

SQUAREHEAD

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"...don't look down."

James Osterberg

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Abstract

In the United States during the early 1960s, there was, within the dominant art-critical mode of formalism, a mounting opposition to Clement Greenberg's grip on the art discourse. By the mid-sixties, this dissent resulted in a weakening of Greenberg's grip. Artists and writers began to break off from the direction which Greenberg prescribed as the formalist imperative. One such artist was Donald Judd, a painter who in 1961 began to experiment with three-dimensional art work, which he came to refer to as "specific objects." The name reflected Judd's conviction that he was working with phenomenologically-stable art works: art works which could not be confused with anything else, which would avoid all illusion, and which would not refer to anything outside of themselves. Judd's shift from working in painting to working in specific objects can be seen as a manifestation of his emerging conviction that painting has a number of insurmountable problems which three-dimensional work does not have, or at least not to the same degree. The most pressing of these problems was, according to Judd, the inevitable illusionism of painting. In a number of articles and interviews in the mid-1960s, Judd argued that one of the major weaknesses of painting --- and of non-specific art as a whole --- is its reliance on internal relations in the form of composition. This, in turn, tended to interfere with the immediate comprehension of the piece and, for Judd, was symptomatic of the lack of integrity of non-specific art.

However, the dispute between Judd, Greenberg and Fried, remained an argument between formalists. The disputants held some

key beliefs about the nature of art in common. The most important of these beliefs for my argument are that art is historically autonomous, and that the central project of Modernist art is the self-definition of forms. Nor did the discussion remain framed within the terms of formalism merely as a result of inertia. These boundaries were adhered to even when talking about artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Roy Lichtenstein, in spite of their highly suggestive imagery. Hence, Judd's aesthetic of the specific object utilizes a conception of the ideal state for the viewer and the artist which relies on a denial of history. It is based on a phenomenological and epistemological innocence that is not concerned with arguments about the historical contingency of the subject. Judd's intention was that the specific object, *by the very fact of its specificity*, would preclude the viewer's perceptions being interfered with by material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of the viewer's will.

The crux of my argument is that Donald Judd is confusing the *appearance* of specificity with specificity *per se*. That is to say, his work is based on the utilization of forms and surfaces which, within their historical contexts, are read as neutral. But this reading is illusory, given that it is historically determined. Therefore, in my paper I demonstrate how Judd's work is a product of the aesthetics of objectivity, and how particular aspects of his art and his arguments can be seen as symptomatic of the system of beliefs which is faith in objectivity and, more importantly, how Judd's specific objects can be seen as a nexus between this system of beliefs and its particular manifestation in the United States of America during the early 1960s.

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Prologue

The art and views of Donald Judd have had a fair amount of ink spilled in their honour. But the effect of all of this discussion has been to entrench, rather than dispense with, inaccurate interpretations of Judd's aesthetics. A significant recent example of this is Barbara Haskell's essay in the exhibition catalogue which accompanied the exhaustive retrospective hosted by the Whitney Museum in the Fall of 1988.¹ Haskell's essay is significant because it accompanies the most ambitious retrospective of Donald Judd's work to date. If anyone should take care to get Judd's arguments right, surely it should be the organizers of such a grand effort. At first glance, it appears that such is the case. Haskell's essay is full of quotations and endnotes, suggesting that here, finally, is a considered analysis of Judd's thought and work. However, the careful reader will quickly realize that Haskell is merely mimicing the form of the density of analysis that I am after. One central example will serve to make the point that Haskell badly misrepresents Judd's arguments. In Haskell's essay, Judd's work is discussed as "Minimalist sculpture," ignoring Judd's arguments against refering to his work as either "Minimalist" or "sculpture." Not only does Haskell use the term "Minimalism" throughout her essay to refer to Judd's work, she even implies that this is an uncontentious term which simply emerged out of the historical milieu that Judd was a part of:

Judd's work and that of peers such as Robert Morris, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, and Sol LeWitt rapidly overthrew other contenders for stylistic dominance of the decade. By 1966, less than three years after its initial introduction to the art community, what came to be called Minimalism seemed to have irrefutably supplanted Abstract Expressionism.²

