland) where heavy (and heavily unionized) industries such as shipbuilding, coal-mining and steel production provided work for large groups of skilled and unskilled labourers, on-site trained engineers and managers. The decline of heavy industry was replaced by a concentration on more technically demanding industries such as petrochemicals, electronics and consumer durables, most of which were located in the South outside London or in the burgeoning conurbation of the West Midlands, centred on Birmingham and Coventry.

There was a two-fold movement in this economic restructuring from heavy, labour-intensive to lighter, consumer-supply industry. It was first of all a change in markets. British heavy industry was locked into the model of the nineteenth-century 'workshop of the world' approach which meant that Brits fabricated heavy machinery and industrial goods to sell abroad-

-most likely to colonial clients. With that market diminished, the emphasis was placed on providing housing, automobiles, refrigerators, televisions and central heating primarily for a British market--a move seeking to expand consumer spending across previous class boundaries.<sup>10</sup> Beyond that, there was a call for greater research and development so that British science and technology could produce new products for international competition.

Secondly, new types of 'post-industrial' employment also required literate and trainable workers capable of undertaking clerical, administrative and service-oriented tasks in place of the piecework and repetitive physical labour of industrial production. As well, the production of consumer goods, from durables to ephemera, required cadres of professional engineers, industrial designers, graphic artists and trained management staff in addition to demanding greater knowledge of machinery and industrial process on the factory floor. As part of this move, education became the main conduit for social mobility in the Britain of the fifties and sixties, with students staying longer in secondary schools and with more working-class youths moving into post-secondary education.<sup>11</sup>

Concurrent with the decline of Northern industry, the social and geographical mobility afforded by increased education combined with the necessity of seeking employment in other areas to decimate Northern working-class communities. As Richard Hoggart wrote in 1961:

In my childhood a man belonged to a district and if his job came to an end he--being probably a general labourer--looked for another job in another works in the same area. . . . Today his son is likely to pack his bags and move where new work and bigger money are to be found--to the Midlands and the complex of motor-car industries; or to the outskirts of London and the new electronics factories. . . . But the old 'general labourer' seems likely to be less and less in demand: training of some kind is more and more needed.<sup>12</sup>

Though this break-up of long-standing patterns of working-class life was motivated by economic need, its cultural effects were also considerable.

Again, Hoggart offers a pertinent analysis. In the 1957 *The Uses of Literacy*, he presented an series of case-studies of the effects of mass media and post-war class adaptation on working-

class culture. Though in many ways impressionistic and nostalgic, the book possesses an acute account of a new figure in British culture: the working-class "scholarship boy."

Drawing on his own experience as a university graduate of working-class origin, Hoggart described the predicament faced by those individuals 'rising' out of the working-class through state-sponsored education:

This kind of person . . . belongs now to no class, usually not even to what is called, loosely enough, the 'classless intelligentsia'. He cannot face squarely his own working-class, for that . . . would require a greater command in facing himself than he is capable of. . . . [H]e feels uncertain or angry inside when he realizes that . . . a hundred habits of speech and manners can 'give him away' daily. . . . He cannot go back; with one part of himself he does not want to go back to a homeliness which was often so very narrow; with another part he longs for the membership he has lost.<sup>13</sup>

While a crude analysis would link up Hoggart's "scholarship boy" with the Art & Language collaboration—as if the group was some off-shoot of class solidarity—I do not want to be so prescriptive. What Hoggart describes, however, fits with some aspects of Art & Language's conditions of formation and their own class predicament.

As said earlier, all the founding members had come from the working-class, with Atkinson, Bainbridge and Hurrell growing up in the Northern coal-mining region of Yorkshire. Atkinson and Hurrell received scholarships for post-secondary education, both migrating to London for their studies. Bainbridge, meanwhile, paid for his education at London's St. Martin's College of Art out of savings from working in a Northern steel mill. After finishing their education, all three re-located for employment to cities other than their birthplace, with Hurrell moving to Hull while Atkinson and Bainbridge became art teachers amid "the complex of motor-car industries" in Coventry.<sup>14</sup> (Baldwin was more local in hailing from Banbury, Oxfordshire, just south of the Midlands.) They thus follow Hoggart's type of inner migration in geographical terms, for, in becoming educated, they did lose ties to their communities, yet they also, in becoming educated as artists, became displaced from "narrow" working-class culture.

Whether they suffered the identity problems Hoggart described is less easy to determine. Surely by becoming artists they moved outside of the laboring occupations, but the position of artist (and art teacher) was not fully coded into a professional class model. As an English art

student and an art school lecturer wrote together in 1969, "the traditional set of beliefs about the 'Artist' is still powerful. According to this philosophy . . . creative people are an elite set apart by their mysterious inner fire. While it is decent of society to provide somewhere for them to go--the art college--all they want to do there is burn away in peace."<sup>15</sup> If this type of attitude--often shared by artists themselves--was so persistent, then proto-Art & Language personnel were asylum-seekers who had isolated themselves from their 'roots' and joined the creative elite. Yet the terms of that elite was never independent of class origin in Britain, nor had art been highly regarded historically outside of an upper- and upper-middle class, educated client-base.

Nevertheless, as Harrison and Orton noted of the Art & Language founders:

They, had not, however, internalized a concept of High Art such as would supplant their original class loyalties and tell them what to do next. Bainbridge and Hurrell in particular preserved an understanding of practice, of 'technique' and 'technology' more compatible with the competences of the industrial working-class than with the idealizations of a would-be modernized liberal culture. . . . Atkinson [had a] more successful adjustment to Modernized Culture. On the other hand, his . . . collaboration with Hurrell and Bainbridge, and subsequently with Baldwin testified to the persistence of his capacity for ironic and critical reflection upon that culture and its subsequent idealizations.<sup>16</sup>

Though the idea of a clear discontinuity between "class loyalties" and "Modernized Culture" is perhaps untenable, the distinctions of "High Art" from "'technique' and 'technology,'" and "ironic and critical reflection" from "adjustment" is useful in understanding how Art & Language's position and work distinguished itself from other British art. Their work may not have spoken its working class origins but it did speak of the class displacement resident in their social and geographic mobility.

Certainly Bainbridge had held "class loyalties" as paramount in the past, becoming a union steward and Communist Party member during his time in a steel works where "practice" was more than a class competence. Hurrell's choice to study at the Institute for Education rather than continue at an art college certainly shows a distance from "High Art." Atkinson's "critical reflection" lead him to leave the Slade School of Fine Art early, without a diploma, and give up painting. Even Baldwin, whom Harrison and Orton describe as "the most clearly ambitious in respect of a career in Fine Art,"<sup>17</sup> worked in a flour mill for some time after being dismissed from

Coventry without a diploma after an incident involving a missed appointment with a department head.<sup>18</sup> These may represent youthful positions or student hijinks that "adjustment" could alter, yet there is also present a palpable antagonism to the class system and its perpetuation in the art world.

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The distinction of "High Art" from "'technique' and 'technology'" is also revealing of how art was influenced by contemporary British debates about technology, class and culture. In terms of that debate, with the coming to power of Labour and Harold Wilson in 1964, the call for Britain to engage and profit upon the "scientific revolution" was a major platform for government action.

Wilson wrote that:

Our task is four-fold:

First, we must produce more scientists.

Secondly, having produced them we must be a great deal more successful in keeping them in this country.

Thirdly, having trained them and kept them here, we must make intelligent use of them when they are trained than we do with those we have got.

Fourthly, we must organize British industry so that it applies the results of scientific research much more productively to our national production effort.<sup>19</sup>

While Wilson's rhetoric recalls Kennedy's claiming of a "new frontier" and similar 'post-industrial' economic challenges, it is important to note how this is framed as a national catch-up, as an industrial necessity rather than a "reach for the stars" appeal. Wilson is announcing the need for Britain to "produce" scientists as one would produce a commodity, and the emphasis on a 'brain-drain' is defensive of British interests foremost, and, secondly, is an assault on the inertia of the class-based financial and industrial hierarchy of the British economy.<sup>20</sup> While the notion of scientific progress as linked to social change is not unique, what Wilson proposed was that the model of scientific rationalism was suitable for realigning the distribution of income through technocratic meritocracy. In effect, as Wilson proclaimed: "There will be no room in Britain for the easy going attitude of a less turbulent age. . . . the world does not owe us a living: we have to earn it. That is why the scientific revolution will be a revolution of all the people."<sup>21</sup>



Wilson's programme is culturally significant for its appropriation of the "two cultures" model presented by C.P. Snow in the late-fifties. Snow--at the time a middle-ranking civil servant but later Deputy Minister for Science and Technology in Wilson's government--had, in "The Two Cultures," a lecture delivered at Cambridge in 1959, described how the scientific and humanistic realms of knowledge were virtually ignorant of each other and that the future belonged to the sciences:

The non-scientists have a rooted impression that scientists are shallowly unaware of man's condition. On the other, scientists believe that the literary intellectuals are totally lacking in foresight, peculiarly unconcerned with their brother men, in a deep sense anti-intellectual, anxious to restrict art to the existential moment.<sup>22</sup>

While Snow calls for a reconciliation of these opinions it lies in a condemnation of non-scientists as "Natural Luddites" who criticize industrial progress and scientific research without considering how scientists have improved conditions for the rest of their "brother men." The hope is that, by implementing the imperative to "produce more scientists," the "two cultures" model will become obsolete as "the existential moment" passes into the technocratic future.

Snow echoes standing arguments regarding the privileges of high culture and its criticisms of modern society, but he does so in order to promote not a popular culture but a technocratic one. Though the arts and humanities had received benefits from the welfare state as clients of the post-war Arts Council of Great Britain and the British Council, neither Snow nor Wilson lend them a place in the technocracy. In their zest for a "scientific revolution," the 'soft' culture of fine art was not seen as part of a new social apparatus or of a social or economic use. With regard to the way art was taught and socially placed in the fifties and sixties, technocracy made inroads into art education through the promotion of design. During the period future-Art & Language members were at art college, the art education system was re-oriented around a new National Diploma in Art and Design which brought together previously segregated disciplines.<sup>23</sup> The imposition of national standards re-organized art education with a concentration on academic courses and the encouragement of design education in order to serve consumer-based industries. The academic requirements were meant to inform studio work with a smattering of

liberal education, but studio instruction in traditional media continued business as usual.<sup>24</sup>

While the aim was to bring design and studio work together, the effect was to marginalize the latter, and, though the studio retained its autonomous image, the need to produce a 'use' for art, a goal consistent with the "scientific" and "technocratic" revolutions of Snow and Wilson, brought design—fashion, industrial and graphic—to the foreground as the purpose of art education.

The ascendancy of design as the basis of art education lead Sir Misha Black of the Royal College of Art to claim:

These graduates would . . . be prepared to work as managers and organizers, as entrepreneurs and civil servants, but they might well in fact become supra-artists, not dedicated to the canalization of their talents and understanding within the confines of specialization but able to bring an artist's sensitivity to focus on problems of human relations and the human environment.<sup>25</sup>

In other words, artists could "earn it" by taking a place as visual administrators or representational engineers possessing professional status and social utility. Yet the enthusiasm for such placement at the top was not felt farther down, and Black well knew it. His statement concludes a discussion that briefly raises and dismisses arguments produced during the 1968 student and staff occupation of the Hornsey College of Art in North London.<sup>26</sup> This action, one of several student occupations during the late-sixties, permitted the articulation of concerns over art education and the art system.

While a good deal of the Hornsey critique of the college and the diploma system stressed standard student gripes about exams and credits, other tones were present as well:

Society's sharp new interest in many forms of design has created a violent new careerism in the design arts. . . . This has had immediate repercussions among art students, producing in some ways a kind of counter-revolution against the old image of the inspired misfit. Here, the hard-boiled competitiveness of the neo-capitalist environment outside, its concern with 'image' and 'public relations', in frank commodity fetishism and the cult of flash success—all tend to be reproduced in miniature in today's art college.<sup>27</sup>

Other students move toward a critique of the art world beyond the college:

The gallery system . . . is riddled with the 'you know so-and-so' set of creeping pseudo-intellectuals and public-school drop-outs, all desperately searching for a rich clientele and the mythical jackpot. Yet this is the home of British modern art, this is the world

inhabited by our 'brilliant' young artists. It is a creation of the boss class and their lackeys; it cannot exist without them.<sup>28</sup>

As these statements have it, the artist's role is limited to either fueling consumer fashion as designers or serving the ruling classes as fine artists. In looking for another role, the writers quoted end their tracts with the proposal that "art training constitutes a viable model for the educational revolution . . . [as] an invaluable guarantee against philistinism,"<sup>29</sup> and a call for "the culture of the people, and not the culture of the bourgeois elite."<sup>30</sup> The earlier claim retains the "mysterious inner fire" approach by arguing art against "philistinism," while the latter suggests that a "culture of the people" follows from abandonment of the gallery system.

The Hornsey committee were demanding an open system, "network approach" to their education without seeming to realize that this reproduced the systematic nature of technocracy in a 'alternative' tenor. That the technocratic revolution had put the squeeze on art education's creative indolence seems clear, yet what other values fine art or art education communicated or possessed as an activity do not appear to have been available for the Hornsey contingent. In a situation as dramatic as their occupation of the college, the fact that the occupiers could not define or defend their practice indicates that art practice in Britain had been restricted to a "specialization" and, moreover, that that specialization could not be defended as a social good—either as a benefit or as a commodity.

This reflects a situation described by Peter Fuller as applying across British art:

The post-war Welfare State has invested the artist with no official 'social duty' which he can choose to transform into genuine social responsibility. . . . The Fine Art Tradition has thus become marginalized and peripheralized, and Fine Artists find they have been granted every freedom except the only one without which the others count as nothing: the freedom to act socially.<sup>31</sup>

Fuller pinpoints the question of "freedom" which has bedeviled almost all modern art,<sup>32</sup> yet he also particularizes his argument by looking at the historical shifting position of "Fine Art Tradition" in British culture. In a nutshell, he represents that tradition as emptied out by two processes: the first being the reproductive capacities of advertising and mass media; the second being the adoption of self-referential modernist principles. These two work together to

marginalize the artist, by making art either utilitarian in purpose or by endowing it with the "relative autonomy" of appeal to the intelligentsia.<sup>33</sup> The choice of freedom becomes a matter of serving monopoly capitalism outright in promoting its products, or in selecting a peripheral existence without "social responsibility."

What makes the British situation unique for Fuller, is both the near absence of a cosmopolitan bohemia and the relatively early coming of monopoly capitalism in the late-nineteenth century. Without a bohemian context to exist within, the oppositional qualities of modernism never—or only sporadically—entered British art.<sup>34</sup> "The history of modern art in England—at least until the 1960s—is to a large extent a history of delayed and mediated responses,"<sup>35</sup> is Charles Harrison's version of this situation, and both he and Fuller cite the example of post-war American painting and art theory as crucial to the British art of the last thirty years. What Fuller views as the further emptying out of British tradition to the extent that the social has disappeared, however, Harrison sees as laying the ground for the practice of Art & Language.

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In line with Fuller's idea of the marginalized "Fine Art tradition," ambivalent responses to social change and the experience of consumer society developed in post-war British visual culture. The most influential art movements—the pop art of the Independent Group and its progeny and the formalist "New Generation" sculptors—were closely identified through the use of new cultural materials and references—keyed particularly to the world of advertising and notions of autonomy. Also, these groups had strong institutional affiliations: the Institute of Contemporary Art for the Independent Group, the Royal College of Art for the pop art painters, and St. Martin's College of Art for the sculptors. Proto-Art & Language members had ties with all of these groups. The Independent Group and the "New Generation" represented the success of post-war British art as modernist in style, but, like the state it existed within, the art was dependent upon a "special relationship" with American trends.

The Independent Group's notion of pop art in the fifties embraced the American consumer culture of science fiction and consumer commodities from an outward-looking, research-based—but untheorized—position of acceptance. The group included painter Richard Hamilton, sculptor Eduardo Paolozzi, art critics Lawrence Alloway and Toni Del Rezio, architectural historian Reyner Banham and architects Peter and Alison Smithson.<sup>36</sup> This *mélange* itself is enough for comment because the Independent Group's major function was to pool together a number of perspectives based in respective disciplines. They aimed to present and illustrate the new cultural situation of Britain—as an American client-state, as a consumer society, as a different and permanently altered cultural economy. Even though their attitude was one of catching up with American models and was openly celebratory, if unassuming, of a homogenizing US-based culture industry, the Independent Group also demonstrated how post-war society was not simply scientific progress and consumer durables, but represented as well the promotional media of advertising and the spectacle of consumption and planned obsolescence. The worst that can be said of it is that without analysis, the Independent Group is all too easily categorized as an art-professional group slumming amid what everyone else had to live with and find meaningful.

American culture and influence operated in a different fashion for the so-called "New Generation" sculptors associated with the Advanced Sculpture course at St. Martin's. Their unofficial head but official teacher was Anthony Caro, and what changed Caro's path was his encounter with the American critic Clement Greenberg in 1959.<sup>37</sup> According to one enthusiast, 1960 "was the year Anthony Caro virtually changed the shape of British sculpture,"<sup>38</sup> and Charles Harrison notes that Caro and his students' work studied formalist painting in order to encourage the "relocation of the ontology of sculpture in a psychological world of experiences, feelings and states of mind."<sup>39</sup> By loosening connection to traditional methods of working and to concepts of presenting sculpture, Caro opened up questions of what sculpture was formed of, but with the stipulation that gallery presentation of objects limited the public and material constituents of such work. Exhibition space alone could arouse conditions for art, for without it,

as Caro said of initial reaction to his welded work, "in my courtyard . . . they thought I was making junk, scrap."<sup>40</sup> This is not the place to debate the full substance of such matters, yet the influence of Greenberg and the way *he* saw the British sculpture was crucial to how it developed. When Greenberg declared in a *Studio International* interview from 1967 that "I think certain younger Englishmen are doing the best sculpture in the world today,"<sup>41</sup> he was speaking of St. Martin's graduates such as Philip King, Michael Bolus, Tim Scott and William Tucker. These were the "New Generation" and the critical weight of Greenberg and his disciple Michael Fried lead to the work being shown in New York and London galleries.<sup>42</sup>

It also had other, pertinent qualities. While Caro had welded and painted to get away from the traditional modes of carving and casting, King and Scott were forming brightly coloured fiberglass and plastics, Bolus painting his welded sheets with stripes, Tucker moulding and painting fiberglass tubes. Their work was less architectonic and cohesive than Caro's and carried a candy-coloured, technological sheen and shape (even if the actual working of the material was not technologically complex). It looked progressive, flashy, in tune with London's burgeoning media construct of the "swinging sixties," and, like that term, it signalled the advent of modernization in British culture before it paid its dues to the penetration of Greenbergian concepts of modernism into British art.<sup>43</sup> A turn to what came to known as pop art after the Independent Group will help explain something of the currency of "New Generation" sculpture.

The material produced by Hamilton and Paolozzi for Independent Group displays were didactic, exhibition-intended collages of advertising and imagery from popular magazines, movie billboards, etc. It was not until after the disbanding of the Independent Group—after 1957—that such material showed up in their painting and sculpture.<sup>44</sup> Other painters, such as Peter Blake and Joe Tilson, were creating assemblages using British 'folk art' traditions and popular imagery by the early sixties, but it was another American—R.B. Kitaj—and his influence upon his younger, fellow-students at the Royal College of Art from 1959 to 1962 that lead to the rise of British pop art.<sup>45</sup> What Kitaj brought with him was a knowledge of the work of Robert

Rauchenberg and Jasper Johns in the late fifties, with its assemblage techniques, fragments of language and overall ironic assimilation of abstract expressionism.

Pop painting can be said to deal with a "world of experiences, feelings and states of mind," but most certainly without Greenbergian sanction. Against the sculptors' ethos of formal arrangements artfully stimulating states of mind in the spectator, the pop work is rich with images of sexuality, advertising, travel and other interests of consumerist youth presented in the vein of schoolboy cheek and quirky design. The superficiality of the result had none of the research interests of the Independent Group,<sup>46</sup> nor did it enter into forceful conflict with abstract painting--as Johns and Rauchenberg had in the style-conscious New York art world. Much as the sheen of fiberglass and the simplicity of acrylic disks let loose the rigour and engineered intelligence behind Caro's abstractions, pop painting simply forgot that there was a region to contest in the first place. Like the sculptors, the young painters--Hockney and Richard Smith in particular--were picked up and shown as novelties in New York and London galleries. What British abstract painter Patrick Heron was to call "a kind of cultural imperialism" in reference to Greenberg's privileging of the "New Generation"<sup>47</sup> was happily taken up as a form of client-state, branch-plant art economy by "the world inhabited by our 'brilliant' young artists."

What Heron was complaining about--and what Fuller would later take up--was that this adoption of transatlantic theory meant discarding the genteel conventions of British art for engagement (or mediation by) American standards. However, the indigenous strain Heron was promoting--a lyrical, landscape-based abstraction or Henry Moore-style casting--was dilettantish, anachronistic and gentlemanly; it pandered to the pre-consumer society of country life. American art and art criticism offered two pertinent alternatives to the question of "freedom" and technocracy that put British art at the margins: for Pop, it permitted the re-absorption of advertising into the "Fine Art Tradition"; for the "New Generation," it provided an intellectually sanctioned language of formal analysis to bolster the notion of Advanced Sculpture. It filled the gap of "freedom" with the noise of fashion, advertising and experiments with materials and discourse.

Several factors here are of immediate consequence to Art & Language practice and its formation. First, Atkinson, Bainbridge and Hurrell spent most of their time in London during the rush of excitement that mixed "swinging London" with the promotion of pop art and the "New Generation." Their reactions to the phenomena were promptly ironic. Atkinson adopted a pop-ist style of painting, although works with titles like *Dead Cat on A Runway* (1962) and *Postcard from Ypres* (1963) suggest a rather morbid sort of work.<sup>48</sup> Hurrell, meanwhile was studying cybernetics at the Institute for Education and taught technical classes at St. Martin's. Bainbridge studied at St. Martin's, but the most important work he did there was *Crane* (1965-66), a commission from the Camden Borough Council for a functional crane for use in a playground.<sup>49</sup>

Atkinson, and to a lesser extent Bainbridge, did become involved in the London scene, primarily through a pop-based kinetic and happening group called Fine Artz. This was a collaboration with others which resulted in two examples of work.<sup>50</sup> One was *Action Chair* (1965), a streamline-style chair with reference to the custom car fad; the other, presented as *Miss Misty and the Tri-Cool Data* (1966) at the Birmingham Polytechnic, was a McLuhanesque "projection/sound show" which finished Atkinson and Bainbridge's involvement with the group.<sup>51</sup> It is notable that the *Action Chair* as a performative and functional sculpture exceeds the gallery boundaries of the St. Martin's work while the "projection/sound show," no matter how trendy, invoked pop art within a non-gallery locale. As well, as a collaborative venture, the personality cult of the solo artist was somewhat diminished in Fine Artz, as was the self-promotional games of gallery dealing and exhibition. Still, outside of these variations on the current practice, Fine Artz did not seriously engage the set of concerns assessed by Art & Language.

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Terry Atkinson has given an account of how he began, after quitting Fine Artz, to investigate the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein "as an antidote to . . . the philosophical charlatanism of pop."<sup>52</sup> But Atkinson did not actually read Wittgenstein till just before he left teaching at the Birmingham



College of Art and moved to the Coventry College of Art in 1966. There, on first meeting Michael Baldwin, he discussed Wittgenstein and Robert Morris. While the collocation of an Austro-Anglo linguistic philosopher with a American minimal artist may sound more than serendipitous, let us leave Wittgenstein for the time being and look at how Morris' example operated as an influence over the young Baldwin.

Like Atkinson, Baldwin was a promising painter. He won a "Northern Young Contemporaries" prize in 1966 and spent the money on a trip to New York, using dealer connections to obtain introductions to Morris and several other coming artists who were already prominent as subjects and authors in the art press.<sup>53</sup> Baldwin returned to England and produced performances "clearly related to those organized" by Morris and made paintings echoing Morris' 1965 *Mirror Cubes* but with a "pink-cerise" (almost pop-ist) lacquer atop the mirror surface (figs. 9 and 10).<sup>54</sup> Also, with Robert Smithson as intermediary, Baldwin published a short article in *Arts* magazine in late 1967, entitled "Remarks on Air-Conditioning."<sup>55</sup> The article briefly considered the question of the air-conditioning of a gallery and whether it should be taken into account in determining the parameters of an exhibition. This record for a twenty-one-year-old is indeed "ambitious" but it also displays a precocity able to assimilate the most current trends in New York art.

If "New Generation" sculpture and pop painting were at one remove from New York due to the middleman status of Caro and Kitaj, Baldwin went to the source and, timely enough, acted almost immediately on the example of Morris. The significance of the work and especially the writings of Morris, Dan Graham, Donald Judd and Smithson for proto-Art & Language lies primarily in the example they offered of artists consciously contesting, in writing, the ground staked out by Greenberg. Judd worked as a regular reviewer for *Arts* magazine from 1959 to 65, providing a pithy, descriptive prose which often lead to damning judgments.<sup>56</sup> His 1965 article, "Specific Objects," published in *Arts Yearbook*, constitutes a concise description of three-dimensional "new work" that was "neither painting nor sculpture," but "related, closely or distantly, to one or the other."<sup>57</sup> Since for Greenberg's aesthetic "the unique and proper area of

competence of each art coincided with all that was unique to the nature of its medium,<sup>58</sup> Judd was calculatedly detailing work that violated this precept. In another way, Graham, Morris and Smithson wrote occasional pieces, published in *Arts* and *Artforum*, whose socio-political and quasi-scientific speculations all lead away from the closure of formalist criticism and thus questioned its viability as a taste-making idiom.

Yet it was reading Morris, almost certainly the "Notes On Sculpture" published in *Artforum* in 1966, that lead Atkinson and Baldwin to their first collaborations in 1966-67. These works combine Baldwin's assimilation with that "critical reflection" already present in Atkinson's work. The *Acid Box* (1966) took a painted grey box and the artists' poured sulfuric acid over it; the 'work' lasting for the duration the acid reacted with the paint and wood surface. This process almost paradigmatically realizes Morris' determination that:

the major aesthetic terms . . . exist as unfixed variables that find their specific definition in the particular space and light and physical viewpoint of the spectator. Only one element of the work is immediate: the apprehension of the gestalt. The experience of the work exists in time.<sup>59</sup>

Yet, whereas Morris is using time in the sense of the spectator's somatic relation to the object as sited for a term (an exhibition), the *Acid Box* recorded the time of its interaction and the gestalt was that of the "unfixed variables" determining the temporal and spatial dispersion of the acid and its effects. The issue was not what pattern or experience was elicited from pouring acid on a box, but the potential questioning of Morris' notion that, "Control is necessary if the variables of object, light, space, body, are to function."<sup>60</sup> While the amount and kind of acid could be controlled, and the size of the box, etc., altered, the inclusion of chemical reaction into the mix gently rebuked the totalizing concept of a gestalt and made it unmanageable. Other factors, more discernible and measurable than artistic intention and the physical materials used, were understood as interrupting the transmission of information from the encounter of spectator and material. The residue, in the form of unresolved queries, bit into the minimalist assurance of spatial manipulation and uniform audience reflex. In this case, Morris provided the cue which showed up the lacunae in the position he indicated. The dispute, however, was so dependent

upon Morris' previous formulation that the *Acid Box* represents a belated and pyrrhic victory over Morris' influence.

This belated tendency of the Atkinson/Baldwin collaboration assumed greater emphasis once they began producing theoretical exhibitions--such as *Air-conditioning Show*, *Air Show*, *Temperature Show* (1966/67)--which further problematized minimalist notions of exhibition space by minutely analyzing the conditions of exhibition rather than by siting objects in a space. The products of such speculation were textual, written-out versions of conversation and correspondence between the collaborating artists. Thus, if Smithson chose an airport terminal site and wrote about plans and speculations upon the site and the art selected for positioning on that site,<sup>61</sup> Atkinson and Baldwin responded, not in kind but in kinship, by claiming a mile-square section of air over Oxfordshire and delimiting its characteristics, terminating the airport as site with the finesse of the *Air Show*. The hype of earth art became instantly deflated by analysis of how the responsiveness and qualities of air--but not art--could be calibrated and isolated for consideration. The idea of placing objects in the space determined became redundant as the concentration of thought about the site and the analysis of its qualities preceded the formation or placement of objects.

Bainbridge and Hurrell were exploring similar situations in their 1967 "Hardware Show," yet with less direct connection to minimalism as a model. Rather, these two followed their technical training and cybernetic background as a pretext to publicly question the place of the spectator to the 'work' of art. Hence the *Radio Loop* (1966) ran an electrified wire under the carpet of the gallery and emitted a barely audible but varying wireless response according to where the spectators positioned themselves in relation to the hidden wire. Though cued to audience participation, there was "nothing to see at all" except a rather recondite technical description placed on the wall.<sup>62</sup> This lead--during the Art & Language collaboration--to a number of text-models and sculptural devices which 'tested' audience response as if to publicize and analyze the "psychological worlds" of the "New Generation" by positing a range of responses from the gallery-public in terms of sensitivity, expectation and--importantly--to use concepts of

communications theory in the process. This was anti-aesthetic in that it interrogated art as a productive and expressive enterprise, querying, above all, why individual intervention (as opposed to gallery placement) made any difference to response, presaging ideas of the subsumption of the artist beneath the communicator who could be engineer, automaton or would-be non-artist according to circumstance. Bainbridge and Hurrell became the "supra-artists" of Misha Black, only to turn the onus back onto art exhibition as to why a literally anesthetized public becomes the *topos* of consideration. The public, not the apparatus, became the hardware of their show.

Bainbridge's and Hurrell's set of alienating exercises joined the collaborative texts of Atkinson and Baldwin in positing objects that raised questions about art exhibition and object-status which would fuse into the textual exclusivity of Art & Language after 1969. The four came together casually and it was the viability and not the strict rigour of their interactions that begat the later formation. The college teaching-room and the nearby pub—with the mixture of intense conversation and occasional humour found on both sites—stimulated the projects of these displaced malcontents. Yet the relations here are complex instances of ironic and strategic interpretation and not just tired and drunken blather. In developing their projects, Atkinson and Baldwin, Bainbridge and Hurrell were using methods more suited to the technocracy than to the art world, and they were only following Morris's minimalism or the exhibitionist pretensions of the "New Generation" to a point and then diverging from them. If the existing work or the claims made for it spoke the language of some depth model—formalism for the St. Martin's cadre, phenomenology for the minimalists—then proto-Art & Language probed those depths with an attitude which unpacked notions of depth while also begging the question of the artfulness of the project—both their own and that of their antecedent target.

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In the pre-formation of Art & Language the stress was on outflanking the pictorial and exhibition-based art of Britain with analysis and erudite reduction. Yet the temerity of the project

and its "thinly veiled contempt for the British art establishment"<sup>63</sup> evinced both the lack of appropriate "adjustment" to "High Art" that Harrison and Orton mentioned and the equivocal position of the working-class lad cum artist in the period. Unwilling to join in the scene and unable to work outside it (as if that were possible) they assumed an identity as the system's irritants. They did not resolve questions of how analytical thought related to art or how the artist was positioned in the culture of technology and consumerist fashion: they merely used their antithetical postures in relation to these phenomena as tactical measures to pursue different, perhaps untimely, inquiries into the claims of current practice and the ideologies sustaining it.

Now is the time to bring on the shade of Wittgenstein and his analytical philosophical followers for if the non-London, non-New York tension helps account for the art of proto-Art & Language, British analytical philosophy provided the language. The first and probably most strategic reason for adopting such a language was, as Atkinson said, "as an antidote to . . . philosophical charlatanism." In place of pop casualness, analytical philosophy offered apparent rigour; in place of pop superficiality and "New Generation" aestheticism, analytic philosophy offered what Perry Anderson called, "a purely technical philosophy, entirely dissociated from the ordinary concerns of social life."<sup>64</sup> In its technical and dissociated position, analytic philosophy possessed the sort of systematic isolation from concepts of feeling or imagery, gestalt or psychology that proto-Art & Language could effectively appropriate its logical and semantic analysis in order to forcefully examine prevailing art world claims from a detached position insulated by a privileged idiolect.

Wittgenstein's concentration on language as a set of games was clearly applicable to an art world constructed according to shifts in aesthetic canons and dominated by the gaming of critics and curators using words to establish the precedence, quality or taste of mute objects and their optical (mediated) response to them. The thoroughness of analytic philosophy, with its precise parcelling out of semantic construction and its extreme skepticism of any metaphysical assertion, could be used, numbingly, to explore, take apart and almost endlessly dismember, reposition and query the loose language of art writing. Part of the Art & Language practice

definitely derived from this instrumental use of the philosophy they assiduously studied. But the aim was not the purist pursuit of knowledge; it was more aggressive in tone and sarcastic in practice. This may be due to the class position of the philosophers, who, as Ernest Gellner described, represented "a sub-group consisting of people who belong to, or emulate, the upper class in manner; who differentiate themselves from the heartier rest of the upper class by a kind of heightened sensibility and preciousness . . . by a lack of interest in ideas, arguments, fundamentals or reform."<sup>65</sup> The very idea of artists, especially working-class artists, handling such material must have given the artists a vent for their class antagonisms. Proto-Art & Language were appropriating the language of privileged, non-art aware Oxbridge philosophy dons, claiming and using a literacy supposedly beyond their class station and outside the expressive "misfit"-identified art education they had received.

Atkinson and Baldwin particularly relished this aspect, producing a kind of vertiginous rhetoric of displacement. Here is the opening of their 1968-published book, *Air-conditioning Show/Air Show/Frameworks 1966-7* (fig. 11):

By declaring one area to be the 'area of attention' and another to be 'not the area of attention', then the area that is designated as 'not the area of attention' will demand a sufficient amount of attention for it to be acknowledged as 'not the area of attention'. One might also designate an area 'not the area of attention' as the only point to be attended to. But, even a 'not the area of attention' is assigned [sic] significance in that sense, then whatever is 'not the area of attention' can be treated here as an area which is not attended to in an observational sense.<sup>66</sup>

The point is rather simple, but the rhetorical embroidery, its pretentious repetitions, its veering off into conditional phrasing and neologisms ("assigned" instead of assigned) is more amusing than functional as communication. It parodies the supposed precision of Greenbergian taste-judgments ("Far from incurring the danger of arbitrariness in the absence of a model in nature, Mondrian's art proves, with the passing of time, almost too disciplined, too convention bound in certain respects"<sup>67</sup>), propounding instead an apparently strict and neutral set of distinctions. It is also surely alienating, requiring meaning to be puzzled out--and it may be that the use of such language was primarily obfuscatory, making up for the lack of art (in the form of an object) by

displaying a capacity for specification and linguistic constriction that read as smart, daunting, maybe even menacing.

I do not want to go into the philosophical astuteness of the usage of such language, for that would require a digression and an evaluation that is beside the point. As Wittgenstein said "the meaning of a word [is] determined by its use,"<sup>68</sup> so I see the importance of Art & Language's use of linguistic and analytic philosophy to be determined by the use they put it to. That is, namely, as a tool and as an analytical tool and a rhetorical flourish, something novel in some ways and something anodyne in another. The aggression supplementing Art & Language's use of this language is summed up by Anderson's accusation that "The technicism of contemporary English philosophy has thus necessarily been a philistinism."<sup>69</sup> He sees the work of Wittgenstein and his followers as invoking an ahistorical sense of language and extolling instead a "technicism" representing "merely the transcript of a historically becalmed society."<sup>70</sup> What was negative and philistine in overall social terms, however, may have a different propensity in the narrow and aestheticised, commercialized art world. Precisely the "technicism" of analytic philosophy, its arcana of concepts, its bewildering and meandering syntax of questions, conditions and formulae--and its lack of social and emotive reference--was potentially upsetting to an art society vigorously fashionable but practically becalmed. The static 'otherness' of the language of analytical philosophy operated like the work of the technocracy it unwittingly begat, to marginalize the making of art to the point where it became fashion or critique--and the artists of proto-Art & Language chose the latter.

Art, however, was left untouched, except in the way that critical intelligence was motivated to deny the effects, psychology, location and meaning of its well-intended providers. The now-canonical *Map Not to Indicate . . .* (1967) (fig. 12) of Atkinson and Baldwin is exemplary in this regard: what you cannot see is the tension in making the point. Like the air over Oxfordshire specified in *Air Show*, "Canada, James Bay, Ontario, Quebec . . ." as entities continue, quite literally beyond comprehension, not needing art world designation to be present. Always, however, precedence dogs the Atkinson/Baldwin chorography; Jasper Johns' had fussily mis-

mapped the same territory before (*Map* 1963). That the Atkinson/Baldwin version is recursive in influence—to its influenced production or to its level of acceptance as conceptual art—is the instance visited by these artists. They saw art as overdetermined by technocracy, fashion, criticism and class, but they did not want to give it up. Understanding the perfidity of their position, they adapted an approach to art (minimalism) and a language (analytic philosophy) which were supra-technical, unfashionable in Britain, critically discriminating and classed alternately as American and upper class British.

They mobilized the weak power of interpretation, trying to apply, with a dose of skepticism, notions that were interesting but problematic and doing so with their particular circumstances in mind.<sup>71</sup> Situated in the Midlands, as art teacher and student (or expelled student), Atkinson and Baldwin did not have the resources to have fashionable mirror cubes fabricated by craftsmen, nor did they have New York or London galleries to show them in. Bainbridge and Hurrell used their individual skills and labour to produce low-tech investigatory devices which queried and denigrated the notion of "High Art" exhibiting altogether. All four were located in the provinces amid industrial developments and technical know-how rather than in London's whirl of fashion and mildly altered beaux-arts technique. They knew enough about the regime of technology and its antagonism to art, and, in reflexive consequence, their work deliberately sought to ridicule and challenge the London scene's technocratic forgetfulness. In looking to technology as a tool or else towards American minimalism as a model for materials and methods to use, they were strategically assessing how these tendencies unmasked the techno-sheen and up-to-date publicity of the London work.

Such sources partook of the spoils of social and aesthetic movements hostile to the mainstream of British art. The American strain of minimalism abjured Greenbergian formalist interests in "a psychological world" for consideration of "the sculptural facts of space, light and materials."<sup>72</sup> The technocratic strain was hostile to 'creative' art and the mythology of the "misfit." In this way, proto-Art & Language worked to elucidate, albeit opaquely and bathetically, the



shortcomings of their contemporaries, using the loaded values and techniques of adversaries in the guise of a set of reluctant followers.

There is a perverse and bathetic identity here, but one that, in contesting the terms of its placement, engages what T.J. Clark has called the array of "practices of negation" in modernism. He writes:

By 'practices of negation' I meant some form of decisive innovation, in method or materials or imagery, whereby a previously established set of skills or frame of reference . . . are deliberately avoided or travestied, in such a way to imply that only by such incompetence or obscurity will genuine picturing get done.<sup>73</sup>

Where one would want to re-write Clark in the case of the emergent discourse of Art & Language would lie in the use of terms such as "innovation" and "genuine." The question of using text and analytic philosophy as materials is one of appropriation rather than innovation; *Radio Loop* or *Air-conditioning Show* do not claim to be progressive advances so much as they claim the region where it is possible to analyze "previously established" methods. They propose, first of all, an approach that interrogates the presuppositions of others, and, secondly, they lay the ground for, but do not necessarily presume concerning, the results of the endeavour. To call them "genuine" in some way is to miss their essential deferral of proper results. They are parasitic in this way, challenging without proving, supposing without concluding, leaving open the field for more punters to enter the fray.

Until then, however, the work of negation "does not appear as a practice which *guarantees* meaning . . . but rather negation appears as an absolute and all-encompassing fact . . . which swallows meaning altogether."<sup>74</sup> It would be futile to deny that the work of proto-Art & Language ingested meaning as its sustenance. Yet the reasons for this self-eating approach are not as nihilistic as they may sound. The individuals who formed Art & Language, like the students at Hornsey, could not come up with a defense of their practice. The novelty and analytic persuasion of their early work filled this gap with an abstruse resistance to the situation they found themselves in. The negational cast of the work proposed aspects that Clark provided for elsewhere, in rather florid terms, saying that: "Art wants to address someone, it wants something

precise and extended to do, it wants *resistance*."<sup>75</sup> In as much as that resistance--and its aggressive cynicism--operated to develop an identity and to consolidate a language, the swallowing potential appeared to be under control.

## Notes

1. Terry Atkinson, *Brit Art* (London: Gimpel Fils, 1987), 23, and Harrison and Orton, 17. Both sources emphasize this aspect. Other British artists of similar background and generation include Derek Boshier, Victor Burgin and David Hockney.
2. See the discussion in David Childs, *Britain Since 1945: A Political History*, second edition (London: Methuen, 1986), 25-34.
3. For an account of the consensus model, see David Marquand, "The Decline of Post-War Consensus," in *Post-War Britain: Themes and Perspectives*, Anthony Gorst et al., eds. (London: Pinter, 1989), 1-21.
4. Journalists Bernard Levin in *The Pendulum Years* (London: Palladin, 1990), and Christopher Brooker in *The Neophiliacs* (London: Collins, 1972), provide contemporary, anxious responses to these changes.
5. For a good description of the contradictions involved in this model, see Ralph Milliband, *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (London: Verso, 1983).
6. On nationalization, see Childs, 25 to 29. For the impact of education and social reform, see François Bédarida, *A Social History of England 1851-1975*, A.S. Forster, trans. (London: Methuen, 1979), 249-252. For the Macmillan quote see, Childs, 106.
7. Childs, 23-25.
8. See Arthur Marwick, *Culture in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), for an elementary account of this phenomenon.
9. Childs, 133-136, 252-255.
10. Bédarida reports that "a cartoonist depicted Macmillan in the aftermath of battle [following the 1959 election] talking to four of his agents, personified respectively by a refrigerator, a television set, a washing machine and a motor-car, and thanking them in these terms: 'Well, gentleman, together we have won the good fight'." Bédarida, 253.
11. Trevor Noble, *Structure and Change in Modern Britain* (London: Batsford, 1981), 150-168.
12. Richard Hoggart, "Changes in Working-Class Life," in *Speaking to Each Other: About Society* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), 50.
13. Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), 246.
14. Hurrell was employed at the Hull College of Art, not too distant from his roots in Sheffield.
15. Tom Nairn and Jim Singh-Sandhu, "Chaos in the Art Colleges," in *Student Power*, Alexander Cockburn and Robin Blackburn, eds. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 106.
16. Harrison and Orton, 17.
17. Harrison and Orton, 19.
18. This anecdote is recorded in Terry Atkinson, "The Indexing, The World War I Moves and the Ruins of Conceptualism," unpublished typescript, 1992, section 2, note 2, page 26.
19. Harold Wilson, *The Relevance of British Socialism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 44.
20. Wilson, 54.
21. Wilson, 55.
22. C.P. Snow, "The Two Cultures," in *The Two Cultures and a Second Look* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 5.
23. For a study of the art education system in post-war Great Britain, see, *Readings in Art & Design Education*, David Warren Piper, ed. (London: Davis-Poynter, 1973), 2 volumes.
24. As Victor Burgin notes: "At the time that I was a student at the RCA [Royal College of Art], during the early sixties, there was a Stained Glass Department there. . . . [T]he painting students thought the Stained Glass Department to be a bit of a joke, an anachronism, and it in fact no longer exists. . . . Those RCA painters of the 1960s . . . might have looked at themselves, with their antiquated paraphernalia of easels and palettes and hog's-hair brushes," "The Absence of Presence: Conceptualism and Postmodernism," in *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 36-37. Terry Atkinson, in conversation with the author, commented on the persistence of a life drawing portfolio as a diploma requirement at the Slade, even though the instructors were all abstract painters.
25. Misha Black, "Notes on Design Education in Great Britain," in Piper, ed., v. I, 45.

26. See *The Hornsey Affair* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), and the Nairn and Singh-Sandhu article cited in note #17.
27. Nairn and Singh-Sandhu, 106.
28. "K.W.," "Against the Art Object," *The Hornsey Affair*, 71.
29. Nairn and Singh-Sandhu, 115.
30. "K.W.," 72.
31. Peter Fuller, "Fine Art After Modernism," *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), 45. I am grateful to Charlotte Townsend-Gault for reminding me of Fuller's analysis of the history of British art practice.
32. I suppose the obligatory mention of Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant Garde*, Michael Shaw, trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), will suffice for this point.
33. Fuller, 58.
34. Fuller mentions Aubrey Beardsley and Art nouveau, but one might also cite Vorticism and the British Surrealists as examples of avantgardism in England.
35. Charles Harrison, "Modernism and the Transatlantic Dialogue," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, Frances Frscina, ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 221.
36. This list of members and the following characterization of the Independent Group are based on *The Independent Group: Postwar Britain and the Aesthetics of Plenty*, David Robbins, ed. (Boston: Intitute of Contemporary Art, 1990) and *Pop Art*, Marco Livingstone, ed. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1990).
37. See Peter Fuller, "Interview With Anthony Caro," in Dieter Blume, *Anthony Caro: Catalogue raisonné* (Cologne: Galerie Wentzel, 1981), v. 3, 35-36.
38. Susan Compton, "Anthony Caro and Sixties Abstraction," *British Art in the Twentieth Century: The Modern Movement*, Susan Compton, ed. (London/Munich: Royal Academy of Arts/Prestel, 1987), 336.
39. Harrison, "Sculpture's Recent Past," in *A Quiet Revolution: British Sculpture Since 1965*, Terry A. Neff, ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 18.
40. Blume, v.3, 42.
41. Edward Lucie-Smith, "Interview with Clement Greenberg," *Studio International* 175 (January 1968), 117.
42. Harrison, "Sculpture's Recent Past," 15-16, gives a listing of such gallery connections.
43. The flashy quality can be seen in the installation photograph of the name-endowing "New Generation" exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery in 1965, reproduced in Harrison, "Sculpture's Recent Past," 16.
44. Marco Livingstone, "A Big Sensation," *Pop Art*, 148-149.
45. Livingstone, 150. Another interesting take on this is Donald Judd's review of Kitaj in *Arts* 40 (March 1965): "Most of the work is only competent. It is weak if you look at it carefully and boring if you think about it. The best things are the collages of photographs, advertisements and magazine covers, most old and not Pop now and often not Pop then. They're more interesting than their context." Reprinted in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, 1975), 168.
46. A critical edge which Hamilton retained as his work is often caustic concerning consumerism.
47. Patrick Heron, "A Kind of Cultural Imperialism?," *Studio International* 175 (February 1968), 62-63.
48. Still, Atkinson won a British Council prize for the latter after exhibiting it in the "Young Contemporaries" annual. See *Terry Atkinson*, 43. The Royal College painters made their big splash in the 1961 "Young Contemporaries."
49. Bainbridge's *Crane* is discussed in "Introduction," *Art-Language* 1:1 (May 1969), 8, and became a centrepiece for some discussion of the readymade, since it could be a crane for use or *Crane*, the art work. Through their friendship and a collocation of interests between Atkinson's Slade instructors and Caro's impression of Bainbridge's "technique," seminars were held that brought the abstract painters of the Slade, Caro's "New Generation" and several members of proto-Art & Language together in 1966. The result was not auspicious, as the issue of Pop painting clouded

- the air and played to the entrenched positions of all concerned. As well, Harrison mentions an essay written by Bainbridge at St. Martin's and published in the student newsletter entitled, "The Artist/Intellectual as an Ineffective (Hypocritical?) Idealist." In strict chronological terms, this would amount to being the first Art & Language text and its sardonic title may indicate more than art student disaffection. See Harrison, "Sculpture's Recent Past," note 80, 33.
50. Terry Atkinson, 43, lists John Bowstead, Roger Jeffs and Bernard Jennings as the other members. It was the Fine Artz connections that lead Harrison and Orton (page 17) to describe Atkinson as having a "more successful adjustment . . . to Modernized Culture."
51. Terry Atkinson, 43. About Fine Artz, Atkinson has recently recalled that: "This was the first salutary lesson of group work. I had been an energetic contributor to its inception and had organized the venue [for *Miss Misty and the Tri-Cool Data*] since I was teaching . . . at Birmingham School of Art. David Bainbridge, who had worked on the extreme peripheries of this spectacle, and whose input was in the main conversations with me expressing some skepticism of . . . the mawkish obsession of Fine Artz with the surfaces of pop," Atkinson, "The Indexing," Section II, note 2, 25.
52. Atkinson, "The Indexing," Section II, note 2, 26. Ironically, it was the Independent Group that provided the contact, for it was Paolozzi, at Peter and Alison Smithson's home in 1961, who first mentioned Wittgenstein to Atkinson and Atkinson was later aware of the use of the analytic philosopher in connection with Johns and John Cage. Paolozzi later made a series of screen prints and a sculpture, *Wittgenstein At Casino* (1963-64) in tribute to the philosopher. See *British Art in the 20th Century*, 341 and catalogue #265.
53. Harrison and Orton, 19-20. They do not provide a complete list of those met, but do single out Morris, Donald Judd and Robert Smithson as contacts. They do specify that the initial contact was from Robert Fraser in London to Ivan Karp of Leo Castelli in New York.
54. Harrison and Orton, 20, speak of the performances. Atkinson saw one and reports the colouring of the mirror work, "The Indexing," section 2, note 2, 35-36. For black-and-white photographic documentation of the Baldwin work (called *Untitled painting* [1965]), see: *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective*, 100; for reproductions of similar works, see *Art & Language: The Paintings*, 8.
55. Michael Baldwin, "Remarks on Air-Conditioning," *Arts* 42:1 (November 1967), 22.
56. See the comments on Kitaj in note 47 for an example.
57. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965), as reprinted in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, 1975), 181-189. The quote is from the opening paragraph, page 181.
58. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," as reprinted in *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, Frances Frascina and Charles Harrison, eds. (London: Harper and Row, 1982), 5.
59. Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture II," *Artforum* IV:12 (October 1966), as reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Gregory Battcock, ed. (New York: Dutton, 1968), 234.
60. Morris, 234.
61. Robert Smithson, "Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site," *Artforum* V:10 (June 1967), 15-21.
62. See *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects*, Donald Karshan, ed. (New York: New York Cultural Center, 1970), 63.
63. Terry Atkinson, *An Evening*, 8.
64. Perry Anderson, "Components of the National Culture," *New Left Review* 50 (July-August 1968), 23.
65. Ernest Gellner, *Words and Things* (London: Gollancz, 1959), 241-242.
66. Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, *Air-conditioning Show/Air Show/ Frameworks* (Coventry: Art & Language Press, 1968), unpaginated.
67. Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 8.
68. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 54.

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69. Anderson, 23.

70. Anderson, 25.

71. For a later take on such problems see, Terry Atkinson, "From an Art & Language Point of View," *Art-Language* 1:2 (November 1969), 25-60.

72. Morris, 222.

73. T.J. Clark, in a note added in 1984 to his essay, "More on the Differences Between Comrade Greenberg and Ourselves." The essay was initially published in *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference*, Benjamin Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut and David Solkin, eds. (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design Press, 1983), but this note accompanied the essay as reprinted in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, Frances Frascina, ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 55.

74. T.J. Clark, "More on the Differences Between Comrade Greenberg and Ourselves," *Modernism and Modernity*, 185.

75. T.J. Clark, "More on the Differences Between Comrade Greenberg and Ourselves," *Modernism and Modernity*, 186. Although Clark was attempting to account for "practices of negation" in the history of modernism, he closed the "Modernism and Modernity" conference with this comment: "the practice of Art and Language—for all its erratic, strange, and at times sort of mannerist proceednigs in the 70's I see as a serious practice, directed to the problems of modernism." *Modernism and Modernity*, 277.

### CHAPTER THREE. ART-LANGUAGE, "ART TEACHING" AND ART & LANGUAGE

*To lend support to their pseudo-cultural references and to their bluffing games, with a complacent display of questionable scholarship, certain artists attempt to explain what conceptual art would be, could be or should be--thus making a conceptual work. There is no lack of vulgarity in pretense. In place of unpretentious inquiry we are subjected to a hodgepodge of explanations and justifications which serve as obfuscation in the attempt to convince us of the existence of thought. For these, conceptual art has become 'verbiage art'. They are no longer living in the twentieth century but wish to revive the eighteenth.*

Daniel Buren, "Beware!," 1970.

This quote from Buren's "Beware!" is a direct response to what Art & Language represented by January 1970.<sup>1</sup> When first published in French during the summer of 1969, as "Mise en garde," the text did not contain a section on "verbiage art" and Buren placed his amendment following a discussion of "Concept=Maniérisme" in the original, including mentions of how "l'anecdote" and "l'art académique" were coming under a conceptual label through the recording of such matters as "le nombre des pas qu'il faut pour faire un kilomètre . . . ou de température relevée à tel endroit."<sup>2</sup> That the revised text takes this mild allusion to the sorts of procedures used in Atkinson and Baldwin's Air Show and inserts the "verbiage" category here is indicative of how Art & Language's first issue of *Art-Language* was understood by Buren and how changes in group identity and personnel had altered their status.

Buren's ire seems to have been raised by a reading of the "Introduction" to the first *Art-Language*, published in May 1969 (fig. 13). In that text the "verbiage" matter is raised:

Suppose the following hypothesis is advanced: that this editorial, in itself an attempt to evince some outlines as to what «conceptual art» is, is held out as «conceptual art» work. . . . Initially what conceptual art seems to be doing is questioning the condition that seems to rigidly govern the form of visual art--that visual art remain visual.<sup>3</sup>

This is opposed to the ideas of visibility upheld by Buren, and it initiates the period of textual exclusivity that Art & Language work would take up to and past the *Index*. A non-visual art came to represent a textual art, a "type of analysis . . . concerning the linguistic usage of both plastic art itself and its support languages."<sup>4</sup> Whether such a position lead them back to the eighteenth-century roots of the Enlightenment or landed them smack dab in the contradictions of late-

capitalism is another matter—as would be the question of which was more mannered in its self-privileging, "Beware!" or the "Introduction." The point is that both Buren and Art & Language were attempting to stake out grounds for prioritizing their practice and this indicates that something was seriously up for grabs in 1969 and 1970. Let us now look at what it took for Art & Language to go from representing obscure artists scribbling away in Coventry to being attacked by a colleague for their "vulgarity in pretense."