Certainly it is true that critics and curators were quick to group these artists together under the label of Minimalism, and to confuse the use of that label with a truly adequate understanding of their work. What is lost in the process of such a Procrustean rubrification are the complex differences between the various systems of thought of which these art works were only one part. For example, a photograph of Judy Chicago's sculpture *Rainbow Picket* of 1966 (fig.1) is included without comment in Gregory Battcock's *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* in the midst of series of pages of monochrome photographs of work by other "Minimalists" and, as I will discuss at greater length in the Epilogue, treated similarly in the catalogue for the *Primary Structures* exhibition which was held at the Jewish Museum in 1966.³ The effect of the way that these texts treat Chicago's work is that important differences between various ways of thinking about the visual language of formalist modernism are effaced. This assumes special significance in relation to *Rainbow Picket* because, as I explain more fully in the closing pages of my thesis, this work is part of Chicago's attempt to formulate a system-immanent feminist critique of precisely the system of ideas that Battcock's documentation seamlessly locates Chicago within.

To be fair, a large part of the blame for the confusion surrounding Judd's ideas must be attributed to Judd himself. His writing is often stilted, and seems deliberately obtuse. Much of this obtuseness stems from Judd's prediliction for using relatively common words in contexts which make it clear that he is attaching special meanings to them, without ever explaining what these new meanings are. The tone of Judd's writing often

suggests that he tries to use obscure language to protect his precious thoughts from the philistines. This is stated more explicitly in some of Judd's later writings, which tend to be more unabashedly self-indulgent than those written during the 1950s and 1960s. For example, in a brief statement titled "In Defense of My Work" (1977), Judd writes:

Somewhere there has to be a place where the installation is well done and permanent. This obviously implies that museums are inadequate for their job. My installations and architecture are very much in defense of my work. Visual, spatial art cannot be reduced to performance. My work and that of my contemporaries that I acquired was not made to be property. It's simply art. I want the work I have to remain that way. It is not on the market, not for sale, not subject to the ignorance of the public, not open to perversion.⁴

Donald Judd is not the only, nor even the first, artist with a penchant for this sort of game of producing obtusely-formulated pronouncements, and then pointing to the failure of others to understand him as proof of his brilliance and their ignorance. As Harold Rosenberg writes in his 1966 essay "Virtuosos of Boredom":

The work (which embraces the aesthetics of boredom, such as that of Cage, Beckett, Warhol, Robbe-Grillet, Judd, Stella) is a masquerade that keeps the stranger at arm's length, yet prevents him from taking his leave by hinting at a significance that is never disclosed. Its impenetrable surface defeats him psychologically and humiliates him as a hopeless Philistine. Behind this barrier the band of initiates, pampered by semi-initiates, romps happily in an atmosphere as relaxed as socks on the bathroom floor. By erecting a wall of incomprehension between those in the know and humanity at large, the boring painting or performance serves to strengthen the inner unity of the various ideological, sex, and taste groups that constitute the world of the arts.⁵

Certainly, Judd is not one of the more imaginative artists of this ilk. My major reason for focusing on Judd lies elsewhere. Judd is interesting because his position, while it does not represent the first attempt on the part of an artist to develop a coherent system of thought in writing and art production, does

represent the moment at which the re-emergence of the element of critical modernism which had lain dormant within formalist modernism for so many years began to crystallize. Judd's relation to this crystallization is a peculiar one, but this is what makes him interesting. Judd himself tried to extend the argument of formalist modernism which had been developed by Greenberg. Yet, in attempting to extend this argument, in true Greenbergian fashion, *not* in order to subvert it, but rather in order to entrench it more fully in its area of competence, he became part of a fragmentation within formalist modernism. As I will discuss in the Epilogue, this fragmentation cleared the way for a second-order critique of formalist modernism which was not prepared to accept on faith the tenets of formalism. I see this, for reasons which will become clear further on, as the re-emergence of critical modernism. Now this re-emergence took, as the target of its critique, Donald Judd and the institution of "Minimalism." But such a diversity of ideas have been lumped together under the rubric of Minimalism that, as I said earlier, almost nothing is accomplished by identifying a particular person as a Minimalist. So part of my project is to identify Judd's view, as far as this is possible, and to separate it out from other views with which it is often confused.

The other part of my project is to clarify my objections to Judd's arguments, and to point out the inconsistencies in his arguments. My aim in providing a clarification of Judd's view for the reader is to set up an argument against that view, because Judd's writing and art, which together constitute an attempt to crystallize the argument which views art as an autonomous activity, provide an ideal vehicle for delving into the

phenomenon of "objectivity," which I see as the hidden presupposition of Judd's aesthetics.

My methodology is a sort of radical formalism, which attempts to look for the arguments, the hidden presuppositions, within Judd's corpus of written and artistic work, and then look for relevant ways to relate those presuppositions to the broader context.⁶ At the same time, it is less a description, a recounting of facts, than it is an attempt to hold a discussion with Judd, and point out why I feel his argument concerning the idea of formalist aesthetics in general, and the specific object in particular, is flawed. Although this type of historical aspect remains somewhat in the background, it is very much the foundation upon which my argument is built. It is precisely the knowledge of the historical effect of Judd's work and writing which allows the argument to begin and, I believe, which gives it its strength.⁷

I have said that part of my project is to identify the hidden presuppositions --- or philosophical premises --- within Judd's work. And I want to spend a few pages discussing on a broad scale the philosophical premises which I see as immanent within Judd's work because they will become important in relation to the thesis' Monologue, in which I discuss the way that Donald Judd formulated an aesthetic position in the mid-1960s, such that both his art work and his writings are essential components of that position. To a great extent, it is the faults which I see in Judd's position that are my primary concern because I feel that Judd is the most rigorous example of a type of formalist modernism which, I believe, really only emerged during the 1960s. Which is to say, it is only at this time that, in the hands of

Donald Judd, Michael Fried, and others that the phrase "art for art's sake" comes to mean "art as tautology."⁸ This is a point which I address in a number of different places throughout my thesis, but what I want to stress here is that one of the reasons I have chosen Judd is because his position seems to be one of the most powerfully formulated arguments of this type.

There are three threads to my critique of objectivity. One thread is the thread which I will develop below: namely, opposing it with a Nietzschean view that knowing and understanding are contingent processes. Another thread is an analysis of the phenomenological assumptions inherent in objectivity based on historically-specific critiques developed by Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard, which I use to propose that the appearance of objectivity is an illusory inflection. The third thread in my thesis is a materialist analysis that is grounded in the writings of Wolfgang Iser, C. Wright Mills, and Ernest Mandel, and which examines particular instances of such illusory inflections that are directly relevant to my discussion of Judd's work.

What, then, is the nature of my argument against what I have said is the hidden presupposition of Judd's idea of the specific object namely, objectivity? The argument against objectivity was summarized well by Edward Said in an interview in the Fall 1976 issue of *Diacritics*. Said notes:

(I)f you separate what you do from what you are, you are reifying, giving objectivistic form to things that in reality don't have that form; or if they do, have it in such a way as to require its overcoming. Thus to interpret man's work (as a laborer, literary critic, engineer, or whatever) as radically and organically connected with what man is and a whole entity (despite the fact that his consciousness cannot recognize or accept the connection) is the common and revolutionary point of departure both for the interpreter as interpreter and, Lukacs also tried to show, for the

proletariat as re-interpreter and upsetter of bourgeois reification.⁹

The argument which Said is developing is one which, in important ways, extends back to the work of Hegel, in the sense that, as long as there have been bourgeois ways of thinking, there have been those, like Hegel, who are concerned to analyze and refute those ways of thinking.¹⁰ However, in my opinion, the most fruitful discussion of this way of thinking begins with Friedrich Nietzsche, and therefore it is with Nietzsche that I want to start in building up my critique of objectivity.