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The attraction of the New York art world as a source of innovative and assimilable ideas for Atkinson and Baldwin has already been discussed. Yet, there is more to it than the sardonic reaction present in their early work, for, as Atkinson recalled:

Michael Baldwin and I figured we couldn't get much of a break in England, in terms of getting our work exposed. The relations of production were no problem. . . . But the relations of distribution were an *acute* problem. You couldn't get a hearing in Britain at all. . . . So our work was taken by hand . . . to New York with the hunch that people would be interested.<sup>5</sup>

Atkinson is referring to a trip to New York he took in 1967, where he followed up Baldwin's previous connections and met other artists—Dan Graham, Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner—who were moving away from minimalist tenets. It is not important now to specify the differences in approach of these artists but it is important that Atkinson left, with LeWitt, examples of the prints and texts Baldwin and he had produced in 1966-67.

By again going to the source of art world power in New York, Atkinson and Baldwin were snubbing London, yet they were also becoming players in a new game. By being codified in Judd's "Specific Objects" in 1965 and then ratified by Morris' 1966 "Notes on Sculpture," minimalism was fixed into the somatics and physicality of installation. When, in 1967, minimalism came under attack by Greenberg and Fried, the anti-formalist tack of the movement could be said to have served its purpose in drawing their fire and letting others run with the loot.<sup>6</sup> Artists like LeWitt consciously began to disconnect themselves from minimalism and become allied with a nascent idea of conceptualism. In a summer 1967 *Artforum* special issue



devoted to sculpture—with Fried's "Art and Objecthood" and another installment of Morris' "Notes on Sculpture"—LeWitt published his "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art." In one section, he wrote:

Conceptual art is made to engage the mind of the viewer rather than the eye or emotions. . . . Anything that calls attention to and interests the viewer in physicality is a deterrent to our understanding of the idea and is used as an expressive device.<sup>7</sup>

It should be clear that this statement repudiates minimalist physicality, and it should also be obvious that Atkinson and Baldwin, with their appropriation of analytical philosophy and the caustic, non-emotive irony of their work, would fit in with these tactics to evade identification with minimalist concerns.

Bainbridge and Hurrell were somewhat outside this network; their devices were not as portable and their promotional instincts were not so stimulated by the New York opportunity. Their "Hardware Show" which received a "hearing" at the Architectural Association in London had met with little response. The material Atkinson had deposited in New York, however, attracted the attention of Lucy Lippard and John Chandler in the first New York synopsis of conceptual art, "The Dematerialization of Art," published in early 1968 in *Art International*.<sup>8</sup> This is a chatty and journalistic piece, snipping at Greenberg and dropping many other names and art historical precedents on the way to some unthinking generalizations—not the least of which was the notion of dematerialization. Ever on their toes, a letter was dispatched to Lippard from Atkinson and Baldwin in Coventry:

All the examples of art-works (ideas) you refer to in your article are, with few exceptions, art-objects. They may not be an art-object as we know it in its traditional matter-state, but they are nevertheless matter in one of its forms, either solid-state, gas-state, liquid-state. And it is on this question of matter-state that my caution with regard to the metaphorical usage of dematerialization is centred upon. . . . That some art should be directly material; and that other art should produce a material entity only as a necessary by-product of the need to record the idea is not at all to say that the latter is connected by any process of dematerialization to the former.<sup>9</sup>

While this is a better explication than that offered by the art critics, one is surprised at the pedagogical tone of the missive. The corrective does not have much relevance to what Lippard

and Chandler said about Atkinson and Baldwin's work,<sup>10</sup> but it does stress an ability-based not only in a privileging of their practice but in acuity of interpretation--to be better critics than the critics themselves. This signals a lack of confidence in art criticism of conceptualism, a gap that *Art-Language* as a magazine set out to fill.

Book works by Atkinson and Baldwin were first shown in New York in the 1968 "Language II" and the 1969 "Language III" exhibitions at the Dwan Gallery.<sup>11</sup> These shows, along with the ventures sponsored by conceptual art entrepreneur Seth Siegelaub and the promotional vehicles attached to them,<sup>12</sup> made conceptual art a New York trend, all the more apparent when, in 1969, Lippard began putting together large-scale exhibitions including conceptualism, such as "557,087" for the Seattle Art Museum and its sequel "955,000" for the Vancouver Art Gallery.<sup>13</sup> Both exhibitions contained over sixty artists, including Atkinson and Baldwin, Bainbridge and Hurrell, though the billing only included Atkinson and Baldwin. The four submitted, on a catalogue card--all other participants' projects were similarly formatted--a work titled "The Art & Language Press Project" (fig. 14) and requested:

Approx. 10-12 screens approx 8 feet high by 10 feet long to be arranged according to the amount, size(s) and nature of the printed material, photographs etc. it is intended to display. Material worked on 1967-1969.<sup>14</sup>

On a card added for the Vancouver show, representing the Seattle exhibition, work by Hurrell is shown as installed--yet not in the form stipulated by Art & Language (fig. 15). Hurrell's text-photo work is placed between an acrylic painting by Gene Beery and the tape recorder piece, *Like* (1969), by Dan Graham. Taken together this suggests that Lippard asked Atkinson and Baldwin to participate and they sent material from all four members of the group rather than as individuals. However, despite their request to hang together, the priority of the individual was emphasized by the organizers as if they did not comprehend or want to respect the artists' collaborative request.

This detailing of asymmetrical relations among the membership of Art & Language indicates that the group was not understood to be a group until sometime after late-1969.

Atkinson and Baldwin were placed in conceptualism due to New York connections, but Bainbridge and Hurrell were not. Even when the work of all four assumed similar wall-display form—"printed material, photographs etc."—the links in their production were not recognized by Lippard as a group effort. This leads me to suggest that one of the purposes of *Art-Language* as a journal—as "The Journal of Conceptual Art" as the first issue proclaimed—was to put forward a collective identity, to emphasize the formative base the group had in Great Britain rather than being subsumed under New York conceptualism. In the "Introduction" to the first issue of *Art-Language*, both the British imprimatur and the New York connection is conspicuously stated:

The essay will point out some differences between American and British conceptual art, but it should not be seen to indicate a clear and definite boundary between them; there are British artists working in the field who show more affinity with American conceptual art than with what is, here, called British conceptual art. The editor-founders of this magazine have, for example, maintained close contact over the past year and a half with Dan Graham and Sol LeWitt. Their position is not at all seen by them to be one of isolation.<sup>15</sup>

Though the last sentence has some problem with whose "position" is in "isolation," the significance of the singularity of "what is, here, called British conceptual art" is a response to international relations rather than being constituted by nationality alone. While Atkinson and Baldwin were working through the New York network, other British artists—representing the latest crop of St. Martin's graduates—were being shown in European exhibitions that, like Lippard's, were large-scale synopses of "artists who share a dissatisfaction with the status of the work of art as a particular object in a finite state," as Charles Harrison, the London organizer of one such show, "When Attitudes Become Form," put it in 1969.<sup>16</sup>

In the British scene, Harrison was the assistant editor at the major art journal *Studio International*, an upper-middle class, Cambridge and Courtauld Institute-trained art historian, a lecturer in the academic section of St. Martin's, formerly a supporter of Greenberg and the "New Generation," now an advocate of conceptual art—almost the promise of young London criticism personified. It was ties with the St. Martin's students Jan Dibbets, Barry Flanagan, Richard Long, Roelof Louw and Bruce McLean that put him in touch with an international network of which he

would later claim: "there may never have been so potentially cosmopolitan a moment in the history of art."<sup>17</sup> The work of the "British artists" was mainly performative, such as Long's sculptures made during walks in the countryside—"working in the field"—or Dibbets' "perspective corrections" that used anamorphosis in natural and gallery sites to be photographed for exhibition. They can rightly be seen as taking off from "New Generation" practice in making eccentric objects but they simply 'did' that and did not, as Art & Language was claiming for itself, question the process of object-making or inquire into textual production as an alternative to exhibition display. Though the above mentioned St. Martin's-associated sculptors were represented in "When Attitudes Become Form," none of the Art & Language group were included.<sup>18</sup>

While almost certainly intending to target this group, the "Introduction" does not name them or describe their practice. Nor does it address the current territory of American conceptual art: Rauschenberg's *Portrait of Iris Clert* (1961) is mentioned in a discussion of the limitations of Marcel Duchamp's 1919 *Bottle Rack* ready-made,<sup>19</sup> and the last paragraph mentions Morris' "notes on his sculpture-objects," but such allusions in the "Introduction" concern the category-errors of past models rather than naming these figures as conceptual art producers. This lack of contemporary mention cuts both ways, given Art & Language's developing position and rhetorical demeanor. Mention legitimates the opposition while ambiguity equivocates about the target; how best to appear non-emotive if one took the high-road of apparent rational debate over name-calling? Also, it needs to be remembered that this was an editorial and the first *Art-Language* issue contained scripted examples of American conceptual art—Graham's *Poem-schema* (1966), LeWitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art* (1969), Weiner's *Statements* (1968)—whose contents do not jibe with the Art & Language position.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps, by avoiding detailing its differences, the "Introduction" subtly illustrated the limitations of such work, permitting the reader to determine competence from a unguided position while also encouraging distribution of *Art-Language* based on the presence of New York artists in its pages.

Though this method of inclusion and the gentle tone of innuendo would shortly change, the "Introduction" is almost pre-possessed with a disciplined, 'scholar and gentleman' type of discourse. Several divisions of conceptual art practice are sketched out, using mainly the group's existing work—Bainbridge's *Crane* and the *Air Show*—as the material for discussion, judiciously separating wheat from chaff, but treating some pretty strange territory. Concerning itself, the "Introduction" asserts this determining involution:

The prime requirement in regard of this essay's appearance is that it is relatively legible. Any decisions apart from this have been taken with regard to what it should not look like as a point of emphasis over what it should look like. These secondary decisions are aimed at eliminating as many appearance similarities to established art-objects as possible.<sup>21</sup>

The self-definition—of the essay itself and the Art & Language anaesthetic, anti-visual position—continues to the point where it is announced that the early work "was a necessary form of development in pointing out the possibilities of a theoretical analysis as a method for (possibly) making art."<sup>22</sup> The "Introduction," with its self-regard minutely and reflexively in consideration, aims to succeed the early work and the conceptual art of others by declaring its type of discrimination as the most recent field for conceptualist practice.

The editorial finishes with a major defense of Art & Language's privilege, suggesting: "it is not beyond the bounds of sense to maintain an art form can evolve by taking as a point of initial enquiry the language-use of the art society".<sup>23</sup> Even if stated as conditional, the strategy of this neo-Wittgensteinian intervention is considerable. Art & Language inaugurates a programme to criticize the "art society" they are collaborating with in order to analyze the conceptual art movement—the "Introduction" is but a first installment.<sup>24</sup> Hence Art & Language represents its "British conceptual art" in the "Introduction" as part of a 'purer' strain than the American and British counterparts it tactically incorporates and critiques. In this move Art & Language sets itself apart from the rest, but nationalizes its tenor, using native British common sense against American influence—terms applicable in London, New York or on the continent.

Launching the journal was also a step outside of the trans-Atlantic "art society," inasmuch as *Art-Language* was not a deluxe or editioned property, was neither a glossy-picture-filled art magazine nor was it an amateurish 'artist's' magazine. As with its language, *Art-Language* appropriated the look of an academic publication and, though weighted to be self-promotional, its analyses of conceptual art and art practice were more sophisticated than any contemporary criticism. Even a champion of conceptual art, Lippard, found *Art-Language* to be a daunting prospect. She wrote in 1970:

I don't understand a good deal of what is said by Art-Language, but I admire the investigatory energies, the tireless spade-work (not to call one one), the full commitment to the re-establishment of a valid language by which to discuss art, and the occasional humour in their writings.<sup>25</sup>

In this respect, Art & Language succeeded in circumventing one part of the "art society": the critics were baffled, unsure, relinquishing, for a time, power over the word about art work. Though exhibitions like "When Attitudes Become Form" and "557,087" were grab-bags of what Greenberg called "novelty art," the critical and curatorial prerogative to establish what counted was set adrift. A handful of the perplexed—Lippard, Siegelau, Harrison, Szeemann, Fischer—took advantage of the relatively small-scale instructional and textual qualities of work which would latter be parcelled out into movements such as *arte povera*, land art, performance art, etc. They held exhibitions that mixed the lot together, making a patchwork quilt of "so-called conceptual or information or idea art" in a manner that lacked discrimination. Conceptualism was but one panel to be picked up, but the analytic posture it assumed made some participants—such as Art & Language and Buren—suspect of being lumped in with exotic objects of slight criticality.

That Buren went after Art & Language specifically and Art & Language went after St. Martin's was a product of this condition, though, as their joint presence in "Documenta 5" displayed, their suspicions lead them to incorporate criticism into their art rather than abjure exhibition altogether. They thus could be said to have usurped the rights of criticism and moved towards "theoretical analysis." But the benefit of *Art-Language* as a serial publication permitted

the group to continue its "verbiage" under its own control and in the printed forms that criticism traffics in. The advantage of the alteration of the "relations of distribution" should be noted: whereas Buren could place his trademark stripes in the urban environment or behind other artist's work and call it painting as critical visuality, *Art-Language* as a vehicle held the potential to move outside the exhibiting institution while being analytical in its stuff rather than needing accompanying verbal defense such as "Beware!"

The two strategies do not exclude each other, but they do contend that the damage done to the other is worse than the control imposed from without. Thus, "verbiage" is castigated by Buren, who can always fall back on the inanity of the institution as a foil for his acquiescence to visual product, while Art & Language can continually point to artists still making visual objects as manipulated transgressors of their terms. However, unlike the large-scale exhibition controlled by organizers, editorial control over *Art-Language*—and the perceptions resulting from it—were the responsibilities of the group. The capacity to publish and avoid the curatorial prerogative of determining display ironed out some of the relations within the group and enhanced the notion of a group effort.

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The initial *Art-Language* contained a text-model for an exhibition concocted by Bainbridge called "Notes on M1(1)".<sup>26</sup> The idea, using the philosophy seminar notion of 'what would a Martian make of this', posited an alien commissioned to produce an art exhibition. After research in the "National Gallery, the Louvre, Prado, Guggenheim, etc." the alien determines that the exhibition public enjoy the ambulations of art display but also states that: "aimless meandering they seem to anathemize [*sic*]." Extending this hypothesis, Bainbridge worked out a device responding to the viewer through a simple system of a stationary metal plate and a remote disc which rotates in accord with the spectator's relation to the plate. The system instates minimal conditions for display by manipulating the viewer's response—turning disc caused by attention to plate; stationary disc in response to remoteness from plate—and encouraging movement in the gallery.

The joke, beyond the pompous language used ("the alien has prodromally articulated a desiderate," "if we regard the implications of these *a posteriori* methods") is to ridicule exhibition as anything more than cynical control. Next, Baldwin pops up with his own "Notes on M1," logically analyzing the propositions of the model, pointing out some problems which Bainbridge responds to in "Notes on M1(2)." The piece as a whole is a one-note affair, yet the textual elaboration and polemic constitute deliberate parodies of the "psychological worlds" presupposed by traditional or exotic sculpture as a language of placement, response and intention. It is "verbiage" to be sure, sarcastic to an extreme, but responding to this sort of language use: "The object, not the beholder, must remain the center of focus of the situation, but the situation itself *belongs* to the beholder—it is *his* situation."<sup>27</sup> The fatuity of the latter is overwhelmed by the vacuity of the M1 model and its elaboration.

If the bathos of the result is familiar, the sort of inter-textual relations used in the various "Notes on M1" and in the "Introduction" emphasized group identity and nominated the group as a self-regulating entity 'beyond' criticism and sufficient unto itself. Bainbridge's devices and Baldwin's analytics engage each other without the need for mediation from without. The "Introduction" figuratively takes care of itself, arguing the criteria for its own positioning. This presumption of authority and autonomy was followed up by significant forays into New York and London territory, the group now seeking more than self-legitimation of its constitution.

Atkinson spent the summer of 1969 in New York, much of the time with Joseph Kosuth, an American conceptual artist known for his interest in language-use and philosophical models. By the close of that summer, he had become the "American Editor" for *Art-Language*. Kosuth had been making what he called "conceptual work" since 1965,<sup>28</sup> using ordinary objects (glass, chairs, brooms), dictionary definitions and the category tables from *Roget's Thesaurus* under the general title *Art as Idea (as Idea)*. He showed these as photostats and combinations of photostats, objects and photographs—with the 'idea' being the disjuncture of meaning from definition, definition from idea, etc. He had recently begun exhibiting the thesaurus categories in public spaces—on



billboards, as paid advertising in newspapers and journals—without any disclaimer of artistic intention.<sup>29</sup>

Kosuth too was part of the conceptual art exhibition circuit—he was almost a permanent fixture in it due to his alliance with Siegelau and the 'legendary' (in conceptual art circles) "January 5-31" exhibition of Kosuth, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler and Lawrence Weiner.<sup>30</sup> In the summer of 1969 Kosuth was working on a text commissioned by Charles Harrison for *Studio International*, published as "Art After Philosophy" in three parts during the fall of the year. Kosuth used this text to put forward a kind of conceptual idealism, announcing at the end of the first section:

In this period of man, after philosophy and religion, art may possibly be one endeavour that fulfills what other ages have called 'man's spiritual needs'. Or, another way of putting it might be that art deals analogously with the state of things 'beyond physics' where philosophy had to make assertions. And art's strength is that even the preceding sentence is an assertion and cannot be verified by art. Art's only claim is for art. Art is the definition of art.<sup>31</sup>

While this has self-reflexive pretensions to being a "theoretical analysis" such as might interest Art & Language, it is, as Kosuth earlier maintained, based on the idea that "it is nearly impossible to discuss art in general terms without talking in tautologies."<sup>32</sup> The difference between this and the elliptical rhetoric of the "Introduction" lies in the fact that the latter rests on language-use and the circulation of language through the formations of discourse around the "art sociaety" and not on tautological rounds of self-reflexivity. Where the "Introduction" presents the possibilities of critique in analyzing how art-language (and *Art-Language*) is used, Kosuth's idealism is limited by a refusal of reference beyond art as an unidentified noumenon.

However, it was not total intellectual affinity that argued for an American editor so much as it was Kosuth's connections in New York and international circles. He was attempting to sever ties with the Siegelau stable in order to attach himself to "the possibilities of theoretical analysis." This is plainly the aim of the survey of conceptual art activity given in part two of "Art After Philosophy." After saying that "Three artists associated with me (through Seth Siegelau's projects)—Douglas Huebler, Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner—are not concerned with, I think,

'Conceptual Art'," he bolsters this argument with information describing how Huebler was still making sculpture in 1968, and Weiner and Barry were painting. Meanwhile:

Purely conceptual art is first seen concurrently in the work of Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin in Coventry, England, and with my own work done in New York City all generally around 1966.<sup>33</sup>

Art & Language (and Kosuth's forgetting of Bainbridge and Hurrell needs to be indicated) could use this sort of promotion. And even if Atkinson, Bainbridge, Baldwin and Hurrell would, in the January 1970 issue of *Studio International*, publish a critique of this sort of history of conceptualism, it ends with the note that: "Joseph Kosuth became American Editor of *Art-Language* in August 1969. His contribution to the Press is already strong and considerable. The broad notions extrapolated here count as significantly in his case."<sup>34</sup> His joining was treated as a conversion to an Art & Language programme.

The article, titled "Status and Priority," is only secondarily about Kosuth's essay, for its main target was Harrison. The words "status" and "priority" occurred in his "Against Precedents" essay published in the catalogue of "When Attitudes Become Form" and in *Studio International*, September 1969.<sup>35</sup> Harrison praised Huebler, Kosuth and Weiner (and others) for their abandonment of traditional modes of painting and sculpture for three-dimensional and time-based works. In contrast, the four Art & Language members discuss how, speaking of themselves, "the naive, phemononalistic affectation of putative translation from the construct to the 'object' have been dropped . . . as gratuitous and semantically misleading,"<sup>36</sup> indicating their "Status and Priority" above other artists and beyond the reach of the critic. Harrison must have been impressed, for he included Art & Language in several of his curatorial ventures over the next two years, giving the group their first exposure in London in "Idea Structures" and including them in the New York Cultural Center exhibition, "The British Avant-Garde." Further essays by the group appeared in *Studio International* over the next two years, and Harrison eventually resigned from the magazine to become the "General Editor" of *Art-Language* in 1971.<sup>37</sup> With his joining, Art & Language appropriated criticism, silencing the arbiter of art world dealing by

putting him to work as the technician for their art work. As Harrison wrote, announcing his abdication of the critical judgment-seat, "The only alternative to criticism is art."<sup>38</sup>

While Kosuth and Harrison demonstrate Art & Language's attraction for those seeking a change of direction through pursuing new affiliations, the relations of the group with Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden indicate a continuity of concerns with other, less prominent practitioners. As expatriates, the Australian Burn and British Ramsden had lived in New York since 1967, making paintings that mocked the intentions, materials and styles of abstraction. They had set-up the Society for Theoretical Art and Analyses (with Roger Cutforth) some time before 1969.<sup>39</sup> Like Art & Language, and perhaps in response to seeing Atkinson and Baldwin's works in New York, they had begun making textual works with accompanying interpretations (*Six Negatives* and *Read Premise [Carrying Case for Six Negatives]* [1968-69]); and they had published discussions about "theoretical art and analyses" as the "Proceedings" of the Society.<sup>40</sup> Their work, in both painted and print form, paid close attention to the polemics of the New York scene, developing along side minimalism and the aesthetic of installation while also retaining address towards the painting practices of Ad Reinhardt and Frank Stella—whose works were less sensational than the announced minimalists but equally intelligible as refusals and counter-examples to the formalist canvases of Greenbergian favour. Atkinson met Burn and Ramsden in New York and their work became part of *Art-Language* and, in 1971, their Society became assimilated to Art & Language. What they brought to the group was an astute take, better developed than Kosuth's, regarding the New York art work and art world they had come into as outsiders.

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The new recruits and the alliances they represented spread the group's scope of influence—extending out from the centre of Coventry but also leaving that space of activity relatively untouched. Indeed, with Atkinson, Bainbridge and—after fall 1969—Baldwin teaching at the Coventry College of Art, the group was more focused than ever before. At the same time *Art-Language* was launched, Art & Language (and others<sup>41</sup>) were developing a course in "Art Theory" at Coventry, leading students along the paths Art & Language tread in the conceptual art world,

with Hurrell commuting from Hull for informal gatherings of the 'art' group. This pedagogical aspect of the group is crucial, for their links through art education kept certain pressures at bay, keeping the association collegial and contentious principally with those beyond its contingent. And they used their position effectively, lecturing and talking, inviting their New York contacts to come to the college (Kosuth, LeWitt, Andre and Siegelau all spoke), using the practice of teaching through verbal language as an integral part of their art practice. As a sign of the significance of their pedagogy, at the same time as Harrison joined, Philip Pilkington and David Rushton, two Coventry "Art Theory" students, became Art & Language members, while several other students were published in *Art-Language*.

In light of their teaching practice, *Art-Language* began to publish almost exclusively its extended group members' writings. The journal became pre-occupied with working through the legacy of formalism and minimalism as members discoursed among themselves and the college contingent, effectively providing a self-generating discourse illustrating how their peculiar language-use differed from typical "art society" use. New philosophical references abound as the group became more fully versed in their appropriated language and more distant from the aim of making demonstrable objects. Though the funny bombast continues, the texts become increasingly stern, wrapped up in logical formulae and the history of philosophy, with less direct regard to the work being produced as conceptual art or the "art society" as a formation, but caught up with the harder aim of dealing with the "support languages" of art production.

Between the power moves to extend influence and the position of the Coventry situation as a teaching-centre, Art & Language was becoming very serious work. Whether it was their increased awareness of how art operated in the international scene or a delayed emanation of continuing concerns, the work of "Art Theory" as a course fixed on questions of the artist as a particular type of social subject. As three students described, "the whole point of Art Theory was that . . . one ought not follow the paradigms which show us what is Art, but as critical practitioners consider alternative a-priori [sic] reasons for making art."<sup>42</sup> This reminds us that after the flamboyance of student occupations and rioting, quieter work was going on 'inside the

system' in the form of instructors and students testing the limits and ideologies of their 'host' institutions. Art & Language needs to be seen as part of this—and not starry-eyed in its tactics. Though there was a "Technos" component, where Bainbridge worked, the "Theory" portion resulted in three coincident products. First, students began writing papers (sounding very much like Art & Language);<sup>43</sup> second, Atkinson and Baldwin began looking at more historical models of art production; third, the course was discontinued in August 1971 and most all of the staff were fired.

To deal with these matters separately is difficult because the course was strategic in intent and suppressed because of the success of its intent. In reply to the "misfit" image—and in accord with national diploma objectives--the course was intellectually challenging and run on a more-or-less academic seminar or tutorial model. It required the instructors to investigate formations prior to modernism in order to touch on social issues about the individual artist and the art market. They used the opportunity to delve into the "arguments, fundamentals or reform" that analytic philosophy ignored in its concentration on empirical proof. This entailed a consideration of the individual as legal subject, as productive agent and as instructed 'student' of the state. However instructive the programme was, the course was not classed as art history or "complementary studies" and existed within the studio-based Fine Art Department of the College. "Art Theory" was designed, much as Art & Language practice was aimed in the art world, to challenge the divide between intellectual and manual labour that persisted in the art college. The results were upsetting to the administrative system that countenanced the split between vocational and academic courses, for, as students produced papers rather than objects for evaluation, this struck the appropriate nerve in the body of contradictions which made up the art college system.

British art education itself was in the midst of administrative change, as many art colleges were being absorbed into the technology-based polytechnics. This too was meant to counter the "misfit" image of the colleges and to meet student unrest, but it was disposed in the direction of producing technocratic designers or "supra-artists" rather than exciting "critical

practitioners." The "Art Theory" course collided with the implementation of the policy at Coventry when the College of Art became the Faculty of Art and Design of Lanchester Polytechnic in 1970. A new dean, Robin Plummer, was installed in spring 1971 and he said he had been "sold a lemon" in "Art Theory" and proceeded to use his authority to end it. A philosopher was called in to examine the work being done. As Atkinson writes:

The regime [of administrators] lived in a simple ontological world—art was objects and since texts were something else, they were not art. . . . The philosopher proved to live in a slightly more complex ontological world and therefore resolved nothing for them, except to suggest that the things of the art world might be marginally more complex than the regime thought and wanted them to be. . . . The latter suggestion went well beyond his brief, the regime were not asking whether it was art or not, they had presumed it wasn't—this was the premise for asking a philosopher in the first place. . . . Their behaviour in the matter was incongruous, willful and stupid.<sup>44</sup>

Unbothered by philosophy, Plummer went up the administrative ladder, to the National Council of the Diploma in Art and Design, where he succeeded in getting a determination from the Chief Officer that "a proper balance should be maintained between studio work and complementary studies," while "'studio work' [is used] in its commonly accepted meaning, that is to say the production of tangible visual objects."<sup>45</sup> Since the "Art Theory" course deviated from this standard and confused Council categories, the diploma credentials of the course were held to be imperilled and it could be cut by Plummer. As sessional instructors, Bainbridge and Baldwin were summarily sacked; Atkinson, who held a full-appointment, stayed on till 1973, then resigned.