In his book of 1887 titled *The Genealogy of Morals: An Attack*, Nietzsche gives a powerful critique of the world view which holds that the human intellect can perceive and understand all things. The ascendance of formal logic and the idea that it is the universal measure of validity are manifestations of this world view which Nietzsche is concerned to critique. Nietzsche writes:

(M)an saw himself as the being that measures values, the "assaying" animal. Purchase and sale, together with their psychological trappings, antedate even the rudiments of social organization and covenants. From its rudimentary manifestation in interpersonal law, the incipient sense of barter, contract, guilt, right, obligation, compensation was projected into the crudest communal complexes (and their relations to other such complexes) together with the habit of measuring power against power. The eye had been entirely conditioned to that mode of vision; and with the awkward consistency of primitive thought, which moves with difficulty but, when it does move, moves inexorably in one direction, early mankind soon reached the grand generalization that everything has its price, everything can be paid for. Here we have the oldest and naivest moral canon of justice, of all "fair play," "good will," and "objectivity."¹¹

In the first chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno build on Nietzsche's characterization of the bourgeois view as one which sees man as

the infallible assayer as the basis of the intellectual impulse that characterizes the Enlightenment. They argue that this general intellectual impulse takes the form of a conviction that there exists a universally applicable system of perception which, like money or common sense, is capable of representing all things using one abstract system of representation --- namely, the separation of subject, predicate and object which, although illusory, denies its illusory nature. A broader theme of Horkheimer and Adorno's book is the ways in which this conviction is manifestly the driving force within some of the most repugnant aspects of contemporary life. In the final chapter of their book, called "Elements of Anti-Semitism: The Limits of Enlightenment," Horkheimer and Adorno are concerned to address the phenomenon of fascism as an example. They write:

Only in that mediation by which the meaningless sensation brings a thought to the full productivity of which it is capable, while on the other hand the thought abandons itself without reservation to the predominant impression, is that pathological loneliness which characterizes the whole of nature overcome. The possibilities of reconciliation appear not in certainty unaffected by thought, in the preconceptual unity of perception and object, but in their considered opposition. The distinction is made in the subject, which has the external world in its own consciousness and yet recognizes it as something other. Therefore reflection, the life of reason, takes place as conscious projection. The morbid aspect of anti-Semitism is not projective behaviour as such, but the absence from it of reflection.¹²

With Horkheimer and Adorno, I see the faith in rationalism, in objectivity, in "common sense," as the primary component of the constellation of beliefs and ideas that form the crucible in which such unsavory social phenomena as reaction and fascism are formed. This view is a crucial element of the thought of many of the writers on whom I rely in this thesis. A particularly powerful concept, which I will use as the basis of a

phenomenological analysis of the untitled piece by Donald Judd which is the focus of my main discussion, is that of "mythology" which Roland Barthes elaborates in his essay "Myth Today" (1957). Barthes uses the term "mythology" to refer to a phenomenological inflection which provides information with a convincing appearance of being absolute. But there is much more to Barthes' argument than simply a formal analysis of a particular type of language or meta-language, for Barthes sees "myth" as the defining characteristic bourgeois thought. He writes:

Statistically, myth is on the right. There, it is essential; well-fed, sleek, expansive, garrulous, it invents itself ceaselessly. It takes hold of everything, all aspects of the law, of morality, of aesthetics, of diplomacy, of household equipment, of Literature, of entertainment. Its expansion has the very dimensions of bourgeois ex-nomination. The bourgeoisie wants to keep reality without keeping the appearances: it is therefore the very negativity of bourgeois appearance, infinite like every negativity, which solicits myth infinitely. The oppressed is nothing, he has only one language, that of his emancipation; the oppressor is everything, his language is rich, multiform, supple, with all the possible degrees of dignity at its disposal: he has an exclusive right to meta-language. The oppressed *makes* the world, he has only an active, transitive (political) language; the oppressor conserves it, his language is plenary, intransitive, gestural, theatrical: it is Myth. The language of the former aims at transforming, of the latter at eternalizing.¹³

This anti-bourgeois argument is a thread common to the critiques of objectivity which I use and develop throughout my thesis. I have taken Judd as the strongest example of an aesthetic position which I believe is a manifestation of this system of ideas, in order to develop a critique of this particular position and in order to be able, towards the end of my thesis, to discuss some of the critiques that emerged at the time.

A second point which I believe it is necessary to clarify in relation to this anti-bourgeois argument is that my position is

not that the various beliefs that are reified by the systems of representations which dominate the mind of the bourgeoisie are absolutely disconnected from, or at odds with, the aggregate of things which are suggested by empirical means to be extant. Rather, the argument is that whatever validity experience suggests to us that these ideas might have is systematically distorted. It is distorted so that what is contingent, the product of a perceptual system fraught with limitations, appears absolute. This is important because it is the nature of ideologies to use what seems reliable in them (i.e.: most people do end up with spouses and children; shoes do protect one's feet from sharp stones and inclement weather) to gain credence for the less justifiable extrapolations for which they also claim absolute reliability (i.e.: not ending up with a spouse and children is a pathological state; expensive shoes protect one's feet better than do inexpensive shoes). To use Barthes' terminology, the mythic inflection of absolute validity gains its power to convince from the way that --- indeed, from the fact that --- it extrapolates seamlessly from what is reliable in it. The difficulty, then, is that there is no place to stand outside of ideologies where one can reliably distinguish all that is valid from all that is not. Hence, as Gayatri Spivak notes in the introductory paragraph to her essay "The Politics of Interpretations," (1982), a persistent critique of ideology is never complete.¹⁴

A Nietzschean model of psychology can be used to provide what I think is a powerful explanation for the need to have faith in objectivity, and for the various manifestations which this has. In his later thought, Nietzsche develops a monist conception

of psychology according to which all actions stem from a single impulse, the will to power.¹⁵ The will to power is the need to feel that one is continuously increasing one's power over one's life. For Nietzsche, this is not necessarily a malevolent thing, since it can take a number of different forms, which Nietzsche arranges hierarchically.

The simplest manifestation of the will to power takes the form of feeling that one is increasing one's physical power over others, by means of physical violence. In the highest manifestation of the will to power, on the other hand, this impulse is internalized into a desire to constantly question and overturn one's own presuppositions. Nietzsche calls this manifestation of the will to power "self-overcoming." Hence, in its crudest form the will to power is destructive, but in its most sophisticated manifestation, self-overcoming, the will to power is sublime. Nietzsche argues that between these two extremes, there are a number of intermediate ways in which the will to power can be manifested. The one that I want to focus on is what Nietzsche calls "the will to knowledge." Within Nietzsche's ontology, the will to knowledge is the second-highest form of the will to power. It involves a certain amount of self-deception as a defense mechanism against the trauma of understanding that human knowledge is always uncertain. The appearance of this impulse --- this belief that there exists a universally applicable system of perception which is capable of representing all things as they are --- in the intellectual community produces what Friedrich Nietzsche derisively calls "mirroring scholars." For Nietzsche, knowledge, that is to say, naming, consists of the packaging and labelling of phenomena in

order to create the illusion that one understands and therefore controls these phenomena. Nietzsche discusses this point in

Beyond Good and Evil:

The power of the spirit to appropriate what is foreign to it is revealed in a strong inclination to assimilate the new to the old, to simplify the complex, to overlook or repel what is wholly contradictory: just as it arbitrarily emphasizes, extracts and falsifies to suit itself certain traits and lines in what is foreign to it, in every piece of "external world." Its intention in all this is the incorporation of new "experiences," the arrangement of new things within old division --- growth, that is to say; more precisely, the feeling of growth, the feeling of increased power. This same will is served by an apparently antithetical drive of the spirit, a sudden decision for ignorance, for arbitrary shutting-out, a closing of the windows, an inner denial of this or that thing, a refusal to let it approach, a kind of defensive posture against much that can be known, a contentment with the dark, with the closed horizon, an acceptance and approval of ignorance: all this being necessary according to the degree of its power to appropriate, its "digestive power," to speak in a metaphor -- and indeed "the spirit" is more like a stomach than anything else. It is here that there also belongs the occasional will of the spirit to let itself be deceived, perhaps with a mischievous notion that such and such is *not* the case, that it is only being allowed to pass for the case, a joy in uncertainty and ambiguity, an exultant enjoyment of the capricious narrowness and secrecy of a nook-and-corner, of the all too close, of the foreground, of the exaggerated, diminished, displaced, beautified, an enjoyment of the capriciousness of all of these expressions of power.¹⁶