One aspect of the fallout from this affair took typical Art & Language form. Atkinson and Baldwin's "Art Teaching" in the winter 1971 *Art-Language* analyzed the art school and art education system in depth without directly mentioning the dispute. Harrison's intermediary role enabled texts penned by himself and several students to be published in *Studio International*; these directly mentioned the turmoil, calling into question the procedures used, and deliberately exposed the retarded quality of the administrative declaration from the Chief Officer. The art education mandarins did nothing, not even responding in print.<sup>46</sup> This series of events affected a great deal of what became of Art & Language. They may be said to have proved that their

language-use critiqued "art society" in the manner in which the administrative system was brought to bear upon their textual practice, yet the retrospective texts indicate how Art & Language coped with crisis—they read it into their own terms. Reasonably enough, the students' desired that "contractual" agreements be met and they receive the education they signed up for. Harrison focused on questions of how art education was being (mis-)administered. Both, however, bring in the terminology of the group to address their criticism and the result sometimes reads more like a debating society than a set of grievances. The authorities' refusal to respond, much as it indicates a satisfied exercise of power, also described a situation where different languages were being spoken.

"Art Teaching" is the most significant of the post-course texts, for it argues about "possessive individualism" and "laissez faire art education"—scoring points in ideological terms against the blunt wedge of bureaucracy—while it also condenses the complaint. The article, without admission, summarizes the material taught in "Art Theory" and its overall social framework is not found in any other Art & Language documents till after 1974. A change in types of reference and intellectual resources is evident in allusions to Kant, Petrarch, Hobbes, Marx, Freud, Hegel, Macpherson and Nietzsche. The substance is political in terms of the way the artist and art education are socially placed—between a liberal notion of "freedom" purporting individual choice and a "neurosis" needing educational "adjustment to society." Full of de-mythologizing analyses of British art education and the contradictions of art production, "Art Teaching," with its intellectual heavyweights and its breadth of argument, lead to a pessimistic conclusion:

One of the precise marks . . . of extreme exploitation is that those who suffer it do not see themselves differently from the way they are seen by their exploiters. . . . Thus if the student 'chooses' to diminish his reflective consciousness he is remaining consistent to the laissez-faire system's possibilities; just as consistent in fact, as the student who 'chooses' to enhance his reflective consciousness. . . . [I]t is possible for the system to allow, and in allowing remain consistent, a diminishing of reflective consciousness.<sup>47</sup>

Atkinson and Baldwin here declare a dialectical distaste for both conformity to stricture and the license to think beyond stricture that had fuelled their production. The system itself remains

impervious, structured around permission only to the point where difference emerges to show difference up as out of the bounds of "laissez-faire."

Precisely the point made by Plummer we might add, and the sting of its proof accounted for the next moves made by Art & Language. In exile from the art education system, the group set itself up as something between a think-tank for the "art society" and a guerrilla *foco* attacking the structures of that society--"reflective consciousness" in action. The notion of the Art & Language "conversation" as the group's 'work' first occurs at this time, as does the notion of a "textbook" or "programme map" which would re-instate the conditions of the didactic schoolroom without educational or art-institutional support: the Art & Language Institute. The tentative and 'loose' quality of their former association was abandoned for a tight, new order. The "conversation" became their unique product and their alibi, for it represented the desiderative pedagogy so rudely forced out of the art education system.

Bainbridge virtually left the group at this time because ending the course meant he was no longer subversive of state-supported employment. Hurrell drifted off as well, and the English fraternity re-organized around Baldwin's home in Banbury and Harrison's editorial cenacle in Berkshire.<sup>48</sup> Though he has never said as much, Harrison's joining was concurrent with the aftermath of the Coventry crisis and the re-ordering of the group as a dissident enterprise; he was now on board "volunteering editorial competence where it was sorely needed."<sup>49</sup> Pilkington and Rushton, still enrolled at Lanchester, became members both for their allegiance to their teachers and as a sign of solidarity with the critical attitude of the group. They continued on the student roll but their classes now took the form of off-campus interaction at Banbury. Atkinson, remaining at Lanchester--the point of contention--now refers to these moves as the formation of the "Banbury caucus" who initiated the indexing project as part of a move to contest and determine the group's position in what he deems "official conceptualism."<sup>50</sup> Harrison regards this period as the first time that Art & Language figured out what it was about, and it is fortunate for his account and his eulogy that he was there to take part (or take a major part in its re-direction, as Atkinson would have it).



Yet this is confusing matters, for what would become the indexing process developed out of a form of discord and displacement that was already latent in the group. Art & Language as a publishing organization, a teaching unit and an exhibition-identified group had a number of aims all of which had rested upon one unfixed and one fixed variable. Members at different times--and for different reasons--had a felt resistance to London, to New York, to conceptualism as a style, to the Lanchester bureaucracy, to exhibition, to criticism, to "laissez faire," etc. The fixed variable was that all had shared a identity-forming position within the structures contested. Cohesion within the group depended on the former to be in place before alliances were formed and the Coventry crisis is the first hit the group had to take as an asymmetrical formation. The persons involved may recall it in terms of the greater dramas which dog them till today, but the immediate situation was one that pressed home the appearance of Art & Language's identity versus the diverging logistics of collaboration and opposition they were variously allied to as group members and individuals.

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A discussion of these matters needs to take into account the 'public' face of Art & Language at the time because the individual claims are complex and seek, retrospectively, to clear the air by incriminating others involved. This is not a petty matter, since its unpleasantness reverbs through the memories, but rather than seeing the claims now made as determining interpretation, I see them as pale echoes of an inability to cohere practice in the realms of pedagogy and exhibition. To deal first with the pedagogical and organizational dimension, let us look at the theoretical areas Art & Language were looking at. If the question of the first wave of conceptualism had been the matter of producing an object or a "dematerialized" art work, then Art & Language began delving into the reasoning behind the persistence of the assumption of the art object as something classed as material in character.

Kosuth published his only contribution to *Art-Language* in the second issue in 1970. It is "An Introductory Note by the American Editor"--only three pages long--and shows Kosuth

adjusting his idealism to the Art & Language position chiefly through an attempt to describe the structural shift involved in suppressing criticism:

This art [conceptual art] both annexes the function of the critic and makes a middle-man unnecessary. The other system: artist-critic-audience existed because the visual elements . . . gave art an aspect of entertainment, thus it had an audience. The audience of conceptual art is composed primarily of artists—which is to say that an audience separate from the participants doesn't exist.<sup>51</sup>

No one need be apprised of the sophistry here, for, though the art audience may be small, the forces that run it depend upon larger and more powerful groups than artists for their function. But conceptual art presented itself as generated by the artists themselves out of a dissatisfaction with the rest of the administration of the art realm. And Kosuth, other relations notwithstanding, allied himself with Art & Language as a sign of being in contest with the standard state of affairs where, as he put it: "The artist's role is not unlike that of the valet's assistance to his marksman master: pitching in the air of clay plates for targets."<sup>52</sup> While Kosuth is naming the critic as the shooter, this statement can be seen as presaging a lot of the shooting around the field of Art & Language.

In the same issue, Atkinson published a lengthy paper of his own, entitled "From an Art & Language Point of View," critiquing Barry, LeWitt and Morris—rewarding Kosuth for his enlistment by separating him out from the fray of New York conceptualism. The text ends with the insult that most "thinkworks, earthworks, waterworks, skyworks, etc., etc., [are] founded upon abortive and sloppy thinking." Earlier on Atkinson offers what he called:

a general picture of the position as it is conceived from the Art & Language viewpoint; this would be something like the fish does not have to get out of the water to examine the water, but such a procedure may entail the fish ceasing to be a fish. The artist changes rather than the art? The progression is one of successive stances taken from a meta-position in relation to the last one; this seems to me to be the essential structure of the conceptual art practice.<sup>53</sup>

With Kosuth's 'artists-only' distinction in tow, the adoption of this position makes sense as an anti-market description of conceptual practice as a 'radical' pedagogy, the stages and "meta-positions" bringing forth knowledge and criteria for change. "Theoretical analysis" would then

mean teaching, correcting, disciplining the 'students' and spectators, readers and lookers, artists and administrators of the art world. It was ironic of course, a resistance to the "entertainment" model of art production, but the metaphors used imply a condition where art is controlled by the producer's scope; Art & Language's grasp of where to move next--playing the audience like a fish in a stream. The 'hunting and fishing' models used by Atkinson and Kosuth may just be an unfortunate coincidence but both conflate the question of audience with the artist's practice. Now in control, insulated by text and positioned in a new field, were the group were on a "progression" or involved in a retreat into hermetic self-regard? Was the water here safe?

These questions lead them in two not quite distinct directions. On one hand, there was the ethical, or "deontic" aspect, which bound the artist to produce objects with the understanding that the object and exhibition model represented the normative manner in which art was received. Investigating this aspect entailed a series of examinations of what held the individual subject to rules, laws, ideologies of production and exhibition, as well as examining the status of rules as exemplars, contracts, imperatives, and discursive formations enforcing those ideologies. The aim was to understand the artist as the subject of such ideologies; as the perpetrator of objects which spoke and embodied art but did not, as it were, contain the coordinates of the existing plan of ideological battle. The second direction followed from the first, for it entailed inquiring into why these terms--the "deontic" analysis--were now open to question; that is, why Art & Language (and other conceptual artists) were allowed not just to bend the rules but were, according to the rules, permitted to investigate their applicability to practice.

While description and analysis of the first meant more use of analytic philosophy and its arcana of semantic parsing of possible uses and meanings of ethical imperatives, the second developed towards the philosophy of science. The philosophy of science had already been applied to art production by E.H. Gombrich's appropriation of Karl Popper's logical positivism<sup>54</sup> in order to examine art as a system of progressive "schemata" in pursuit of what Norman Bryson calls "the essential copy."<sup>55</sup> Though cued by Gombrich's example, Art & Language took up another text, Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, for their purposes, expressly

because whereas Popper and Gombrich had concentrated on progressive, individual efforts as constitutive of change, Kuhn proposed a model which stressed group effort and, moreover, his work treated the science community as a variegated entity with the rules changing for its members under the structure of the paradigm.<sup>56</sup> To account for change in scientific approaches and theories, according to Kuhn, it was necessary to posit a period of entrenchment of developed theories—the paradigm—that was followed by an enervation of those theories to the point where a new set of ideas and theoretical positions supplanted the previous paradigm with another set of established theoretical positions. This period—analogue to the state of art after its formalist, object-based paradigm—would indicate the existence of a "paradigm-shift," the replacement of one set of theoretical assumptions and positions with a new formulation of the problems to be solved and the manner in which the deadweight was to be disposed.

Art & Language admired and appropriated the elegance of Kuhn's account, and its adoption by them does help account for the depth of questioning and the new focus upon organization and shared argument which would propel the group towards the procedures of the *Index*. The advent of conceptual art met most of the criteria for paradigm-shift, but the object remained as paradigmatic evidence for theory-testing—as in the "Introduction" with its conditional positing of itself as being "held out as «conceptual art» work." In querying the conditions of production of the "material-character/physical object paradigm" the group could see itself as scientific as opposed to artistic in constitution.<sup>57</sup> In enigmatic terms the statement:

The first thing to point out is that none of this has any systematic bearing on questions of the order 'Is it alright as art?' . . . We don't have to worry about admitting the futility of the existence[-]assumptions in your practical thinking. *We are not planning.*<sup>58</sup>

represents evidence of a position wherein the group itself takes on the trappings of a scientific group. The criteria of normative aesthetic reception are set for a loop here. This statement asks those who respond to their work with the saying "It's alright as art, but I know what I like" to take a hike; conversely, the text asks those who, deontically set to expect art, would put their "practical thinking" to work out what kind of object is presented, to sit back and consider this example of

text as an example of a paradigm-shift that is not *in* the text but going on *across the field* of art practice. It does not seek to supplant or re-order the object so much as to seek out methods to talk about the conditions under which the object came to become the accepted model for art production—rejecting, at the start, the idea of art appreciation. It was towards this end that the "conversation" was to be aimed, for, by positing the members as discursive agents rather than as artists making something, the goal was for Art & Language to be seen as researchers rather than artisans, as "intellectually rather than culturally franchised." That, of course, was the phrase Harrison applied to the *Index* and its "fantasy" of a public, but it applies much better to the corporate image of Art & Language in its attempt to resist the norms of production.

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Meanwhile, Art & Language were still encountering difficulties at exhibition, when, for example, Kynaston McShine of the Museum of Modern Art framed copies of *Art-Language* for part of their contribution to yet another conceptual art survey, "Information," in 1970. The journal could not be read by the spectator, perhaps reflecting, as Harrison has suggested, that curators "found the journal 'unreadable',"<sup>59</sup> but the unreadability had its auratic effects. As the conceptual art tide rose, networking and alliances produced results. Art & Language began getting attention and exhibitions from continental dealers.<sup>60</sup> The "art society" would prove accepting of them, the dealers buying up early work and displaying it, providing funds to print *Art-Language* and Art & Language Press publications. The funds also helped to feed the group, as the sacking from Coventry put strains on more than group cohesion.

As Michael Baldwin recalled, for Art & Language "an exhibition was regarded as an *occupation*" in two ways:

- 1) the beholder-as-reader would become an agent regarding the discourse to which exhibited texts attested; and 2) the beholder-as-consumer would go away empty-handed or worse. The two alternatives are of course subject to various modalities, mutatis mutandis—from 'anger' to a feeling of 'coercion', etc.<sup>61</sup>

While this was written with hindsight, Baldwin invokes the vocabulary of guerrilla tactics in order to accent the type of intention Art & Language acted on in the early seventies. In terms of the "beholder," as Baldwin is clear, their activity was intended to alienate and aggravate, but Art & Language achieved this through curious means. The insult to the audience was delivered not as avant-gardist "nothing to see at all" or a document of action elsewhere, but in the form of alphabetic text, supposedly legible. This might be pinned to the walls or placed as a booklet in the space, yet it was not nonsensical in grammar or syntax if you picked it up. Rather, its density and language challenged, spoke of occult knowledge and superiority—much as Bainbridge and Hurrell's devices set up the participant as dupe. The cynicism and resentment present in this method is driven by a misery which it churns and circulates as the bad faith of its witness in coming towards the text in expectation—denial of affect seeking to offend and rebuff participation. Contrary to "becoming an agent" the discourse subjects the viewer/reader to taunts, rambles, logic and system, ordering the encounter as a type of violation or interrogation of normative aesthetic reception. Baldwin now calls this the "(didactic?) terror" of conceptualism.<sup>62</sup>

Parentheses and question-marks aside, this "terror" left little initial evidence of its effects. Art & Language's campaign against criticism worked to the extent that they were rarely mentioned in the contemporary art press outside the more-or-less promotional materials noted above. The curators placing them in synoptic exhibitions dealt in typical curatorial generalities of information or "idea-art" and fit their work into the mould of "art intended as pure experience" intending to "break down the artificial imposition of 'culture'," as Lippard put it in 1969.<sup>63</sup> Even Harrison, in the summer of 1971, prefaced "The British Avant-Garde" with a plea to comprehend the good intentions of artists, calling Art & Language's aims a "pursuit and analysis of the implications of the art work . . . in consciousness of the fact that those implications may/will have relevance in the long-term in the cultural/political context."<sup>64</sup> Curators, of course, can hardly face the bad side of things in promoting exhibitions, yet the sanguine, liberatory hopes placed on the art are at odds with its origins as critique and its attempts at irritation.

Such a lack of fit implies something was not working. Either Art & Language were not really irritating or conceptualism's promoters were capable of absorbing the shock. It could be both, for the manner in which conceptual art was shown and discussed played strongly on the artist as an intending agent and the viewer as a potential receiver who was being invited to consider this type of work as alternate practice rather than as a critical practice. Art & Language protested to the contrary, yet they did so in the vocabulary they had declared to be art. Hence "theoretical analysis" could appear as the "investigatory energies" Lippard saw in Art & Language or put on hold for the long term as Harrison's remark could be construed. That is to say, the "beholder" need not leave mugged by the work unless he became subjected to its discourse. A conundrum is illustrated here and an example is useful. For "The British Avant-Garde" exhibition in New York, Atkinson and Baldwin specially signed and editioned one copy of their 1971 book *Theories of Ethics* (fig. 16) with the proviso that "this is the only copy authorized for wall display."<sup>65</sup> The stipulation reveals the chink in conceptual art armour that had already been ridiculously opened up at MoMA.

Though responding to the exhibition predicament in requiring a sole copy for display, *Theories of Ethics* is perhaps one of their most irritating works, taking ten ethical imperatives ("Will the good in truth!", "Do not be 'double-minded'!", "Be ready to 'suffer all' for the good!" are three) and expounding the ramifications of analyzing imperatives in general as calls to action and statements of individual will or enforced ideas of good. This involves some seventy pages, most of which is a repetition of the imperatives followed by conditional phrasing and linguistic analysis. The hectoring imperatives clash with the reasoned, speculative connectives, and the repetitions could certainly make one ask: What's the good of this?; Do I want to read this?; Is this suffering all for the good? An accompanying text, printed in the catalogue, "*De Legibus Naturae*," analyzes the object-status of *Theories of Ethics*, finishing with the determination that "the problem is what to make of these 'pieces of paper'." As such, one understands more of Baldwin's talk of an "empty-handed" encounter; but were the pieces of paper to be read or to be seen to be readable? It would be possible to glance at them as legible as text or as intelligible as art works to be looked

at but not, in a metaphoric sense, to be touchstones for understanding the "art society." That "*De Legibus Naturae*" discusses this problem ad nauseam does not guarantee its penetration; nor do negational tactics necessarily mark the advancement of critique.

The imperatives of *Theories of Ethics* anagogically resemble guides to critical, political and aesthetic 'good' behaviour, so an Art & Language-type examination is present if one thinks about it as a "deontic" investigation. Yet the matter of whether the endeavour aimed for an understanding of this difficult text by viewers is not so important as is the fact that the very difficulty—the novelty of the analyses and products—could be aestheticized. Art & Language's challenge was not occupying but *pre-occupying* the gallery space, deferring material presence in the name of artistic license. The aesthetic privilege of a sanctioned Art & Language critique suitable for framing was available not just because copies of *Theories of Ethics* were objects but because the 'work' "specialized" itself, routing around criticism but not out of the way of privilege. The seriality of *Theories of Ethics* and the parody of interpretation in the accompanying text made the work an intricate web, complex and hard, worthy of respect as a piece of work, but it was still art and critical mostly in the manner in which it staged its affliction for the reader. The crisis of the object-text had no problem in being co-opted as an abject and mastered entity calling for care and delectation on the part of the spectator: read it and weep. In this, like much of the Art & Language work of this period, methods for mobilizing critique, for going beyond the M1 model of the superficial, surveying viewer, were not forthcoming even if the "relations of distribution" had altered the media of practice. The writing was in a privileged position like any object—its artistry hooking a catch because it assumed a glimmering presence in murky depths. This type of depth, alienating but approved by exhibition, would lead to the obdurate "occupation" of indexing and the *Index* itself. There, the history of Art & Language would become staged as the conflicted emblem of the "reflective consciousness" of the time.



## Notes

1. This portion of the text is one of a number of amendments made by Buren to his "Mise en garde," first published the catalogue for *Konzeption/Conception* (Leverkuzen: Städtisches Museum, 1969). The text was reprinted in *Studio International* 179 (March 1970), 100-103, and in *Five Texts*, Charles Harrison and Peter Townsend, trans. (Paris: Éditions Daniel Buren, 1970). I cite the facsimile versions of both the typescript "Mise en garde" and the typeset version of "Beware!" found in *Art Conceptuel Formes conceptuel/Conceptual Art Conceptual Forms*, Christian Schlatter, ed. (Paris: Galerie 1900/2000, 1990), 410-433.
2. Buren, 411.
3. "Introduction," *Art-Language* 1:1 (May 1969), 1.
4. "Introduction," 10.
5. *An Evening*, 9.
6. Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," in *American Sculpture of the Sixties* (Los Angeles: LACMA, 1967) and Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* V:10. Both reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Gregory Battcock, ed. (New York: Dutton, 1968), 116-147, 180-186.
7. Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* V:10 (Summer 1967), 84.
8. Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* XII:2 (February 1968), 31-36.
9. Published in Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years*, 43-44. Lippard claims this is a "letter from the Art-Language group . . . March 23, 1968," but no such group existed at the time. Given the fact that it was their work being discussed, the text was probably by Atkinson and Baldwin. Although, the use of the first-person possessive pronoun, "my," in the quote suggests a single author, many early texts by the pair alternate from first-person to third-person usage.
10. "Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin: conceptual drawings based on various serial and conceptual schemes," identifying the *Map Not to Indicate* and *Map of Itself* (both 1967), "The Dematerialization of Art," 33.
11. Harrison and Orton, 24, write that "Neither book was submitted to the Dwan," adding the (for them) sinister note that "but copies of both had been left by Atkinson with interested parties in New York," as if the notion of New York display would be anathema to Baldwin. The bookworks in question were, *Hot/Cold* (1967) and *22 Sentences: The French Army* (1968).
12. Siegel's "January 5-31" show of 1969 existed "primarily" as a catalogue. One of the participating artists, Joseph Kosuth, conducted interviews with the others--Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Lawrence Weiner (and himself)--publishing them in *Arts* ?? (February 1969) under the name of Arthur R. Rose. Siegel next presented the "March 1-31, 1969" show with thirty-one artists (including Atkinson and Baldwin) each given space in the catalogue rather than on the wall. The work was to be mailed to the gallery and reproduced for outside distribution. For the "Simon Fraser Exhibition," Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Siegel brought a group of artists together using remote mailings and (in Robert Barry's case) telepathy. Atkinson and Baldwin had copies of *Hot/Cold* and *22 Sentences: The French Army* catalogued and placed into the university library collection. (The copies are now listed as missing, but they were catalogued under interdisciplinary art, perhaps out of spirit with the artists' intention.)
13. "557,087" was held at the Seattle Art Museum (World's Fair Pavilion, Seattle Center) September 5-October 5, 1969. It was enlarged and remounted as "955,000," (Vancouver Art Gallery and Student Union Building, UBC), January 13-February 9, 1970. The titles refer to the population of the City of Seattle at the time and the population of Greater Vancouver at the time. See Lucy Lippard, *955,000* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1970), and *557,087* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 1970). Both publications use catalogue cards submitted by the artists' describing their work for the show, and provide an introduction and bibliography in the same format. For an account of how the Vancouver exhibition is related to the Seattle Art Museum's 1969 exhibition see, *Six Years*, 110-113, 143.
14. *955,000*.
15. "Introduction," *Art-Language*, 1:1 (May, 1969), 1.

16. Charles Harrison, "Against Precedents," *Studio International* 178 (September 1969), 91. "This article is also printed as a catalogue introduction for the exhibition" reads the preface to the article proper, page 90.
17. Charles Harrison, "Sculpture's Recent Past," 28
18. See Harald Szeeman and Gregoire Muller, *When Attitudes Become Form* (Berne: Kunsthalle Berne, 1969) for the artists involved. For St. Martin's connections, see Charles Harrison, "Sculpture's Recent Past," 24-28. Dibbets, Flanagan, Long and Louw were also represented in "557,087."
19. Here, I must take exception to Benjamin Buchloh's description of the "Introduction" as expressing a "restricted reading of Duchamp," in his essay, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions." What he cites on page 126 as a declarative claim on the part of Art & Language is, in the context, a conditional category which is soon deemed to be unsatisfactory as any full reading (or quotation) of the paragraph in question would show. Buchloh's lack of research into Art & Language's treatment of the readymade obviously did not extend to Atkinson's comments in "From and Art & Language Point of View," *Art-Language* I:2 (February 1970), 54-60, or to Atkinson and Baldwin's, *Air-conditioning Show / Air Show / Frameworks 1966-7*, where they write: "The 'Portrait of Iris Clert' et famille are very old. It reflects among others that 'what we have we hold': an anarchic blow at artistic jingoism. It ends up itself as jingoism." Compare to Buchloh's later claim for Buren's "reading of Duchamp and the readymade as acts of petit-bourgeois anarchist radicality," and his qualifier that though such a reading is "not complete and accurate" this "allowed Buren to construct a successful critique." Meanwhile Art & Language are accused of "an authoritarian quest for orthodoxy." Buren is one of Buchloh's darlings and Duchamp his albatross, but sloppy and misleading citation should be repaired before critical favouritism is invoked. For the matter, see Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 126 on Art & Language and Duchamp, 137 on Buren and Duchamp.
20. The *Poem-schema* is a reductive exercise in describing the contents of a page in grammatical and typographical terms; LeWitt's sentences resemble counselling for conceptual wannabes ("Conceptual artists are mystics rather than rationalists"; "Perception of ideas leads to new ideas."), while Weiner's statements are proposals and/or works of art, depending on how you "receive" them. I treat these as works of art with a certain hesitation. Although printed in *Art-Language* and other publications (*Aspen* magazine for the Graham, 0-9 for the LeWitt and separately by Siegelau for the Weiner), all were represented in *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective*. The Graham as a work, reproduced in part on page 153 of the catalogue, includes a signed leaf from *Art-Language*; the LeWitt is reproduced in holograph on pages 200-203; Weiner's work exists as both the printed statement and the achieved action, so the 1968 works at 231-232 also come from *Art-Language*.
21. "Introduction," 3.
22. "Introduction," 10.
23. "Introduction," 10.
24. The "Introduction" is the first citation in the *Index*. The poster with its *Alternate Map for Documenta (Based on Citation A)*, then, takes this as the principal base for the lattice of relations.
25. *Six Years*, 151.
26. David Bainbridge, "Notes on M1(1)" and "Notes on M1(2)." *Art-Language* I:1 (May 1969): 19-21, 30-33.. The M1 or Motorway One is the name given the first long-distance freeway in Britain, completed in the early sixties. Whatever relevance the name has for the title of the model has not been recorded, though the scheme does sound like something you might cook up driving down the road.
27. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Minimal Art*, 127.
28. Joseph Kosuth, "Art After Philosophy III," *Studio International* 178:917 (December 1969), 212. Reprinted in Gabriele Guercio, ed., *Art After Philosophy and After: Collected Writings 1966-1990* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), 30. Buchloh, in "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," questions the dating of Kosuth's early work before

1969. This questioning, like any other argument about attribution, lead to argument: see Joseph Kosuth's "Joseph Kosuth Responds to Benjamin Buchloh," *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective* (Second Edition), 60 (reprinted in *October* 57 [Summer 1991], 152-154). For amusing insider information on the matter, see, Charles Harrison, "Conceptual Art: Myths and Scandals," *Artscribe* 80 (March/April 1990), 15-16. Terry Atkinson, in "The Indexing," 44-6, also enters the fray, reporting that he saw at least one piece, *Three and One Chairs*, in 1969.
29. See *Joseph Kosuth: Investigation über Kunst & 'Problemkreise' seit 1965* (Lucerne: Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1973), volumes 1, 2 and 3.
30. In the introductory essay to "Ideen," Klaus Honnef and Gisela Kaminski list this exhibition as the beginning of conceptualism. See *Documenta* 5, section 17: 1. Gabriele Guercio, "Formed in Resistance: Barry, Huebner, Kosuth and Weiner vs. the American Press," in *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective*, 74-81, examines the links of the group to press coverage without questioning the cohesiveness or appropriateness of treating them together. As we shall see, this is a problem as far as Kosuth is concerned.
31. Kosuth, 24. Though his objectives are defamatory, Buchloh does treat the "Art After Philosophy" essay well, pointing out its shortcomings in "Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," 125-130. My objections to the way he lumps Art & Language together with this essay are discussed in note #19.
32. Kosuth, 20.
33. Kosuth, 27.
34. Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell, "Status and Priority," *Studio International* 179 (January 1970), 30.
35. In the following phrases: "the status of the work of art as a particular object in a finite state," and "the object is no longer to be seen as the absolute priority in art," *Studio International* 178 (September 1969), 91, 93.
36. Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell, "Status and Priority," *Studio International* 179 (January 1970), 28.
37. Harrison and Orton, notes 33, 37, 38 and 40, page 82, list the exhibitions and the essays, with extra information about Harrison's change of position.
38. Charles Harrison, "Notes Towards Art Work," *Studio International* 170 (February 1970), 44.
39. See *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects* (New York: New York Cultural Center, 1970), 67, and Lippard, *Six Years*, 37. Kosuth also notes the Society as doing "interest work in the 'purer' sense," "Art After Philosophy II," 29. Ramsden and Baldwin have recently published a text describing the work of these years, "Making Art from a Different Place," *Ian Burn: Minimalist-Conceptualist Works, 1965-1970* (Perth: Art Gallery of Western Australia, 1992), 7-16.
40. Ian Burn, Roger Cutforth and Mel Ramsden, *Proceedings* (New York: n.p., 1970).
41. Atkinson, "The Indexing", 20-22 gives the most detailed account of personnel and activities associated with the course.
42. Charles Harrison, Philip Pilkington, Kevin Lole, David Rushton, "Some Concerns in Fine Art Education," *Studio International* 182 (October 1971), 121.
43. Pilkington, Rushton and other students also produced the magazine, *Analytical Art*, whose contents were absorbed into the *Index* and whose publication record ceased when Pilkington and Rushton joined Art & Language. Most of the unpublished material by Graham Howard, Lole, Pilkington and Rushton found in the *Index* represent their "Art Theory" course work. See "Appendix A" for the extent of this, particularly in cabinets IV to VIII.
44. Atkinson, "The Indexing", 21.
45. E.E. Pulée to Sir Alan Richmond, July 29, 1971, reprinted in "Some Concerns in Fine Art Education," 120.
46. See "Some Concerns in Fine Art Education", *Studio International* 182 (October 1971), 120-122. Also, for more general follow-ups, see Charles Harrison, "Educating Artists," *Studio International* 183 (May 1972), 222-224, and Anthony Everitt, "Four Midland Polytechnic Fine Art Departments," *Studio International* 184 (November 1972), 176-181. Harrison also notes that Plummer *et al*

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contemplated legal action over the publication but he produced evidence of their own malfeasance that none was attempted, if the threat was truly serious at all.

47. Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "Art Teaching," *Art-Language* I:4 (November 1971), 48.

48. The back cover of *Art-Language* II:1 (May 1971) lists three addresses—retail inquiries to Atkinson in Leamington Spa and American inquiries to Kosuth in New York; editorial mail went to Harrison in Berkshire.

49. Harrison and Orton, 24.

50. This is the main argument of "The Indexing" and, though most of Atkinson's discussion is based on events after the *Index* and "Documenta 5," the events at Coventry more than any other cause precipitated the situation. As well, no matter how sincere Atkinson is in detailing the manipulations he was subject to, it remains that Art & Language went down that road (or down in that sea) with him on board.

51. Kosuth, "An Introductory Note by the American Editor," *Art-Language* I:2 (February 1970), 2-3.

52. "An Introductory Note by the American Editor," 1.

53. Terry Atkinson, "From an Art & Language Point of View," *Art-Language* I:2 (February 1970), 36.

54. E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960). Baldwin cites this work as "one of the mediating influences" on Art & Language, in "Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden on Art & Language," *Art & Text* 35 (Summer 1990), 30.

55. Bryson's *Vision and Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), is an extended and indebted critique of Gombrich's logical positivist position.

56. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). This discussion of Art & Language's understanding of the philosophy of science is indebted to David Mitchell's "The Art & Language Group: 1966 to 1973" (Masters's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1976).

57. See Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "On the Material Character/Physical Object Paradigm of Art," *Art-Language* II:1 (Summer 1971): 51-55.

58. Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "Unnatural Rules and Excuses," *Art-Language*, II:1 (February, 1972), 1. (Emphasis in original.)

59. Harrison, 1991, 69. Nancy Shaw, who has recently examined the "Information" show files at MoMA, tells me that the Art & Language file contains installation instructions for the texts the group sent for display, but not for the *Art-Language* journal.

60. Such as Daniel Templon in Paris, Enzo Sperone in Turin, Paul Maenz in Cologne, Bruno Bischofberger in Zürich.

61. "Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden on Art & Language," 30.

62. "Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden on Art & Language," 30.

63. 557,087.

64. Charles Harrison, "Virgin Soils and Old Lands," *The British Avant-Garde* (New York and London: New York Cultural Center and Studio International, 1971), 4.

65. The title page of this copy is reproduced in Christian Schlatter, *Art Conceptuel Formes conceptuel/Conceptual Art Conceptual Forms*, 126.

#### CHAPTER FOUR. THE ART & LANGUAGE INSTITUTE AND "DOCUMENTA 5"

*By putting forward its forgotten card-files and print-outs (its caskets of information) conceptualism recapitulates a kind of Mallarméan aesthetic: social subjects are presented as enigmatic hieroglyphs and given the authority of the crypt. The identification of bureaucracy, publicity and academicism with cryptic utterances expresses an awareness of the participation of universities and bureaucracies in a corporate death-machine, an awareness which of course animated the student movement.*

*What is unique about conceptual art in this context, therefore, is its reinvention of defeatism (of the quietism implicit in 'purist' art). The grey volumes of conceptual art are filled with sombre ciphers which express primarily the incommunicability of social thought in the form of art.*

Jeff Wall, "A Draft for Dan Graham's Kammerspiel," 1981.

*Without getting into a discussion of the personalities that formed it (and for that reason doomed it), suffice it to say that Art & Language was basically an art theory think-tank discussing the possibility of a practice and dominated by individuals who ultimately didn't have one.*

Joseph Kosuth, "History For," 1988.

*The Documenta Index originated as follows: I visited Joseph Kosuth in New York in the Winter of 1971. He informed me he had been invited to exhibit at Documenta in the following summer. In the context of Art & Language think-tank atmospherics, I undertook to devise a method of indexing the various discursive materials which seemed to go to the possibility of a very complex artistic identity indeed. It was argued (by me) at the time that we were within range of a very interesting, even revolutionary sense of artistic identity—identity expressed in respect of (indexical) marginality, an artistic identity which confronted directly the self-images of the age.*

Michael Baldwin, letter to the author, July 1, 1992.

In the language of the *Documenta Index* "Key," it could be held that these retrospective statements are compatible and are to be "interpreted as indicating 'history'." What Wall declares to be the failure of conceptualism is the possibility recognized by Kosuth as unrealized by Art & Language while Baldwin concurs by considering his formulation of a "revolutionary" concept of identity as "within range" but perhaps not on target for the *Index*. To form a complex statement, the three could be combined to indicate that the goal of 'purity' impeded "social thought" with the result being the (eventually) impractical but (potentially) confrontational "think-tank atmospherics" associated with the notion of the Art & Language Institute. In this case, the very "identification of bureaucracy, publicity and academicism with cryptic utterances" created a situation where the organization of the association and the writings of the Art & Language Institute bound them to a quiescent reflection of administrative domination.

In other ways, the statements are blatantly incompatible, inasmuch as Baldwin puts the question of "artistic identity" foremost, in the place where Kosuth puts (absence of) practice and Wall places "incommunicability of social thought." Articulating that identity along with its marginal position would seem to be the goal of the *Index* for Baldwin, and, given the esoteric quality of Art & Language work for the purveyors of contemporary art, it could be that their identity as a "think-tank" blew the dust off the crypt by presenting a critical "self-image" of some vitality and pertinence. After all, the *Index*, with its equalizing grids and cross-referencing, did prevaricate over the relations of author to text, text to text, text to art, art to formal regard, formal veneration to artistic textuality, the visibility of art to occult knowledge, etc. It may have rather haughtily presented these relations in the Art & Language Institute's recondite and exclusive manner, but, seemingly, it did leave the substance of these matters open for continuing "conversation." I take it that such openness, the dedication to pursue questions rather than resolve them in plastic form, was the timely identity the Art & Language Institute sought to represent in the *Index*.

The role of presenting prevarication--the *Index* as "conversation"--is also the argument put forward by Charles Harrison regarding the work, and, for his part, Baldwin might argue that the "reinvention of defeatism" was a most urgent item on the agenda because of the intractable and diminished "reflective consciousness" found in other art. He is surely turning a resistant face towards Wall's assumptions of purity when he speaks of confronting "the self-images of the day," as he did when he said that Art & Language's "concern is with the mechanisms wherein an emotivist culture is able to function."<sup>1</sup> Such aims abjure purity by investing their means with the complications of the situation at hand. Whether prevarication can count as an anti-emotivist, critical practice is the question Kosuth raises, a matter he resolved in the article cited as being founded on the hindsight opinion that Baldwin and Ramsden--by continuing to call themselves Art & Language and by taking up painting in the late-seventies--are "cancelling the meaning of the original group and its work."<sup>2</sup> This claim, like the other disagreements between the former associates of Art & Language, was delivered *ad hominem*, but it does raise the question of

"practice"; that is, the matter of what "self-images" were current when Kosuth and Baldwin began planning the *Documenta Index* and how the planners set about their task. Was the imperative of the *Index* to present an identity, illustrate a practice, or contest the space of its appearance? These are questions which emerge out of incompatibility.

Though instructive of some of its potential as an instrument, the imposition of the logic of the *Index* on these three quotes may not be totally appropriate. Even if conclusions regarding the *Index* and its significance will involve examining their relations of compatibility and incompatibility, these authors are not in substantive discussion on the matter. Wall is discussing conceptual art *tout court* with certain distinctions in tow; Kosuth is putting his two-bits into an argumentative pool over his place in the history of conceptualism; Baldwin is accounting for his direction as the main agent in the design of the *Index*. These are not commensurate positions, but even their variant intentions describe some of the issues being raised in the revision of conceptual art. How is the movement as a whole to be understood (and is it whole?) is one issue, as is the importance of any single individual contribution to a collaborative and skeptical phenomenon such as Art & Language—not to mention the divergence of opinion, then and since, concerning the effects of the intentions and identity of the producer (or producers) on the reception of a work of art. These were raised and discussed during the period—by Art & Language and others—and must be thought of in combination—given both the flavour of the time and the history since. The intention of this study is to present evidence that touches upon but does not invoke closure on these arguments. After all, the *Index* itself claimed the condition of prevarication; I cannot pretend to have exhausted its possibilities.

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The specific conditions of the construction and installation of the *Documenta Index* have just come to light due to an exchange between Kosuth and Harrison.<sup>3</sup> Where Harrison had previously held that "To Kosuth goes the credit for making the installation more-or-less upmarket" and that "The space was secured by Joseph Kosuth on an advance visit to Kassel,"<sup>4</sup> Kosuth has gone further in

recording that "Documenta 5" director Harald Szeemann "offered me a room of my own at 'Documenta 5,'" and:

When I found out Art & Language was not going to be invited to participate in 'Documenta 5', I immediately informed Harald that I would like to invite them to collaborate with me on a project in my room. He agreed since that was my wish.<sup>5</sup>

Kosuth follows this notice of his sponsorship of the *Index* with information on how he and Baldwin did preliminary work on the installation in New York while the remainder of the work was done in England. Harrison and Orton note the contribution of Pilkington, Rushton and other "Art Theory" students to the indexing procedure. Ramsden came to England in order to work on the assembly, with Kosuth and Baldwin doing the final installation in Kassel.<sup>6</sup> Baldwin's claim to having developed the indexing method in "the context of Art & Language think-tank atmospherics" is then more-or-less agreed to, even if Kosuth wants acknowledgment as the founding agent of the work's generation.

Aside from attributing handiwork, this situation shows the "marginality" of Art & Language to the international art world. The Kosuth connection paid off in the sense that the group got into "Documenta 5" through his resourcefulness but the terms of their inclusion display something of the conundrum Art & Language was operating within. As with Lippard's "557,087" in 1969—when Atkinson and Baldwin were given billing and Bainbridge and Hurrell were left off the list—the group itself was not considered to be the catch: the 'known' individuated entities operating in the group ambience (Atkinson/Baldwin, Kosuth) were. Whereas in previous Art & Language displays work was shown with demarcated spaces for each contributor, the *Index* broke with this scheme of identification as if in opposition to the recognition of individual distinction. The *Index* was determined and installed as a singular group effort, a system and a physical entity 'made' by the 10 listed persons. However, with geography and temperaments splintering activity, the group did not act jointly in proposing or in determining the display itself, even though they were represented together by it. Similarly the division of labour was asymmetrically assumed while the "convention of collective responsibility" operated to present a common front in the *Index* itself.<sup>7</sup>



The adoption of corporate identity by the Art & Language Institute—with consensus but non-participatory unity—represents an approach masking contribution and implies cohesion where discord existed. This, of course, was the position of the association following the firings from Lanchester Polytechnic, and it marks the turn from the *Art-Language*-centred publishing and individuated exhibition association towards the more cell-like formation investigating the discursivity of indexing. The transitional relation of the *Index* to this shift needs to be kept in mind, for the installation is a product of this shift and not the picture of some new ideal community that the Art & Language Institute had become. In the fluctuating fortunes of the group—reacting to dealer and curatorial pressures, promotional requirements, ego-bruising favoritism—there had always been self-possession to a certain degree, but there is something else present in the current situation: distrust.

As the *Documenta Memorandum (Indexing)* poster snaked around its point, it also addressed the internal and external distrust the group now felt:

Consistency is not . . . what one necessarily strives for in a context of theoretical discourse to which there are several contributors. Something more like 'defensibility' is what one might aim at.

. . . . .  
We want to be careful who we talk to and who we can be made to talk to.<sup>8</sup>

The need for defense, the care that needs to be applied to who one speaks to, suggests that there are threats and potential manipulations from without which the group could become subject to. The tone is one of conspiracy. While this type of association—united as a front, divided in fact, suspicious of others—describes a precarious network of relations, it does have the advantage of proposing collaboration as a method of deviating from and remaining skeptical towards the territorial, individualized appropriations of art criticism and the market. In effect, the singularity of Art & Language as an assembly of artists rather than a stable or 'style' were regarded as renegade; playing around the image-market, the associates themselves had formed a group rather than the art world putting them together under stylistic or geographical similarities. The Art & Language Institute made their suspicions of such categorical positioning paramount—to the

point where the most auspicious form of 'group' presentation was one that cast a disdainful glance and made a provocative gesture towards its own "art society" involvement.

Something of this advantage and its accompanying distrust had been grasped in the fall of 1971 when the Art & Language associates in England (including Ramsden but without Kosuth or Burn) discussed a policy that individuals would work together on *Art-Language* and renounce exhibition of individuated art works. The atomized nature of the association rendered this policy impractical—mainly due to Kosuth's relatively high profile but also as a result of the lack of union in the group.<sup>9</sup> Yet the prospect of de-differentiated association persisted as the basis of *Index* procedures since the texts were each related to the other according to logic rather than precedence. Though the citations follow a more-or-less chronological scheme to determine placement in the cabinets, the photostats treat each item discretely and the resulting order is derived without prejudice. Authors' names are listed as identifying marks for indexing, not proprietary so much as constitutive of material to work upon. When combined with the notion of the Art & Language Institute as a "conversation," Baldwin's retrospective "very interesting" identity becomes a discourse-producing and discourse-regulating syndicate whose function was to give form to self-representation through the informative inter-relations of its texts and history. Such was the significance of the title given in the "Documenta 5" catalogue—*Survey by the Art & Language Institute (1968-1972)*—for its claim to be "by" the artists implied self-representation and self-curation, a side-stepping of the normal terms of group show practice. As well, the isolation of the installation itself in the "*Ideen*" section needs to be recalled, for setting itself off—"in my room" as Kosuth says—privileged the group and made its identity separate from other art on display.

All is well and good with this explanation so far as the representation of identity, but as a manifestation—even of identity—the *Index* still possessed an opacity of a high degree. This is true of both the "upmarket" display and in the manner in which its identity was announced. Although novel in its use of a textual and logical system, the installation carries with it a "history" and an attitude of some consequence. An outline of these factors are present in the following description by Atkinson:

The "Indexes" had a clear reductivist aesthetic, they were grey and geometric. These features hugged the minimalist aesthetic. The *Index* charts were a pure kind of conceptual functionalism. In the staggering detail of the items, piled apparently endlessly, reading in and reading out became highly fetishized procedures.<sup>10</sup>

The memory of minimalism is clear in the symmetrical siting of the files and in their provenance in standard-issue materials—a memorial most appropriate when put against Robert Morris' 1961 work, *Card File* (fig. 17).<sup>11</sup> In that work, Morris used a Kardex file like the kind found in the *Index* drawers, documenting the procedures used in fabricating the work, labelling each leaf in the drawer with a heading—such as "Accidents," "Cards," "Stores," "Trips"—indicating the information to be found on the card below. This work, along with others by Morris in the early sixties,<sup>12</sup> created a self-referring loop wherein the *Card File* constituted itself and became tautological as a descriptive object.<sup>13</sup>

The links to the *Index* are clear; yet differences are also apparent. *Card File* has a heading for "Cross Filing" but does not express a complete network of relations or refer beyond itself—it remains a sort of neo-dada exercise in formalist debunking, using tautology to parody self-reference. The *Index* uses self-reference in another way, to map out group compatibilities, while the charted relations are meant to refer to some outside space where the indexed items can be said to operate: the Art & Language Institute. In this, the *Index* describes its making as a product not of certain actions or "Accidents" but as the conspicuous result of intellectual labour by Institute members. In doing so, the *Index* pays tribute—self-referring recognition—to Kosuth's series of *Investigations* that took the form of reading-rooms (fig. 18).<sup>14</sup> These involved setting strict, bureaucratic rules and tests for participants, subjecting viewers to logical problems from IQ tests, using clocks and notebooks, chairs and tables like a classroom of the most rigid sort.<sup>15</sup> Hardly a form of "entertainment" but seemingly inviting audience complicity in order to stress the intellectual component invested in the preparation of the piece—thus calling participants to read and use their minds instead of simply look. Through this strategy Kosuth developed contexts and procedures for elaborating on the type of display problems met with by Art &

Language's 'pieces of paper': Kosuth's displays and their protocols insisted on participation--so to 'get' the work meant that the viewer became complicit in its functioning.

For the *Index*, the only 'work' by Art & Language listing Kosuth's name, his method was put to work. The difference here, essential to the continuance of the Art & Language Institute, was that the texts and conditions of the *Index* were from and by the group, with the implication that their problems were your problems, that participation meant an ineluctable engagement with their terms. They had also worked some of their past into the work in further terms, given that the four plinths and cabinets mimed the equidistant placement of Morris' *Mirror Cubes* that had set Baldwin off along the path to Art & Language; also, of course, they sought, like the early Bainbridge and Hurrell work, to set up a systematic exhibition hardware that used the spectator to begin functioning. In this way, and not just through the texts, did Art & Language Institute incorporate its history and previous identity into the *Index* display.

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With this self-referring pedigree in tow, the poster and the wall signage announced the new face of the group as the Art & Language Institute, parodying academic status and stressing another space in which the group functioned. The words "The Art & Language Institute/Paul Maenz/Köln/June 15" were emblazoned at the bottom of the poster, on both sides, in large type, to advertise the group's show at Maenz that ran concurrent to the opening of "Documenta 5."<sup>16</sup> As well, the poster is titled on the obverse, *Documenta Memorandum (Indexing)* and, on the reverse, *Alternate Map for Documenta (Based on Citation A)*. On one hand, the word "Memorandum" represents the exhibition as a corporate structure--as if Art & Language were the research division of a consolidated company. On the other, the idea of the *Alternate Map* could be read as an appropriation of all of "Documenta 5"--re-mapping the territory of international art "from an Art & Language point of view." The private gallery in Cologne and the separate space in Kassel were linked by the Institute's simultaneous "occupation" of both spaces, with the Institute itself accentuating its corporate and insular character within the conceptual art realm. In this manner,

the Art & Language Institute constituted itself as the product of conditions which call for the corporatization of art as a retreat from the individual producer and then turned around to celebrate its institutional ties to the art market.

These moves suggest that Art & Language's hermeneutics compelled greater attention than the hundreds of works on display; that the Art & Language Institute analysis of the "art society" carried a didactic imperative superseding the claims of others because their work and position was admitting much that was otherwise disavowed. They were purposefully exposing their relations while the others were just making art, that disabled and fetishized object of delectation. The Art & Language Institute were asserting their difference in order to claim to be analyzing what everyone else was taking for granted. A taste of what was behind this determination is found in an essay credited to the Art & Language Institute which appeared in the "Documenta 5" catalogue. It is fairly direct about the logistics of the *Index*:

The character of the work which falls under the aegis of the Institute is instructive; that is, it teaches to learn. This is in apparent contrast to the conventional 'show-biz' aspects of many contemporary art practices. The Institute work is a reflection on the constitution and context of each of our epistemic presuppositions at each point in our progress of understanding, at every level of the presentation of our findings.<sup>17</sup>

And elsewhere in the essay:

There is the priority of making public--demonstrating the publicity of--the difficulties of talking to one another. The public paradigm and the repudiation of 'private language' is [sic] basic and central as a methodological thesis of the Art & Language Institute.<sup>18</sup>

Here we run into not just the self-representation of the Institute but the demands it wants to make on the spectator and the anxiousness of the Art & Language Institute to be taken seriously as a didactic enterprise.

The avowal that "it teaches to learn" and the mention of "the difficulties of talking to one another" are probably the most fraught remarks made about the *Index* because they give the work a vulnerability it otherwise covered over with pompous talk. The "fantasy" of a public for the work, which Harrison blithely asserted as its distinction, is more like a disavowal of a fear of being unheard, unrecognized, invisible and unappreciated in this context. Though otherwise

presented as impenetrable and isolate, these notes buried in the thick, bulky, loose-leaf catalogue of "Documenta 5" nearly penetrate the opacity of the *Index*, coming close to announcing a transformative yielding to the "public paradigm" of display. Different from the hectoring or baffling verbal gymnastics of their previous displays, the idea of going public with the *Index*--and making the terms of the procedure based on compatibility--suggests that this is a test of the represented work as well as being a trial for the uninitiated. Hence the role of compatible "history" and "(logical, ethical) space" in the "Key," for the point is to represent these features as intrinsic to group work and for the public to undertake an insistent effort to engage with both that work and the idea of an association devoted to pursuing the terms of the work.

Whereas in almost all of the Art & Language writing there is a tentative tone, here the notion of being in medias res qualifies the tentativeness with what is euphemistically called "our epistemic presuppositions" and those conversational "difficulties." It is as if, after the years of working and the volumes of text, the Art & Language Institute associates were admitting the density of their enterprise and re-formulating its terms as substantially imbricated with its role in the world. They have not thought themselves out of problems "concerning the linguistic usage of both plastic art itself and its support languages," but have found that the investigation of such concerns becomes what another 'difficult' artist of the time--Thomas Pynchon--called "not a disentanglement from, but a progressive *knottling into*."<sup>19</sup> The *Index*, with its procedural complexity and need to be shown as a public entity represented, from this perspective, an agitated, circular unveiling of the knots and ties that bound the Art & Language Institute to the art world.

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Without envisaging the viewer catalogue-in-hand and always attuned to the Art & Language Institute display, it is worthwhile considering what the viewer could carry around the exhibition. That is a knowledge not of Institute intentions but the knowledge gained from other artists and art works on display. While this demands attention to the "conventional 'show-biz' aspects" of the

exhibition, it is pertinent that the Art & Language Institute were one among a number of room-sized installations in "Documenta 5." These were found across the exhibition and ranged from Joseph Beuys' *Organisation für direkte Demokratie durch Volksabstimmung* to Richard Serra's *Circuit* or Michael Asher's *Environment* and Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'Art Moderne Département des Aigles, Section Publicité* and *Section d'Art Moderne* (all 1972). In terms of being instructive, Beuys provided lectures and "conversation" throughout the exhibition term, setting up an office for his direct democracy campaign in his room.<sup>20</sup> In terms of "mapping a space," Broodthaers presented the final sections of his parody-museum, the *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles*, using a pair of rooms to foreground the institutional proprieties of display through multi-lingual directional signs, empty picture frames and, on the floor, surrounded by stanchions, the text: "Privat Eigentum / Private Property / Propriété privée." Broodthaers ironically said this installation was "the expression of my artistic power as it is destined to replace that of the organizer."<sup>21</sup>

While these two artists used text and language in their work, most of the other installations followed from minimalist practices, with Serra, for example, setting up four huge sheets of steel projecting in from the corners of a square room, or Asher's room painted half white and half black. The Serra provoked claustrophobia while Asher's 'light-show' toyed with retinal response. It was against the artist-parables these sorts of works offered that the Art & Language Institute reacted--rooms that played to and with the public, that highlighted a kind of celebrity for the artist (Beuys, Broodthaers) or rooms that held apparent threats or deprivations as aesthetic experiences (Serra, Asher). Conceptualist 'show biz' indeed, but also suggestive of those "self-images" the Art & Language Institute set out to encounter and to contest: Beuys as artist-shaman delivering politics as "social sculpture"; Broodthaers, *poet manqué*, resisting display by asserting his sardonic manipulation of the display system; Serra and Asher manufacturing experiences of alienation and displacement for a public seeking a somatic thrill. Against these droll identities, the *Index* played to their parables and then denied them their effect. The access promised by Beuys became the excluding order of the research laboratory; the institution critiqued by

Broodthaers was supplanted by the Institute as a collective artists' organization. Meanwhile the corporeal aspect of installation was elided by mental work.

When Kosuth says his former colleagues lacked a "practice" it could be the 'neither/nor' effect of this denial or negation that he is in opposition to. The Art & Language Institute defined itself as being made up of its interactions as a set of discursive agents, with the *Index* constituting a carapace both protecting the group from outside influence and detailing its imbrication within the terms of "art society" discourse. In relation to other works, it was "as bland (or as slick) as it could be"<sup>22</sup>—quiet amid the chatter but also verbose once the verbal and the visual were given weight as organizing principles for discourse. Presenting the residue of a pseudo-academic bureaucracy rather than the creation of a free spirited critique, the *Index* was a display whose experience attempted to de-feature the aestheticizing properties of its (and others) materiality. The components shown were visually negligible (even the cabinets as mutant minimalism) and the public participation demanded a sort of initiation rite, the lure being the aura of rigour and limitation that the Institute appeared to place upon itself. While this distinguished them from the "show biz" types, it did so by making the task of analysis interminable and by prescribing the rewards as simply more talking.

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It sounds more like therapy than practice, and is prophetic rather than evangelical regarding its ascetic viewpoint and appearance. The Art & Language Institute denied itself the trappings of theatrical art-object garb and the parables of commodity-form in order to deliver a contrite homily on the vanity of exhibition instead. The critical response to the *Index* negotiates the emergence of its lugubrious identity through an interestingly polarized set of concerns. Of the near dozen critics who give it mention in their "Documenta 5" surveys, most seem dimly aware of the strategy of the endeavour while only a few say enough to suggest an analysis. One day the work is called "a Stalinist reading-room" in the *Sunday Times*. A few days later, in the daily *Times*, another reviewer saw in the *Index* "an insane love of filing systems and office furniture."<sup>23</sup> These



two comments sum up the approaches of the rest: either the Art & Language Institute is viewed as a group of system obsessives or else as furnishings fetishists. We read of the "computer-like corner" of the group<sup>24</sup> or that the work "défend l'inébranable principe britannique du sens commun," in order to indicate that "l'image perd sa relation privilégiée avec l'expérience immédiate."<sup>25</sup> Carter Ratcliff, in *Artforum*, called the work "an unusable demonstration of 'good office design'," citing the "extremely inconvenient files" and says the discursive intent was similar to Beuys.<sup>26</sup> Gregory Battcock simply says that "The Art & Language people were represented in detail."<sup>27</sup>

There is a special reaction to the bureaucratic aspects of the installation in these comments, for, where the "Stalinist" epithet is mawkish, demonizing the *Index*, the concentration on the display emphasizes its denial of visual bearing. Ratcliff can't get a good read and seems to resent having to engage with the *Index* at all; Beuys at least put on a show. The administrative aspect is read as a willful and laboured affront in the other mentions as well: the pun of "sens commun" and the misunderstanding of "computer-like" are clever ways to say that the *Index* was inconsequential, jokey--technological or nationalist rather than aesthetic. Yet even the dismissive tone of these epithets is worth noting, since, for all the above, the *Index* was seen as an extreme work that stood out for comment. No other work in "*Ideen*" came in for the same treatment and, though their understanding may be limited, the need to dismiss this particular work intimates its partial success in gaining attention. That the art journalist--potential target for its critique--dismissed its invitation is a sign of its irritation if nothing else.

Other critics appeared to get the more insidious aspects of the work. Charlotte Townsend wrote in *artscanada* that:

Presenting the Institute's work like this only makes more acute the paradoxes it has dealt with--the analysis of this very situation nipped in the bud and etherized under a cool, minimalist sensibility.<sup>28</sup>

This is the only sympathetic review the *Index* received. Townsend notes the debt to minimalism and cottoned onto the attempted neutrality of the display technique--but she also grasps that the

link between the installation and the Institute's writings indicated an attempt at representing its "sensitivity," what Baldwin calls its "artistic identity." One could also do little better than to call the identity "cool" and "etherized" (cf., Eliot's evening "spread out across the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table"<sup>29</sup>) in contrast to the rest of "Documenta 5." However, Townsend stops at the claim of self-representation and does not go into the vagaries of participation in the "conversation." That ideal move, the aim of "teaching to learn," was not brokered in any critical account.

Townsend's sharpness was not followed by the more defining criticisms of the Art & Language Institute. Marcelin Pleynet, in *Art International*, lumped "Art-language, Art conceptuel, Arte povera, Body Art" together as "un «art» refoulant la production spécifique des contradictions du sujet-en-procès dans les maigres investissements sociologique."<sup>30</sup> Pleynet's raises the "sujet-en-procès" as a kind of cipher for the spectatorial regime of modernism, insisting in his jargoned prose that the modernist project of a purified art needs to be maintained because the lessons of autonomy will teach us to respect our psychic damage. While Pleynet matches *Art-Language* density in terms of verbiage, the clarity of Rudi Fuchs in *Studio International* is also disturbing:

Being private is now art's proper way of existence. It does become a specialty for some people, an internal mode of communication. . . . *The Index* . . . seemed to me almost the grand allegory of art's contemporary privateness.<sup>31</sup>

Where Pleynet was calling for a return to formalist concerns with a nod to post-'68 Freud-Marxism and the work "sociologie" left undone, Fuchs and Townsend demonstrate how Art & Language's strategy rebounded. The reflexivity of the institute—its attempts to isolate the "conversation" in order to work out internal and external organization—became the walls that sealed the group into a private space. If anything, for these select spectators, the ideas of the late-sixties—of the questioning world of May '68, of the problems of art in a technocratized society—were brought up by the *Index* and found no longer applicable. All the critics sensed the

claustrophobic and oppressive character of the Art & Language Institute programme. None saw the ongoing use of it as an "art society" critique.

There are aspects of this critical assessment that preceded "Documenta 5." Even as the *Index* was being installed in Kassel, Lizzie Borden was writing in *Artforum* comparing "Three Modes of Conceptual Art," including her understanding of Art & Language as "a conscience to art" because it was textual in character.<sup>32</sup> Even this nomination is cautious, however, for Borden also claims that "visual and aural thinking are not less consequential than theory that can be stated in words"—permitting her essay to give equal attention to Richard Long and Klaus Rinke as conceptual artists. It is these artists—and the documentary and somatic nature of their art—that Art & Language's conscientiousness is compared to, on the basis that the three modes of conceptualism have a combined social meaning through their perceptual, corporeal and conceptual re-tooling of the art object. The three modes are regarded as necessary complements of the conceptual movement, a liberal reading which is at odds with Art & Language's statements at the time and since.

Several months later in *Artforum*, Max Kozloff answered Borden's liberality with these wearied comments:

A credibility gap exists in our art life just as it does in our political world, for the reason that, in both, people are systematically abstracted from their humanity and considered as *receivers* of stimuli—a mass that exists only to be conditioned. Conceivably the art scene here is a frivolous microcosm of big power rhetoric and manipulations. I am impressed, in any case, by the bureaucratic tendencies of art-as-idea—the fact that ever more extraneous, repetitious and purposeless work fills the air with crypto-efficiency.<sup>33</sup>

The attitudes of Kozloff and Borden are guided by the assumption that the 'academic' elements of Art & Language (or conceptual art theory) overwhelmed whatever 'content' its work possessed. The "purposeless work" did not invite participation but encouraged manipulation of the audience in a vengeful mode. Where Borden holds out for sensual experience as a way of "thinking" with less bite than conscience alone would allow, Kozloff, like Wall later, saw the cryptic aspect as a willful and counter-productive abdication of humanity. All three saw this as a compromised position wherein, as Kozloff noted, "play becomes desperate," and, he continues: "Unrefreshing in

itself, the contrast between the frivolity of the premises and the puritanism of statement in art-as-idea is also unilluminating. It is a weird deadlock."<sup>34</sup>

Although there could be a strong argument that the Art & Language Institute sought out precisely to address a public "systematically abstracted from their humanity" and immersed in the Institute's pessimistic programme instead, Kozloff's sense of "deadlock" is what the *Index* aimed to deliberate and confront with its incessant verbiage. The *Index* attempted to revise the "deadlock" through a hard-won reference to the idea of the paradigm-shift which caught the lot of "Documenta 5" in a conflict over questioning. We might say however that the rules of engagement had shifted just as the Art & Language Institute had found a means of display that expressed its identity. Indeed the fundamental concern of most of the reviewers was that "Documenta 5" almost contradicted itself with critique and that was why the *Index* is either dismissed for its pretensions or described as being incomprehensible in their critiques. This was mainly due to the overall "Befragung der Realität" theme of the exhibition, as the critics saw the questioning leading to a pluralism without predictive consequence. But it was also due to an impatience with ideas reflexivity as opposed to representations of reflection.<sup>35</sup>

The critic's loved Serra's piece for its ability to be felt; they responded quite discursively to the super-realist painting and sculpture<sup>36</sup>; they approved the formalist endgame of Ryman's all-white paintings and LeWitt's instructional procedures. These types of work were regarded as directions for art to go forward because their palpable evidence of reduced material usage and extravagant social reference represented assertions of material practice and social relevance rather than evidence of "reflective consciousness." In this regard, the *Index* was a dead letter for the critics. The identity it explored and represented was a problematic address and not a concise resolution to the multiplied, permissive practices of the late-sixties. The critics maintained that "Documenta 5" was good to the extent that it presented resolved "self-images" rebuking chaos and confrontation. For them, the *Index* as "conversation" represented an investigation that had been gladly shunted off as the decade had turned.

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After "Documenta 5," the Art & Language Institute never showed under the name again and the camps represented in the *Index*--split between Banbury, Coventry and New York--chose various means of internecine battle and indexical complexity that make the *Documenta Index* and the manoeuvres around it seem simple and tame.<sup>37</sup> The *Index* itself was sold to Thomas Ammann and sat in his Zürich warehouse till 1989, when it was put on exhibit in the first major survey of conceptualism, "L'Art conceptuel, une perspective," held at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris. In one review of that exhibition, a critic--clued into the work by Harrison's essay in the catalogue--took an understandable but short-sighted angle and wrote that "the piece is something of a vast game, to be *played* rather than merely viewed."<sup>38</sup> Somehow, over time, the fortress façade of impenetrability has become reduced to the accessible and limited status of a plaything.

The *Index* as "game" or as "computer-like," as "privacy" or as "sens commun"--such notions indicate that what Harrison has called the "clear and apparent contrast between the formality of the display mechanisms of the *Index* and the diversity and untidiness of its intellectual and psychological components"<sup>39</sup> were not as apparent as he makes out. It could be made into a tidy package, in order to dismiss the Institute, or into an expression of conceptual art's esotericism. Though the "contrast" between display and intellect had always been present in the history and the relations of the group--in its tactical moves and its in-your-face rhetoric--the *Index* tried to turn that into a coercive alienation theatre and ended up as a display with quite formal psychological properties redolent of the "caskets of information" Wall wrote about. Certainly the group's strategy of analytical collectivity was not questioned by the critics; just as certainly the members' disagreements and individual contributions were not read off the sheets of compatibility-relations. The transformative concept of the Art & Language Institute as a pedagogical space was off the map for all concerned. At a more basic level, the "(didactic?) terror" imputed by Baldwin was injured by the estrangement tactics to the extent that many viewers just left it alone, left the room.

It may be that the self-declared didactic position of Art & Language and the *Index* were not apparent to anyone until Harrison began along to historicize it. Conceptualism as a critical practice never really penetrated art world "epistemic presuppositions" to the point where, to use Kosuth's terms, "theoretical conceptual art" was distinguishable from "stylistic conceptual art." While artists like Long, Buren and Beuys went on to be 'blue chip' artists, Art & Language were treated less as discursive agents and more like performing philosophical bears until the novelty wore off.<sup>40</sup> For some others, even in the mid-seventies, conceptualism was easy to forget. When Rosalind Krauss wrote that "The file cabinet is a different object from the wall or the easel. It holds out the possibility of storing and cross-referencing bits of information,"<sup>41</sup> she was speaking of nineteenth-century stereoscopes and not the *Documenta Index*. When, in 1977, she wrote a two-part essay on seventies art called "Notes on the Index," the Art & Language indexes were never mentioned.<sup>42</sup> For her, indexicality meant the artist's negotiation with narcissism or the trace of specific positioning in material labour--just the sort of autocratic claim the *Index* attempted to unseat in favour of its aggressive analysis of the artist in relation to the verbal system of such criticism.

For Wall, writing almost a decade after the *Index* was shown, Art & Language was "acutely circumscribed, academic and linguistic"<sup>43</sup> in comparison to Asher, Buren and Dan Graham, all of whose work "draws its themes, strategies and content from the cultural critique identified broadly with the New Left."<sup>44</sup> Art & Language are outside of the New Left nexus since they do not directly address the institutions of state power and urbanism. By inhabiting the bureaucratic forms with the *Index* furniture and procedures, Art & Language were mimetic of bureaucracy rather than critical of it, and so the "forgotten card files" and "grey volumes"--which describe the *Index* without naming it--represent a conceptualism that "fell prey to the very formalism and exhibitionism it had begun by exposing (though it managed in the process to drive that formalism to a new level of internal decomposition)."<sup>45</sup> Wall's argument has recently been applied directly to the Art & Language "Indexes" by Terry Atkinson. For Atkinson, the work was mired in the world of influence Art & Language took upon themselves to work through

(and, as at Coventry, to worm themselves into). The basis of Art & Language in a reaction to minimalism became its downfall as the world itself became the cave and the Banbury Caucus the shadow puppets of "official conceptualism":

Art & Language were part of the political fantasy of conceptual art in this sense. Within the general decay of conceptualism, Art & Language to a considerable extent retained its energy by turning it inward, and making a show of this inwardness.<sup>46</sup>

In the end, writes Atkinson, "protesting the 'corporate death-machine' was probably too ambivalent despite our best intentions."<sup>47</sup> He thus annexes the indexes to Wall's argument, claiming that though the intention was to protest, the results were bereft of liberatory results because the formal methods were tainted.

Though I have sympathies with the views of Atkinson and Wall, there are many problems with the implied alliance between conceptual art and the New Left. The ascribed intent to protest "the corporate death-machine" is rarely found in the work grouped under conceptualism<sup>48</sup> and the sort of anti-institutional changes in production and distribution that characterized the movement are not automatically some reflection of social concern. Two early New York enthusiasts of conceptualism sensed this in the early seventies. Although he continues to cite a counter-cultural synergy operating within conceptual art, Seth Siegelaub withdrew from art dealing and exhibition organization in 1971 in order to become a publisher of Marxist texts on communications.<sup>49</sup> As a sign of her disaffection with the art she had so widely promoted, Lippard's *Six Years* chronicle, published in 1973, closes on the mordant note that it was "unlikely that conceptual art will be any better equipped to affect the world any differently, or even as much as, its less ephemeral counterparts."<sup>50</sup> While her book became a sort of encasement of the movement, its scrapbook, she moved on to become an advocate of feminist and activist art. These moves could be seen in two ways: either the move into leftism addressed the gap in "social thought" implicit in conceptualism as an outgrowth of minimalist permission, or else the alliance between the New Left and conceptual art was part of their investment in the work and Lippard and Siegelaub saw through their fabulation and moved into more direct political involvement.

Kozloff's humanist "credibility gap" and his sense of "deadlock" are important here, for they are telling of a position that regarded conceptualism as part of a situation where "so established is the permissiveness that accepts the turnovers and flip-flops of modern art that it has, I feel, become rigid, and lost its sense of scale."<sup>51</sup> Kozloff seems to point to something that Art & Language also—and in a very different way—tried to deal with, for the whole negativist cast of the group's activities lead towards an analytic cynicism with regard to the permission given artists to express themselves and to produce objects with nugatory intellectual or moral justification. For Art & Language, "social thought" was a part of Institute aims inasmuch as the group itself and its "conversation" described a social situation based on didacticism and intellectual exchange. But this in turn exemplified a crisis in the social subject produced by the "art society." As Mel Ramsden recalled: "This wasn't the activity of a SDS study group. It was a deliberate allegory of discontinuities, only in part directed against the simulacra of cohesion known as the art world."<sup>52</sup> Ramsden is pointing away from the liberatory motifs of "social thought" towards what he refers to as "the shape of culture."

While that "culture" has its international "shape"—as did the group itself after 1969—the politics of Art & Language were more fully rooted in Great Britain than in the American "student movement." For Art & Language, politics had been ever-present in the shop-floor Marxism of Bainbridge, but, in early seventies, its application to art production was limited by the dual identity of Marxism and socialism in British political life. Unlike the USA, the parliamentary and governmental presence of the Labour Party, the entrenched bureaucracy of the trades union movement and the modifications of class privilege in post-war society put the 'revolutionary' aspect of leftist thought into a quagmire of co-opted positions. By the late-sixties the Marxists of the *New Left Review* were known as tweedy dons who had once walked in Committee for Nuclear Disarmament marches and who now showed more interest in French post-structuralism and Gramsci than in the working class.<sup>53</sup> They were continually critical of Labour policies and sought in theoretical terms to outdo Labour neo-capitalism, but in the end they had to hold to the postponement of the revolution due to trades union representation in the party machinery. When



the British New Left or British students proposed cultural critique of the sort current in America, they immediately ran into the populist and technocratic cultural policies of the Labour Party.

Not wanting to succumb to the ultra-leftism of attacking working class organizations, the British New Left retreated into discussions of hegemony rather than "false consciousness," attempting to account for the resistances to dominant culture found in popular culture and, for the most part, they developed a social history of that culture rather than a programme for contemporary cultural intervention. There was little substantial address to modernist art in this formation, and there was slight contact among the Labour populists, the New Left theorists and the contemporary art scene. In the British context, adopting the "themes, strategies and content" of the New Left in the early-seventies would mean, for Art & Language, a harrowing reconstruction of the group as social realists appended to the British "Fine Art Tradition."<sup>54</sup>

Due to this lack of mesh between advanced art and leftist politics in Britain, when sensitive terms such as "ideology," "praxis" and "politics" comingle with critiques of "laissez faire art education" and of the "possessive market society" in early-seventies Art & Language texts, they need to be read as indicating a set of terms imported in order to analyze and not to overtly politicize the group's activities. As the title of one of their *Studio International* texts—"Some Post-War American Art: Ideological Responsiveness"<sup>55</sup>—uses the term, it is read as the ideology of art production and not the ideology that art supports, reflects or contests that is at issue. In the student-teacher struggle of the "Art Theory" fiasco, the refusal of conventional product or effect constituted the framework for the "conversation" presented—and it bored into the art education system's presumptions to intellectual exchange. In the *Index* the politics of that framework rested on the enervated "identity" of the group as an analytic association within and about the "art society"—again attempting to question the compatibility of analysis as evidence of the paradigm-shift in art practice.

Such a move required vigilant maneuvering to avoid being recuperated into the clichés of conceptual art with its stylish indulgence and dilettante "dematerialization"—Wall's "quietism of 'purist' art." Art & Language put up its bureaucratic and academic shield in order to both

reflect and refuse the "established permissiveness" that allowed conceptualism to come about and the "purity" of formalism that dealt out intellectual exchange to the critic or curator as representative of the artist. What their strategy went after was not the "corporate death-machine" supported by administrative and technocratic systems but the lacklustre artistic culture that disavowed its structure and proclaimed its freedom to be outside the determinations of functional protocols—including that establishing "social thought" as "content" for art work. In this case, by not addressing "social thought," Art & Language were paying it the (perhaps dubious) compliment of not using it to find an outside reference for its work; that is, they read it into their terms and did not seek to promise an discourse beyond those terms.

There is a thin line between "defeatism" and deep skepticism at the best of times, but here it is necessary to recover the difficulties of criticality rather than lament the lost possibilities of protest. It is not at all likely that the *Index* was negotiable for a public in 1972; yet that very intransigence speaks to a fear of transparency on the part of Art & Language—of being taken up as providing a solution to the questions raised by the installation and the exhibition it was a part of. A particular anxiety lies behind the question "We are a cell, aren't we?" that heads this study of Art & Language, and, in conclusion, it is the slippery, inchoate set of ambitions, restrictions, identities and addresses that the *Index* contained and provoked that pictures that anxiety. A real cell would have targets, aims, a secured identity, but a skeptical one—or one operating in as buffered an institution as the "art society"—may flail around, and be permitted to flail around, without effect and without striking home. That, despite the theoretical and critical insights and analyses of Art & Language, is what the group did.

## Notes

1. "Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden on Art & Language," 35.
2. Joseph Kosuth, "History For," *Flash Art* 143 (November 1988), 102.
3. See Charles Harrison, "The Critic's Part," and Joseph Kosuth, "Writing and the Play of Art," *Kunst und Museenjournal* 3:4 (1992), 13-18, 30-36. These texts are edited versions of papers delivered at a conference on "Writing About Art" held at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, in December 1991. Harrison also responded to Kosuth's paper in a letter to the editor published in the same issue on page 36. Kosuth has perpetuated the exchange in another response prepared for *Kunst und Museenjournal* 3:6 (1992), 25-26.
4. Harrison and Orton, 33, and Harrison, 1991, note 1, page 269.
5. Kosuth, "Writing and the Play of Art," 33.
6. Harrison and Orton, 32, and Baldwin's letter to the author, July 1, 1992. Harrison and Orton also note that Kosuth, installing the *Index* at Kassel with Baldwin, "was caught applying the names of contributors in two different sizes of Letraset. Those thus relegated to 'junior' status had done more work on the *Index* than he had himself. The lettering was replaced." Harrison and Orton, note 51, page 84.
7. Harrison, 1991, 65-66, gives a typically sanguine discussion of the various roles individuals played in Art & Language.
8. Art & Language, *Documenta Memorandum (Indexing)/Alternate Map for Documenta (Based on Citation A)*, offset poster issued by Paul Maenz, Cologne, 1972.
9. Harrison and Orton, 29-30, report on the discussions and speak of "Kosuth's apparent need to keep his options open." Previously, and cryptically, they write of how "the identity of his own career was never willingly subject to the critical content of projective work," page 25. Atkinson remembers this meeting as being in July 1971 and writes that "it was at this meeting that Bainbridge left A & L." See "The Indexing," Section 2, note 4, page 31. Other accounts have Bainbridge remaining till 1973.
10. Terry Atkinson, "The Indexing," 22.
11. The best documentation of Morris' *Card File*, including a French translation of the file's contents, is found in *Art conceptuel I* (Bordeaux: Musée d'art contemporain, 1988), 25-33.
12. These would include *Box With the Sound of its Own Making* (1962) and *Metered Bulb* (1963).
13. As to the Art & Language Institute attitude to their homage to Morris, on the *Index* poster, Morris is discussed: "We also seem to be avoiding Robert Morrisish pseudo-existential 'men-at-work' connotations (see his *Card File* for instance). This is because there's enough volume and diversity of work to make some complexity possible. Morris *et al.* are in the end so quickly and easily exhausted." See Art & Language, *Documenta Memorandum (Indexing)*.
14. The best documentation of these works is found in the third and fourth volumes of *Joseph Kosuth: Investigation über Kunst & 'Problemkreise' seit 1965* (Lucerne: Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1973).
15. Kosuth, in "Writing and the Play of Art," explicitly links the *Index* to these works. Harrison, 1991, and Harrison and Orton, prefer to avoid the connection.
16. This portion of the poster has been cropped out of frame in reproductions of the work. See: *Art & Language: The Paintings* (Brussels: Société des Expositions du Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1982), 13; *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective*, 109 and 111; and Harrison 1991, 66.
17. Art & Language Institute, "Suggestions for a Map," *Documenta* 5, 17:17.
18. Art & Language Institute, "Suggestions for a Map" *Documenta* 5, 17:18.
19. Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (New York: Viking, 1973), 1.
20. Beuys eventually closed "Documenta 5" with a boxing match "for democracy" with a former participant in the discussions. For honorific documentation and discussion of this work, see Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 269-274.
21. The description and text is found in, *Marcel Broodthaers*, Marjorie Goldwater, ed. (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 192-193.
22. Harrison 1991, 67.
23. See *Sunday Times*, July 2, 1972 and *London Times*, July 6, 1972.

24. John Anthony Thwaites, "Kassel—In the Air," *Art and Artists* 7:6 (September 1972), 30.
25. Stephen Bann, "Documenta: le vide et le plein," *L'Oeil* 213 (1972), 72 (emphasis in original). This article, incidentally, was the only piece that illustrated, in three pictures on page 30, details of the *Index* installation.
26. Carter Ratcliff, "Adversary Spaces," *Artforum* XI:2 (October 1972), 40.
27. Gregory Battcock, "Venice and Documenta," *Arts* 47:1 (September/October 1972), 54.
28. Charlotte Townsend, "Documenta 5," *ariscanada* 172/173 (October/November 1972), 42.
29. T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *Poems 1909-1925* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1925), 11.
30. Marcelin Pleynet, "Documenta 5: Art (sociologie) Histoire," *Art International* XVI:8 (October 1972), 81.
31. Rudi Fuchs, "More on the New Art," *Studio International* 184 (November 1972), 195. Fuchs is reviewing a show of another *Index* (*Index 02* or the *Hayward Index* as it is now called) that was part of "The New Art" exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London in the late-summer of 1972. The *Hayward Index* contains the same materials as the *Documenta Index* but with a slightly more complicated use of logical transitivity. See Harrison, 1991, 65-67 for details.
32. Lizzie Borden, "Three Modes of Conceptual Art," *Artforum* XI:10 (June 1972), 71.
33. Max Kozloff, "The Trouble With Art-As-Idea," *Artforum* XII:1 (September 1972), 37.
34. Kozloff, 37.
35. This is certainly Pleynet and Townsend's major argument, and is also shared by Jan van der Marck in "Venice and Kassel: The Old and the New Politics," *Art in America* 60:6 (November/December 1972), 129-137.
36. Edward Keinholz's *Five Card Stud* (1972), a tableau with four rednecks castrating an African-American, was the most mentioned and illustrated piece, with Serra's *Curcuit* as a strong second.
37. Harrison and Orton provide the Banbury version of the battle; Atkinson, "The Indexing," provides the view from Leamington Spa and the Lanchester Poly; Kosuth's, "1975," is a near-contemporary version of the debacle in New York.
38. *The Globe and Mail*, August 25, 1990.
39. Harrison, "The Critic's Part," 14.
40. For example, Peter Fuller, in 1980, wrote of Art & Language's "interminable verbal obfuscations about matters on which any first-year philosophy student could put them right," in "Where was the Art of the Seventies," *Beyond the Crisis in Art* (London: Writers and Readers, 1980), 28. Also, of note, in a series of contra-Art & Language texts published in *Artforum* in the seventies, are: James Collins, "Things and Theories," *Artforum* XI:9 (May 1973), 32-36; and Bruce Boice's review of *Art & Language: Texte zum Phänomen Kunst und Sprache* (Cologne: Dumont, 1972), in "Books," *Artforum* XI:7 (March 1973): 84-85.
41. Rosalind Krauss, "Photography's Discursive Spaces," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), 141.
42. See, or see the absence of Art & Language in Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index Part 1 and Part 2," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, 196-220. The essays were first published in *October* 3 and 4 (Spring and Fall 1977). When Kosuth pointed out the exclusion from mention of Art & Language-associated activities and artists from mention in the work of Krauss, Buchloh and other critics published in *October*, he and the group were soon enough disciplined. Buchloh wrote of Art & Language's "authoritarian quest for orthodoxy" in *October* and slapped Kosuth with the accusation of back-dating his work. See Joseph Kosuth, "History For," *Flash Art* 143 (November 1988), 100, for the claim of exclusion, and for the resulting exchange see the articles and letters cited in Chapter Three, note 30.
43. Jeff Wall, "A Draft for Dan Graham's *Kammerspiel* (1981)," *Dan Graham's Kammerspiel* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1991), 98. Since some of the quotes I use come from the draft for this text and some from the version published in 1984, I will note which version is being cited by using full titles.

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44. Jeff Wall, "Dan Graham's Kammerspiel" *Dan Graham's Kammerspiel*, 10. Since he mentions the "student movement," I take it that Wall is speaking of the North American New Left rather than the British group associated with the *New Left Review*.
  45. Wall, "Dan Graham's Kammerspiel" *Dan Graham's Kammerspiel*, 22.
  46. Atkinson, "The Indexing," 23.
  47. Atkinson, "The Indexing," 23.
  48. Hans Haacke's work *Shapolsky et al.: A Real-time Social System* (1971) would be an obvious exception to this.
  49. For his remembrance of the period, see, Seth Siegelaub, "Some Remarks on So-Called 'Conceptual Art': Extracts from Unpublished Interviews with Robert Horvitz (1987) and Claude Gintz (1989)," *L'Art conceptuel: une perspective*, 91-94.
  50. Lippard, *Six Years*, 264. It is true that many of the artists involved in conceptualism before 1972 went on, in the mid-seventies, to take leftist stances in their work—Art & Language, Atkinson, Victor Burgin, Kosuth, among them—but it is also revealing that Siegelaub and Lippard were organizing broad art world alliances prior to these latter adherents' adoption of a politicised stance. Lippard's involvement with the Art Worker's Coalition and Siegelaub's work on The Artist's Reserved Rights Transfer and Sales Agreement and the United States Servicemen's Fund directly followed their respective and collaborative ventures into conceptual art.
  51. Kozloff, 33.
  52. "Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden on Art & Language," 27.
  53. Raymond Williams, *Politics and Letters: Interviews With the Editors of New Left Review* (London: New Left Books, 1979), 146-49.
  54. In effect, after the 1973 return of Labour to government, the need to reconcile British conceptual art to 'art for society' politics became the major motif of British art (with Art & Language playing a typically antagonistic role as producers of what they called "black propaganda").
  55. Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "Some Post-War American Art: Ideological Responsiveness," *Studio International* 183 (April 1972), 164-167. The first paragraph of the essay illustrates my point: "Suppose, for example, one is prepared to presuppose painting and sculpture, then the essentialist notification (reification) of painting becomes the basis of its ideological status."

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## APPENDIX 1

## DOCUMENTA INDEX: KEY AND INDEX

Transcribed by William Wood, April, 1992

Thomas Ammann Collection, Zürich, Switzerland.

The *Documenta Index* as examined consists of three components:

1) Eight Kardex file cabinets with six drawers in each cabinet contain the writings listed below. The "Key" and "Index" transcribed below are placed in each cabinet, at the back of the top drawer. Each drawer has a label indicating the citation reference mark and a short title of the essays contained within. The texts forming the bulk of the indexed material are photocopies of both published and unpublished texts, some of which have been sliced in half in order to fit the Kardex envelopes. Seven of the cabinets have all six drawers labeled and containing material (though many of the Kardex plastic envelopes for holding texts are empty). The eighth cabinet has only three and a half drawers labelled and filled.

2) A set of black and white photographic negatives to be enlarged into photostats for wall display. These negatives express the compatibility relations described in the "Key" below. There is one negative for each citation.

3) A copy of the offset poster *Alternate Map for Documenta (Based on Citation A)* and *Documenta Memorandum (On Indexing)*, containing texts on the index and a lattice graphically expressing the compatibility relations of the first eighty-six citations corresponding to the contents of the first six cabinets.

The *Documenta Index* as seen in installation views at "Documenta 5" distributed the file cabinets to form a square, with four plinths each supporting two cabinets (the cabinets are approximately eight by ten by 36 inches each) with the drawers facing alternate directions on each plinth. Though no diagrams or installation plans appear to exist, this method of display was followed for the exhibition of the *Documenta Index* in "L'Art conceptuel, une perspective" at the

Musée d'art contemporain at Montréal in 1990. This and the originating presentation of "L'Art conceptuel, une perspective" at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris in 1989 are the only times the *Documenta Index* has been exhibited publicly since the close of "Documenta 5". Shortly after the close of "Documenta 5", the *Documenta Index* was sold to Thomas Ammann through the Galerie Bruno Bischofberger of Zürich.

The following texts are transcribed from the "Key" and "Index" files. These files, giving the criteria for the compatibility relations and the titles of the materials making up the *Index*, have not been published before. The original punctuation and spelling have been retained. I have, however, indicated the contents of each cabinets and provided proper names for the abbreviated authors. Published texts are listed in the Bibliography.

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### Key

'(+)' suggests that the document or document section(s) at the top is compatible with the ones cited below it. The string following this symbol is interpreted as indicating 'history' which instantiates the possibilities inherent or implied by the documents cited below it.

'(-)' suggests that the document or document section(s) at the top is incompatible, does not instantiate the ones cited below it.

'(T)' suggests that the documents below are in a different space, involve non-commensurable points of reference with respect to the documents cited at the top i.e. where '(+)' and '(-)' indicate/represent transformation in space (ethical, logical, etc.) '(T)' indicates transformations of (logical, ethical) space.

### Index

#### Author Abbreviations in "Index"

Names in italics indicate membership in Art & Language Institute as listed by signage at entrance to *Documenta Index*.



T. Atkinson	<i>Terry Atkinson</i>
D. Bainbridge	<i>David Bainbridge</i>
M. Baldwin	<i>Michael Baldwin</i>
F. Barthelme	Frederic Barthelme
B. Bihari	Benjamin Bihari
R. Brown	Robert Brown
I. Burn	<i>Ian Burn</i>
D. Graham	Dan Graham
C. Harrison	<i>Charles Harrison</i>
D. Hirons	David Hirons
G. Howard	Graham Howard <sup>1</sup>
H. Hurrell	<i>Harold Hurrell</i>
S. Knight	Stuart Knight
J. Kosuth	<i>Joseph Kosuth</i>
S. LeWitt	Sol LeWitt
K. Lole	Kevin Lole
P. Pilkington	<i>Philip Pilkington</i>
M. Ramsden	<i>Mel Ramsden</i>
D. Rushton	<i>David Rushton</i>
P. Smith	Peter Smith
M. Thompson	Michael Thompson
L. Weiner	Lawrence Weiner

Citation	Title	Author
Cabinet I		
A	Introduction	2
B	Sentences on Conceptual Art	S. LeWitt
C	Poem-Schema	D. Graham
D	Statements	L. Weiner
E	Notes on M1(1)	D. Bainbridge
F	Notes on M1	M. Baldwin
G	Notes on M1(2)	D. Bainbridge
H	Introductory Note by the American Editor	J. Kosuth
I	Notes on M1(3)	D. Bainbridge
J	Three from May 23rd 1969	F. Barthelme
K	Plans and Procedures	M. Baldwin
L	Dialogue	I. Burn
M	Moto-Spiritale	R. Brown
		D. Hirons
N	From an Art & Language Point of View	T. Atkinson
O	Concerning the Interpretations of the Bainbridge/Hurrell Models	T. Atkinson
P	Notes on Atkinson's "Concerning the Interpretations of the Bainbridge/ Hurrell Models"	H. Hurrell
Cabinet II		
Q	Sculptures and Devices	H. Hurrell
R	Conceptual Art, Category and Action	

		M. Thompson
S	Notes on Genealogies	M. Ramsden
T	On the Idea of Conceptual Art	J. Kosuth
U1	Concerning Some Theories and their Worlds	G. Howard
U2	Mona Lisas	G. Howard
V	Marshall McLuhan and the Behavioral Sciences	B. Bihari
W	A Preliminary Proposal for the Directing of Perception	M. Ramsden
X	Atkinson and Meaninglessness	M. Baldwin
Y	Dead Issues	M. Baldwin
Z	Theory, Knowledge and Hermeneutics	S. Knight
A(i)a	Revelation and Art	G. Howard
A(i)b	Actuality and Potentiality	G. Howard
A(i)c	Accessibility and Conceivability	G. Howard
B(i)	Art Teaching	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
C(i)	La Pensee avec Images	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
Cabinet III		
D(i)	Unnatural Rules and Excuses	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
E(i)	Four Wages of Sense	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
F(i)	Aspects of Authorities	K. Lole/

		P. Pilkington/ D. Rushton
G(i)	On the Material Character/Physical Object Paradigm of Art	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
H(i)	Ontological Relativity: A Note	G. Howard
I(i)	Status and Priority	T. Atkinson/ D. Bainbridge/ M. Baldwin/ H. Hurrell
J(i)	Lecher System	T. Atkinson/ D. Bainbridge/ M. Baldwin/ H. Hurrell
K(i)	De Legibus Naturae	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
L(i)	Some Post-War American Art and Ideological Responsiveness	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
M(i)a	Art After Philosophy (1)	J. Kosuth
M(i)b	Art After Philosophy (2)	J. Kosuth
N(i)	Virgin Soils and Old Lands	C. Harrison
O(i)	Educating Artists	C. Harrison
Cabinet IV		
P(i)	Some Questions on the Characterizations of Questions	I. Burn/

		M. Ramsden
Q(i)	The Sixth Investigation	J. Kosuth
R(i)a	Induction and . . .	G. Howard
R(i)b	Indexical Sets and Virtuals	G. Howard
S(i)	Event	D. Rushton
T(i)	Essay	P. Pilkington
U(i)a	Essay	P. Pilkington
U(i)b	Essay	K. Lole
V(i)	Exhibited Painting	D. Rushton
W(i)	Project	P. Pilkington/ D. Rushton
X(i)	A Noisy Channel: Photography	D. Rushton
Y(i)	Tautologies	P. Pilkington
Z(i)	Concerning the Paradigm of Art	K. Lole/ P. Pilkington/ D. Rushton/ P. Smith
Cabinet V		
A(ii)a	Explanatory Note	P. Pilkington
A(ii)b	Mapping and Indexing	P. Pilkington
A(ii)c	Extract from Index—Heuristics	P. Pilkington
A(ii)d	Extract from Index—The Decision Problem	P. Pilkington
A(ii)e	Extract from Index—The Paradoxes	P. Pilkington
A(ii)f	Extract from Index—Lowenheim-Skolem Theorum	P. Pilkington
A(ii)g	Extract from Index—Natural Law	P. Pilkington

B(ii)a	Notes	P. Pilkington
B(ii)b	Oratio Recta	P. Pilkington
B(ii)c	Pragmatics and a Lack of Semantics	P. Pilkington
B(ii)d	Opacity and Transparency	P. Pilkington
B(ii)e	Schema for Art Models	D. Rushton
B(ii)f	Extracts from Work, January- April 1972(A)	D. Rushton
B(ii)g	Extracts from Work, January- April 1972(B)	D. Rushton
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C(ii)a	Some Additions to 'On Asserting'	D. Rushton
C(ii)b	Section Four	D. Rushton
D(ii)	Phenomonology as a Hermeneutics of Art	P. Smith
E(ii)	Hierarchies: A Note	G. Howard
F(ii)	The Grammarian	I. Burn
G(ii)	Conceptual Art as Art	I. Burn ??
H(ii)a	Proceedings	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
H(ii)b	Proceedings	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
H(ii)c	Proceedings	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
I(ii)	Six Negatives	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
J(ii)	Notes for Altered Photographs	I. Burn

K(ii)	Stating and Nominating	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
L(ii)	General Notes: Conduct and the Domain of the Artist	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
M(ii)	Notes on Analysis	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
N(ii)	A Question of Epistemic Adequacy	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
O(ii)	The Nature of Orthodoxy	I. Burn
Cabinet VII		
P(ii)	The Art of Believers	I. Burn
Q(ii)	The Artist as Victim	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
R(ii)	Art Language and Art-Language	I. Burn/ M. Ramsden
S(ii)	Handbook to Ingot	M. Baldwin/ H. Hurrell
T(ii)	Introduction	C. Harrison
U(ii)	Translation	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
V(ii)	Translation	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
W(ii)	Translation	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
X(ii)	Translation	T. Atkinson/

		M. Baldwin
Y(ii)	Theories of Ethics	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
Z(ii)	Art-Language and Information	T. Atkinson/ M. Baldwin
Cabinet VIII		
A(iii)a	On Aspects of Section Three of 'Concerning the Paradigm of Art	D. Rushton
A(iii)b	Some Uses of Paradigm	K. Lole
B(iii)a	Model Theory in History	D. Rushton
B(iii)b	Model Theory in History	P. Pilkington
D(iii)	Don Judd's Dictum and Its Emptiness	P. Pilkington/ D. Rushton
E(iii)	On Asserting	D. Rushton
F(iii)	Duchampian Delinquency and the Constitutive Cure	P. Pilkington
I(iii)	Control, Intention and Responsibility	K. Lole <sup>3</sup>

#### Notes

1. In the catalogue for *The New Art* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1972) and *Art & Language* (Lucerne: Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1974), Howard is named as an Art & Language member. However, his name did not appear as part of the signage in either the "Documenta 5" installation or the *Documenta 5* catalogue.
2. Published anonymously, but since 1980, attributed to Terry Atkinson. See, *Art & Language* (Eindhoven, Netherlands: Van Abbemuseum, 1980), 15.
3. Total number of citations is 107. Harrison and Orion and Harrison 1991 give the incorrect figure of 350 citations, which may instead refer to the actual number of individual pieces of paper inserted into the plastic envelopes of the *Documenta Index* file drawers.



# Museum Fridericianum 1. Stock

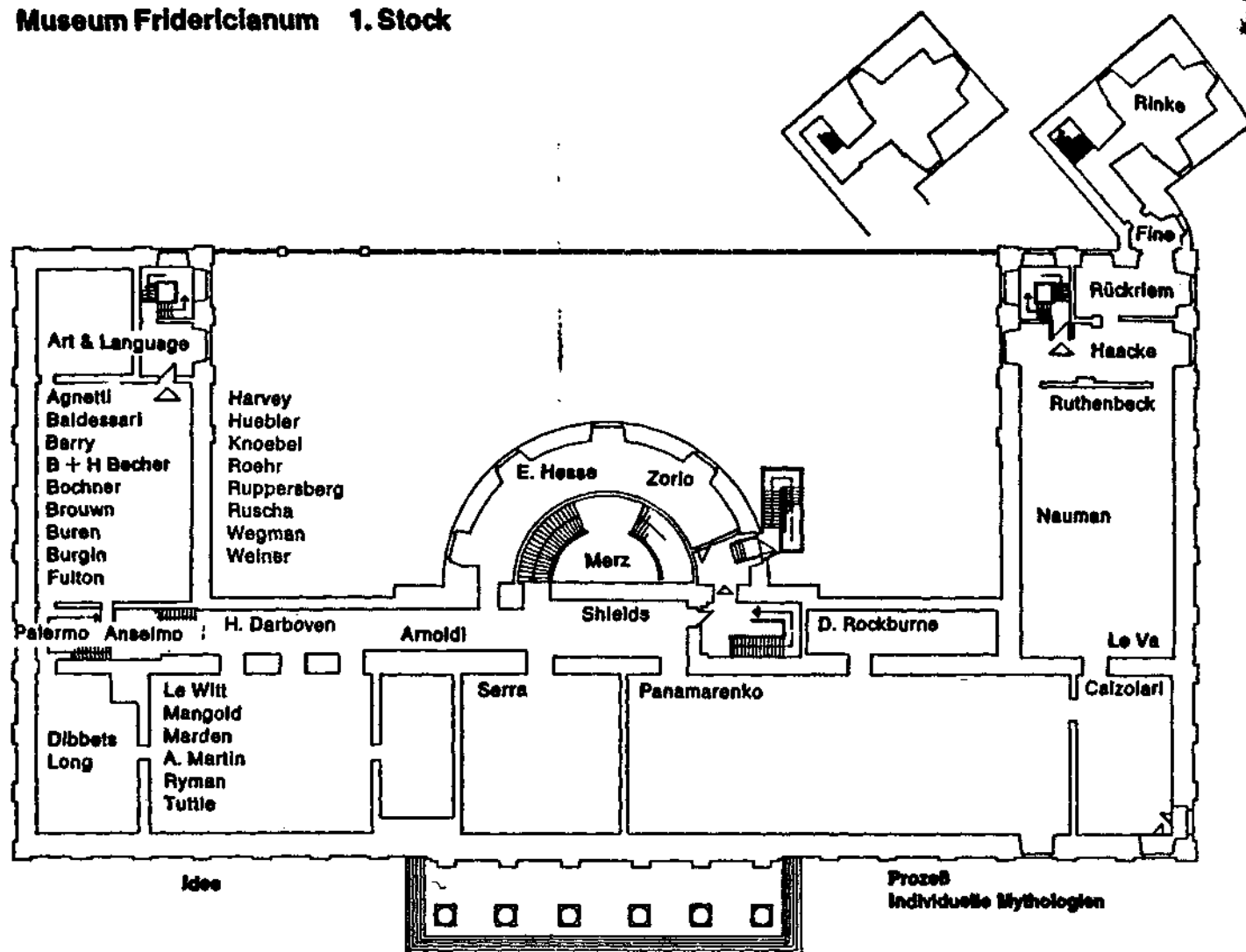


Figure 1. Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, West Germany, floorplan for "Documenta 5" (1972). Source: *Documenta 5* (1972).

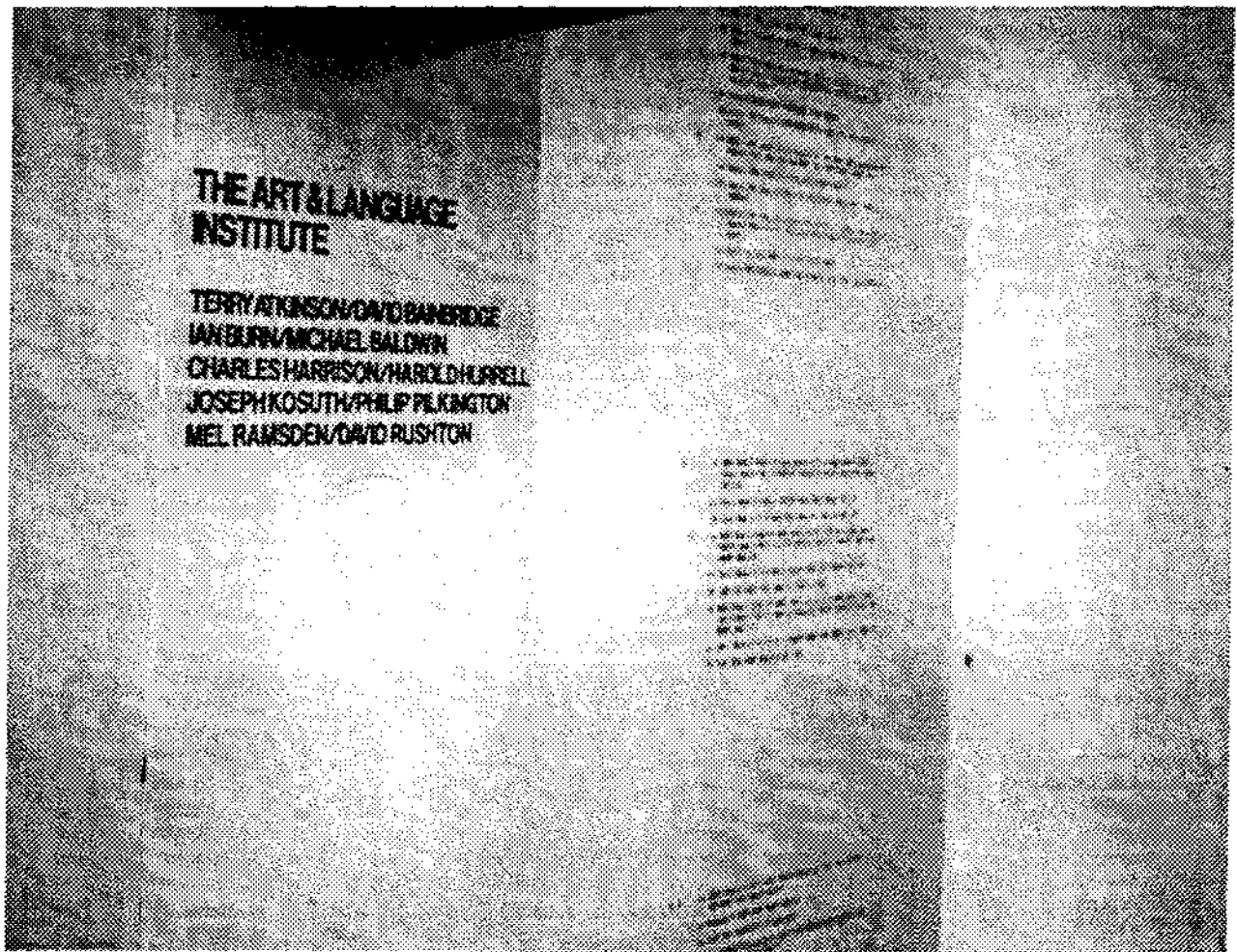


Figure 2. Art & Language, *Documenta Index* (1972), entrance to installation at "Documenta 5". Photograph: courtesy Lisson Gallery.

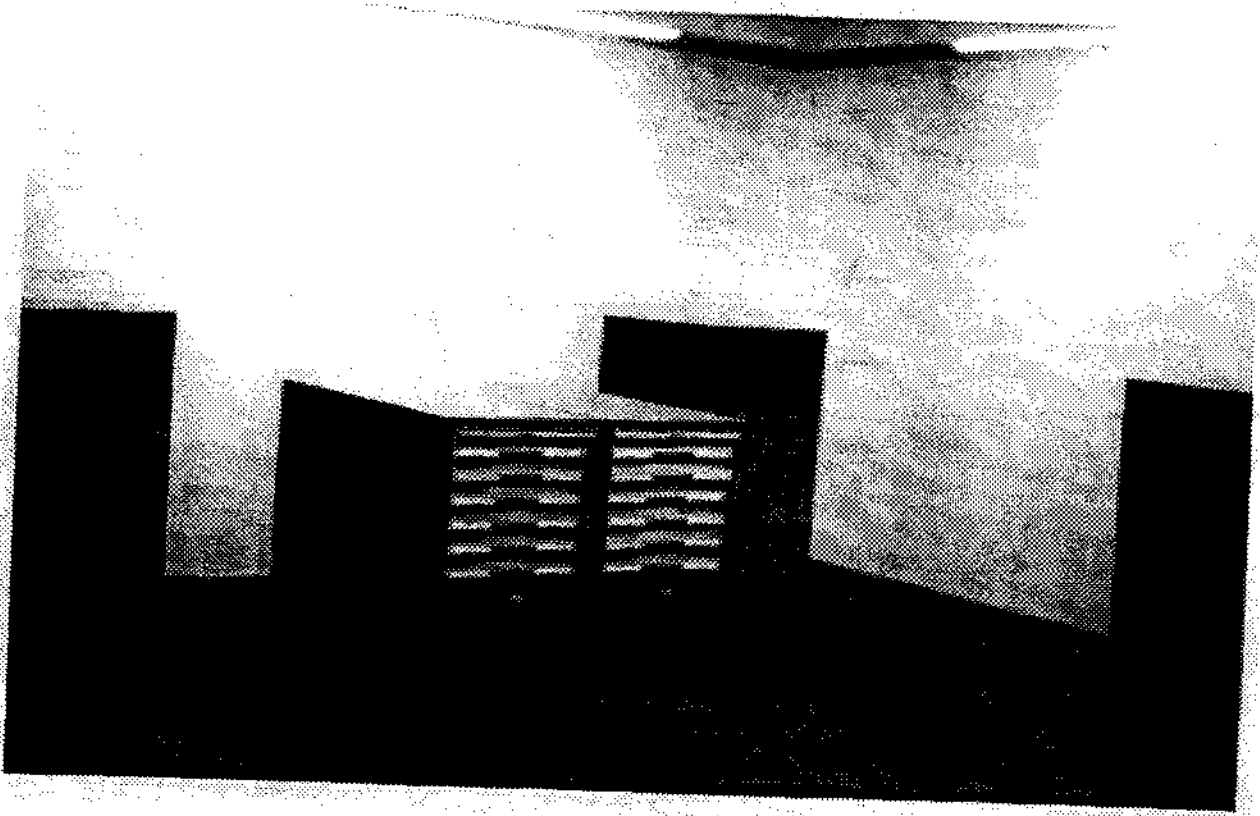


Figure 3. Art & Language, *Documenta Index* (1972), installation detail. Photograph: courtesy Lisson Gallery.

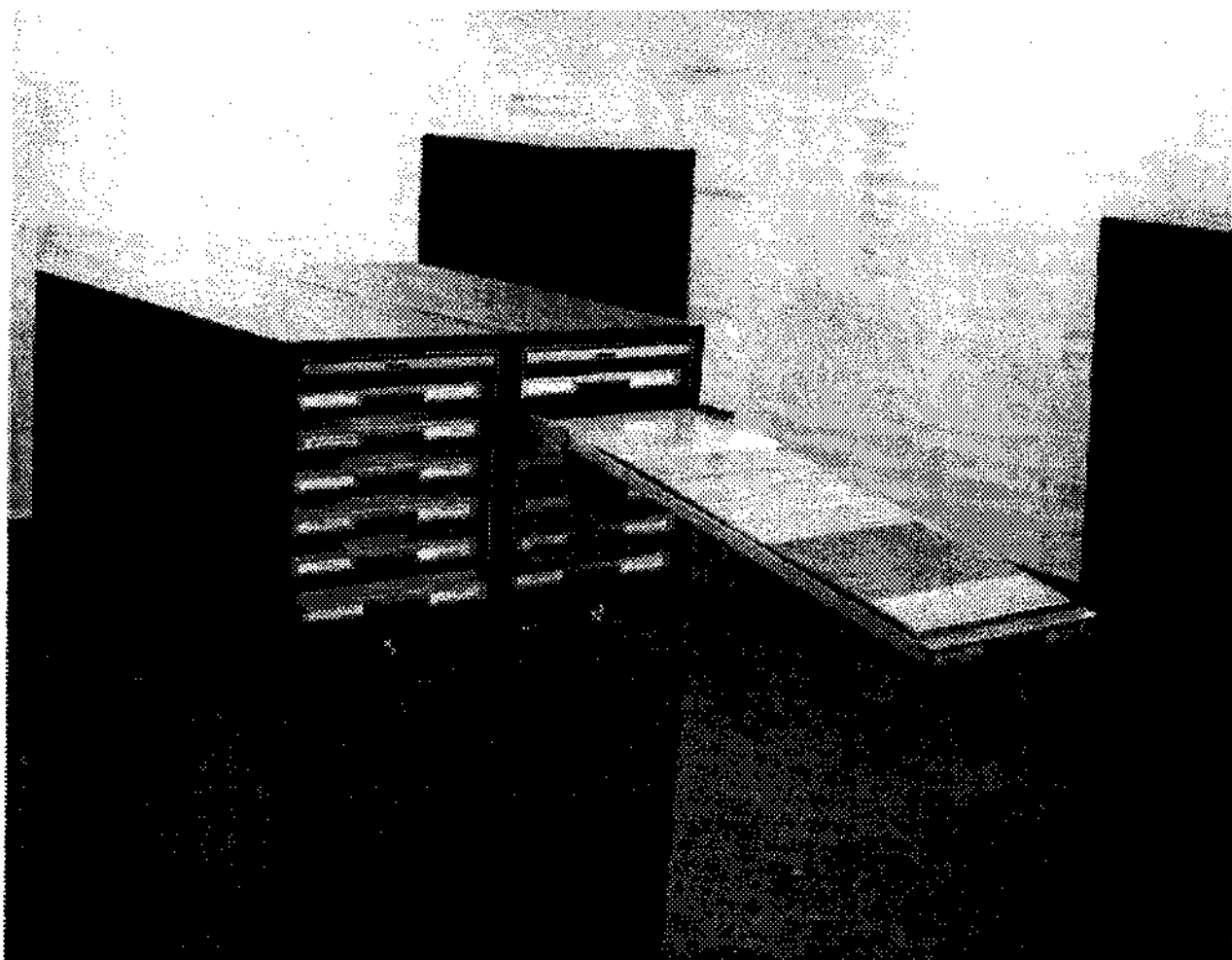


Figure 4. Art & Language, *Documenta Index* (1972), installation detail. Photograph: courtesy Lisson Gallery.

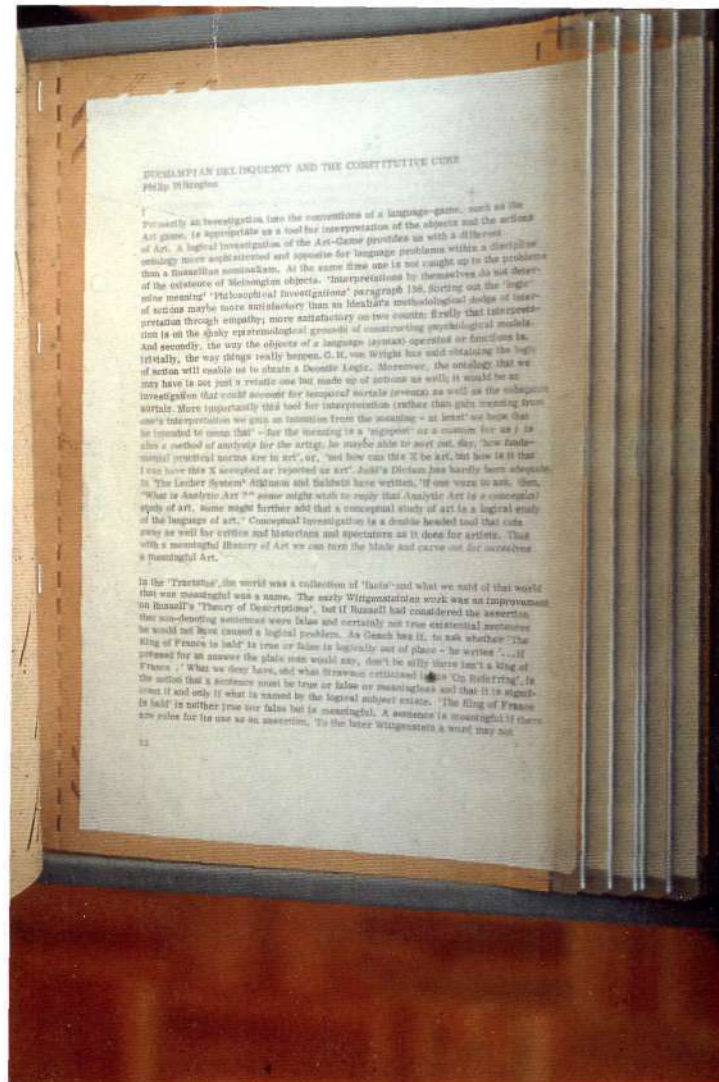
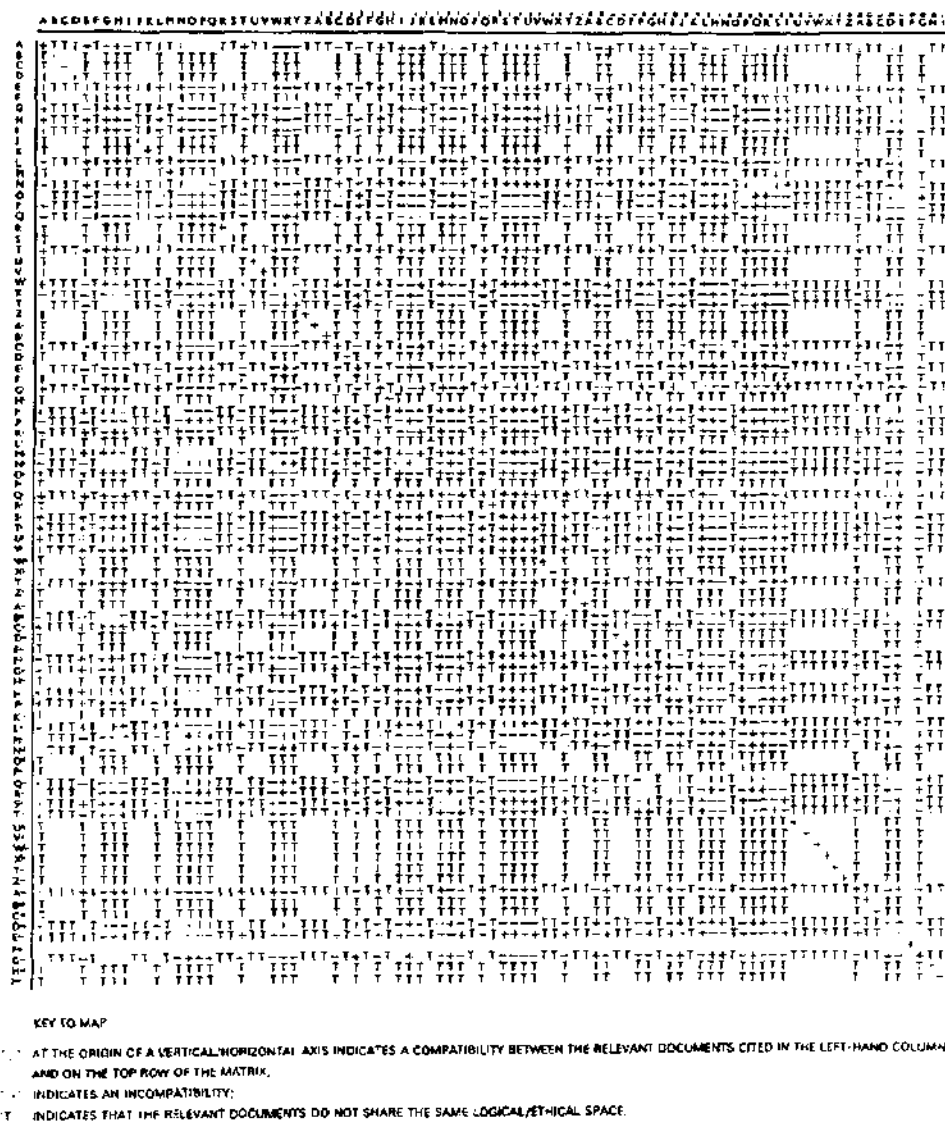


Figure 5. Art & Language, *Documenta Index* (1972), installation detail. Photograph: William Wood; courtesy Thomas Ammann.



Figure 6. Art & Language, *Documenta Index* (1972), installation detail. Photograph: William Wood; courtesy Thomas Ammann.

# ALTERNATE MAP FOR DOCUMENTA (BASED ON CITATION A)



TERRY ATKINSON/DAVID BAINBRIDGE  
IAN BURN/MICHAEL BALDWIN  
CHARLES HARRISON/HAROLD HURRELL  
JOSEPH KOSUTH/MEL RAMSDEN

THE ART & LANGUAGE INSTITUTE  
PAUL MAENZ/KÖLN/JUNI 15

Figure 7. Art & Language, *Alternate Map for Documenta (Based on Citation A)* (1972), offset poster, 72.5 x 50.6 cm. Photograph: Stan Douglas.



## DOCUMENTA MEMORANDUM (INDEXING)



Figure 8. Art & Language, *Documenta Memorandum (Indexing)* (1972), offset poster, 72.5 x 50.6 cm. Photograph: Stan Douglas.





Figure 9. Michael Baldwin, *Mirror Piece* (1965), mirror on canvas, 35 x 92 x 10 cm. Present whereabouts unknown. Source: *Art Conceptuel Formes Conceptuel/Conceptual Art Conceptual Forms* (1990).



Figure 10. Robert Morris, *Mirror Cubes* (1965), mirrors on wood, 100 x 100 x 100 cm. Private collection. Source: *Art Conceptuel Formes Conceptuel/Conceptual Art Conceptual Forms* (1990).

By declaring one area to be the 'area of attention' and another to be 'not the area of attention', then the area that is designated as 'not the area of attention' will demand a sufficient amount of attention for it to be acknowledged as 'not the area of attention'. One might also declare an area to be 'not the area of attention' as the only point to be attended to. But, even a 'not an area of attention' is assigned significance in that sense, then whatever is not in the 'not an area of attention' can be treated here as an area which is not attended to in an observational sense.

#### **The air-conditioning as device**

After a few weeks attempting to sort out indicators for the exhibition of non-entities model, Michael Baldwin remarked that he was not sure that the air-conditioning didn't constitute a separate focus. For myself, I made the decision that it suited my purposes to regard the air-conditioning as an integral part of the exhibition. Although one can see a possible situation where, if the air-conditioning were to be declared a separate focus, this separating from the exhibition might be used as a device to relate it to the exhibition. But here there is no need to set up this separate focus, rather, to use the air-conditioning as a means to examine the concepts of length and temperature.

Assuming the air-conditioning equipment is functioning then the room(s) will be filled with air-conditioned air. A question to be asked at this point; Is the air (air-conditioned or not) a permanent factor? And if it is, then how do we identify it as such? Let us consider firstly the question of identifiability.

We can start by examining how we detect temperature. The temperature of a body is a measure; that is a measure of its hotness. This can further be defined as a property the rate of which heat will be transferred to or from it. It is then reasonable to say that the temperature is a measure of the kinetic energy of the molecules, ions, atoms, of which matter is composed? Let us assume that we need an exhaustive description of the temperature throughout the rooms. We therefore need to make extensive analytic breakdowns. Firstly a million years of experience guides us to acknowledge the presence in the rooms of various bodies. The concept of a 'body' involves a measure of identifiability (1) and permanence. This measure of identifiability will, if it is to be a com-

Figure 11. Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, *Air-conditioning Show/Air Show/Frameworks: 1966-7* (1968), detail of opening page. Source: *Art Conceptuel Formes Conceptuel/Conceptual Art Conceptual Forms* (1990).

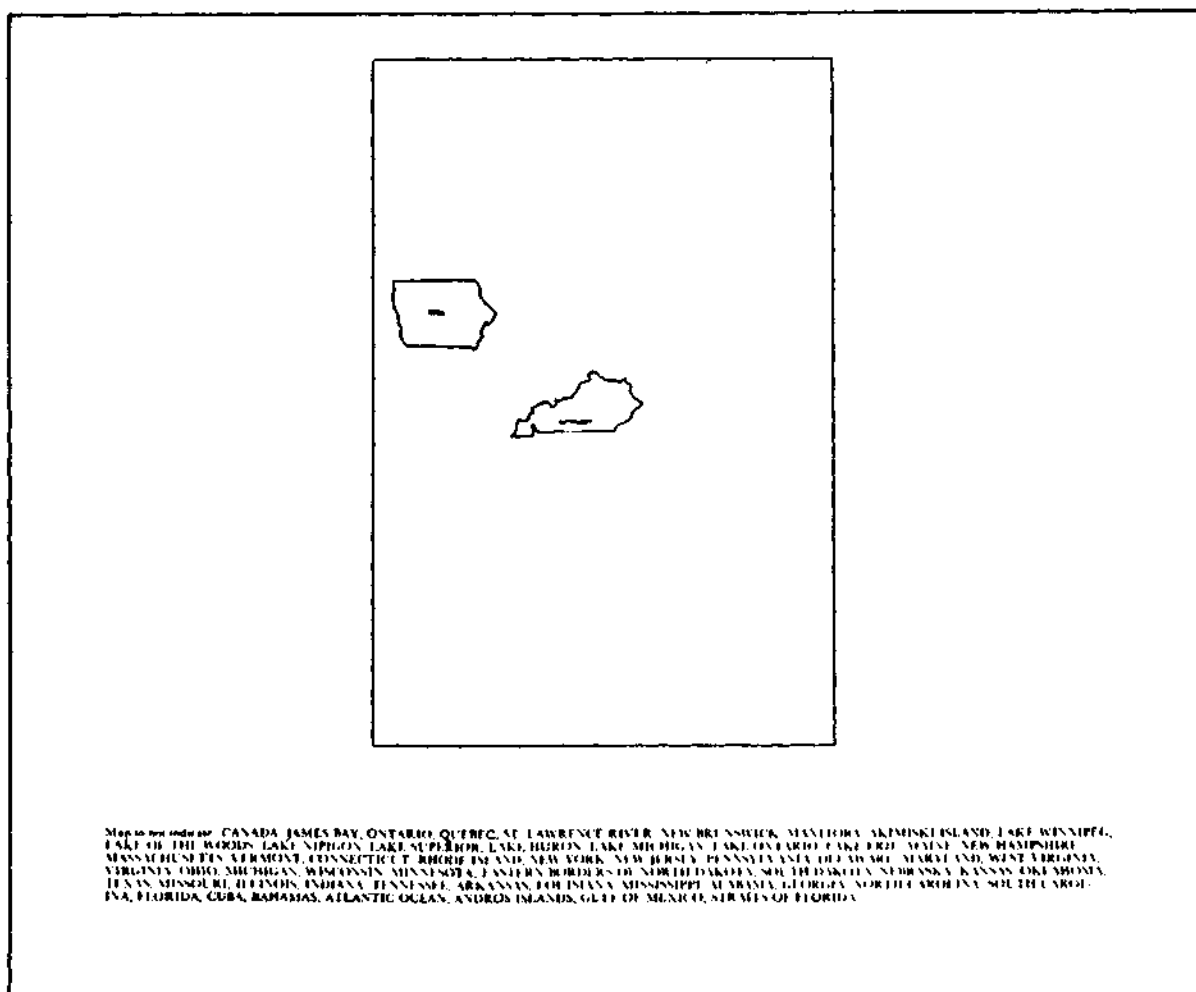


Figure 12. Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, *Map Not to Indicate . . .* (1967), letterpress, 50 x 52 cm, edition of 50. Source: *Art & Language: The Paintings* (1982).

VOLUME I NUMBER I		MAY 1969
<h1>Art-Language</h1>		
<i>The Journal of conceptual art</i>		
Edited by Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin, Harold Hurrell		
<hr/>		
<h2>Contents</h2>		
Introduction		I
Sentences on conceptual art	Sol LeWitt	11
Poem-schema	Dan Graham	14
Statements	Lawrence Weiner	17
Notes on M1 (1)	David Bainbridge	19
Notes on M1	Michael Baldwin	23
Notes on M1 (2)	David Bainbridge	30
<hr/>		
 <i>Art-Language is published three times a year</i>		
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Printed in Great Britain		

Figure 13. *Art-Language* I:1 (May 1969), cover.

	b)	c)
a)	Terry Atkinson July 1939	Coventry, England.
	David Bainbridge July 1941	Birmingham, England.
	Michael Baldwin Dec. 1945	Chipping Norton, England
	Harold Hurrell Dec. 1940	Hull, England.
d)	The Art & Language Press Project.	
	Approx. 10-12 screens approx 8 feet high by 10 feet long to be arranged according to the amount, size(s) and nature of the printed material, photographs etc. it is intended to display. Material worked upon 1967-1969.	

Figure 14. Terry Atkinson, David Bainbridge, Michael Baldwin and Harold Hurrell, *The Art & Language Press Project* (1969), card submitted for "557,087." Source: 557,087.

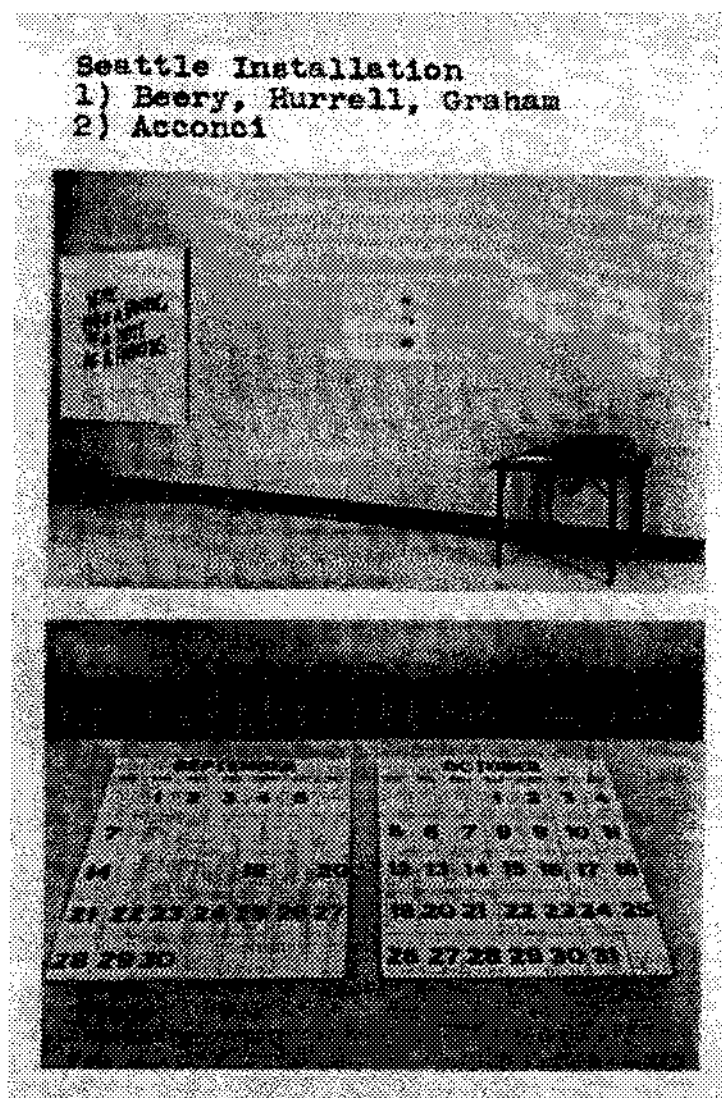


Figure 15. Card showing installation detail of "557,087" exhibition, Seattle Art Museum, 1969. Source: 557,087.

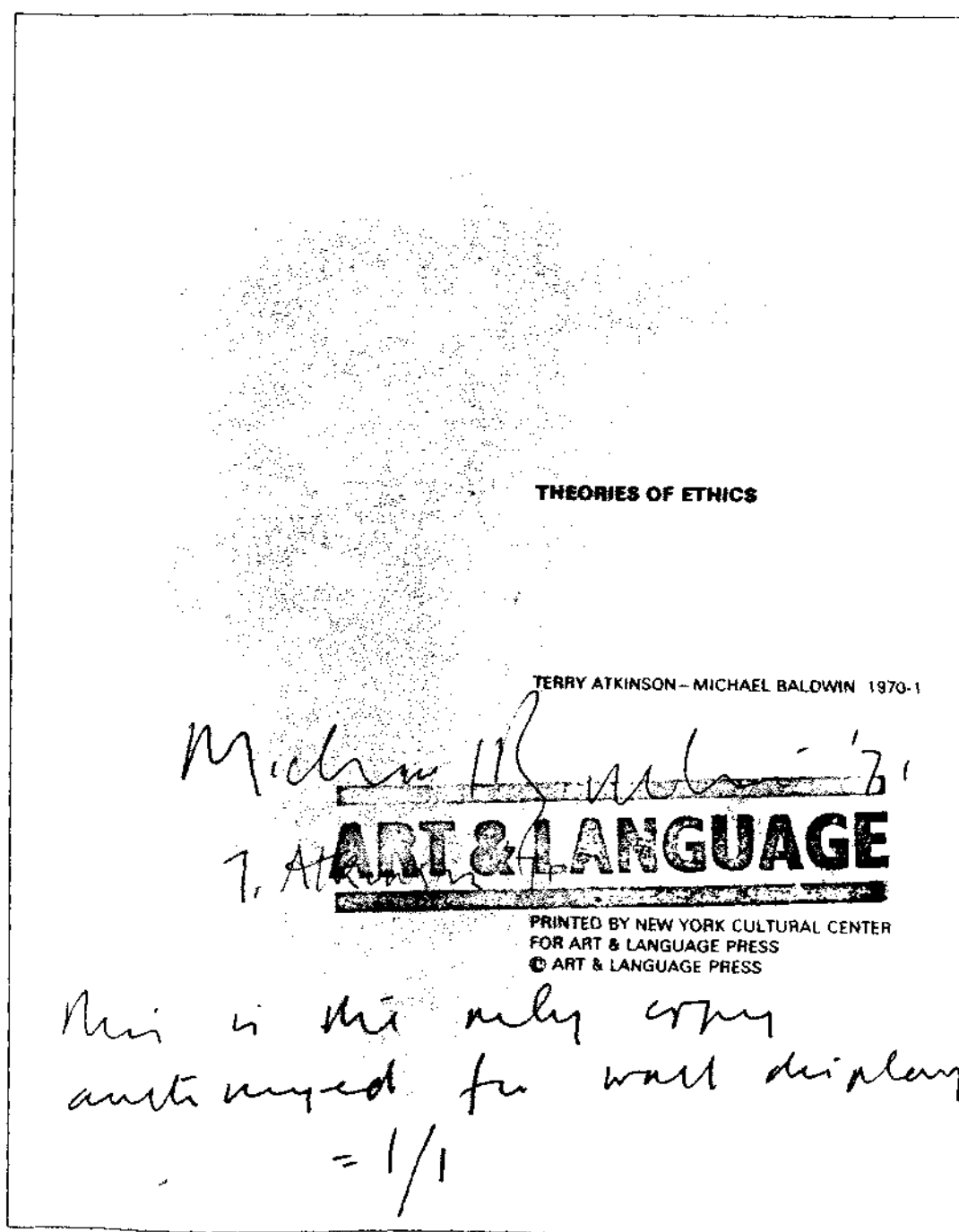
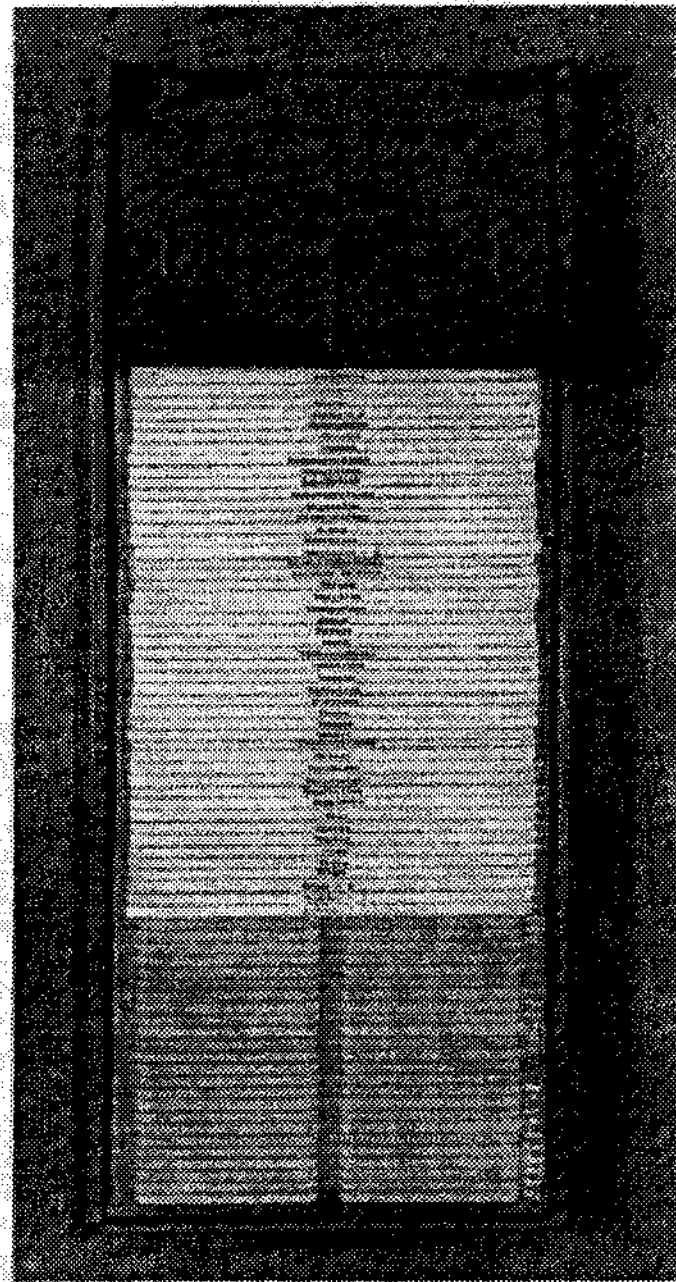


Figure 16. Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, *Theories of Ethics* (1971), signed and editioned title-page. Source: *Art Conceptuel Formes Conceptuel/Conceptual Art Conceptual Forms* (1990).





Robert Morris, *Card File* (1961), file and typewritten text, 119.3 x 26.7 x 5.1 cm. Virginia Dwan Collection. Source: *Art Conceptuel I* (1988).

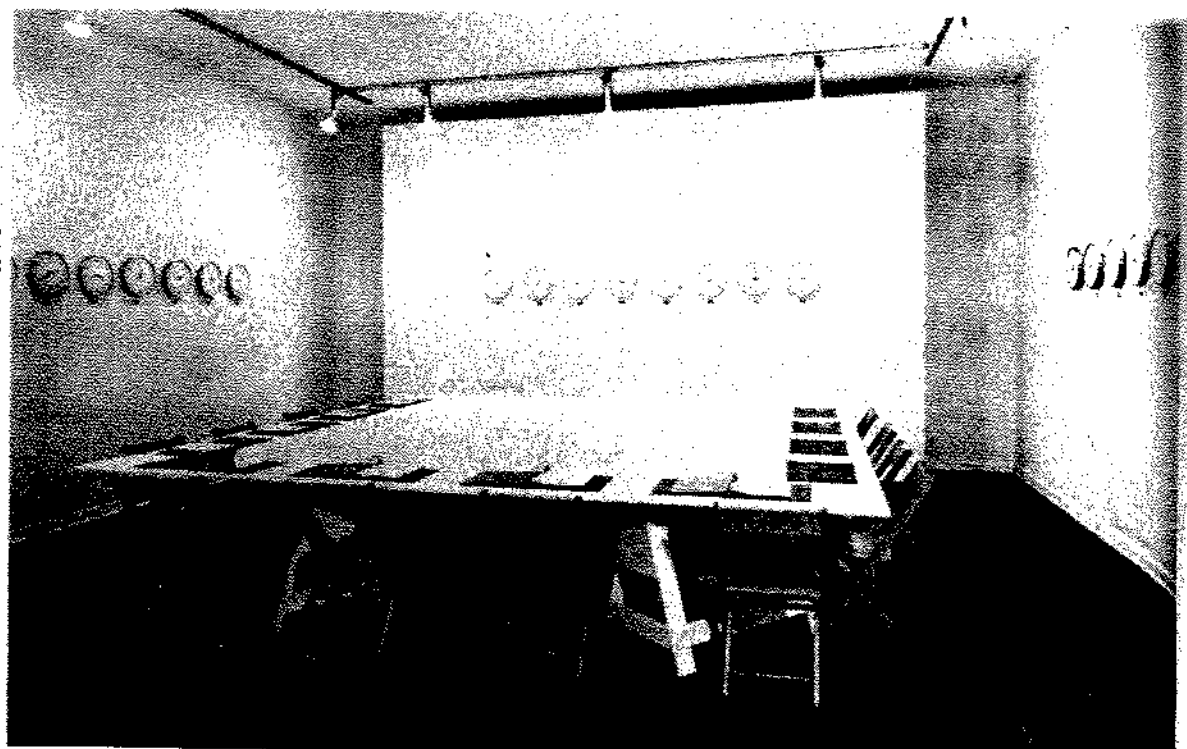


Figure 18. Joseph Kosuth, *The Eighth Investigation* (1971), installation at Leo Castelli Gallery, New York. Source: *Joseph Kosuth* (1973).