What separates the will to knowledge from self-overcoming is that the will to knowledge is an *anti-dialectical* manifestation of the will to power: it studiously avoids turning its desire for understanding in on itself. This is the psychology of objectivity. Self-overcoming, on the other hand, is a *dialectical* manifestation of the will to power. Its very nature is to studiously turn its desire for understanding in on itself, continuously questioning its own presuppositions as they develop.¹⁷

A philosophical system which proposes an objective phenomenology is a particular manifestation of a more widespread phenomenon. Nietzschean psychology accounts for this phenomenon in a general way. Now, the question is: what is counterposed to this system of thought? What can be offered in its stead? It is this question that I wish to address briefly in this, the final section, of my prologue.

In the first sentence of *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche presents the reader with a rhetorical question: "We knowers are unknown to ourselves, and for a good reason: how can we ever hope to find what we have never looked for?"¹⁸ Yet Nietzsche continues almost immediately:

The sad truth is that we remain necessarily strangers to ourselves, we don't understand our own substance, we *must* mistake ourselves; the axiom, "Each man is farthest from himself," will hold for us to all eternity. Of ourselves we are not "knowers"....¹⁹

These two formulae, for which no common denominator can be found, summarize the two irreducible points of view which comprise the dialectical --- believing in advance that, in looking, one *must* mistake oneself, but also believing that look one *must*. It is for this reason that Walter Kaufmann writes, "Perhaps it is the most striking characteristic of 'dialectical' thinking from Socrates to Hegel and Nietzsche that it is a search for hidden presuppositions rather than a quest for solutions."²⁰

Truly dialectical thinking as Kaufmann understands it --- and I will take Kaufmann's understanding of this term throughout my paper --- is a daunting prospect. It may lead to the realization that the confusion of the process of *naming* a phenomenon with the process of *understanding* a phenomenon is an

elision which acts as a defense mechanism to shield us from the conclusion that it is impossible to truly understand "the world."

So then, haven't I painted myself into a corner? What is left after the radical denial of the rationalist position which is the handmaiden of objectivity? Is there no way to conclude this introduction other than in what has become the conventional style of the parodic recuperation of deconstruction?²¹ That is, is there no other way to avoid being in bad faith except to end by admitting that my attempt to carefully construct an argument is a sham, since all interpretations of Judd or Nietzsche are as good as any?

I think not, since such arguments assume that relativism is a radical rejection of the idea that there is any degree of stability or reliability in the processes of thought and perception. In fact, all that one need reject in order to be a relativist is the argument that these processes are absolutely stable and transparent. The sort of relativism which I am arguing for is based, first, on the argument that perception and thought are contingent and, second, on the argument that the degree of contingency is variable and unknowable.

Thus, my argument is that during the 1960s, a U.S. American artist named Donald Judd developed an aesthetic system which presupposed that perception could be objective, that since objectivity is untenable, Judd's aesthetic system is untenable, and that the phenomenon of the development of such an aesthetic can be seen as symptomatic of a particular historical moment. It is hard to disagree with Edward Said when he notes that so much of what goes on in academia appears important to us for the simple reason that we spend so much time discussing various ideas

as if they are important.²² Nonetheless, I make these points: more, I insist on them. And these are precisely the points which Judd and others who think in the same way or, to put it another way, who adopt the same ideology, will not, and cannot, concede. They cannot concede these points because to do so would be to give up the comfortable position of seeing one's way of organizing one's perceptions as infallible.

Worse than misguided, however, such a position is dangerous. For, as Horkheimer and Adorno argue in the discussion of Anti-Semitism quoted above, the belief that one's own system of perception is infallible and superior to all others all too readily provides a foundation for the conviction that one's own system of perception is entitled to work for the elimination of all competing systems. These points are precisely the crux of my critique of Judd and, more broadly, of the system of ideas which, to me, he represents.

Monologue

Throughout much of the 1950s, the voice of the critic Clement Greenberg held sway over much of the United States' art world. The crux of Greenberg's way of thinking about art is that the best art contributes to the progression of the arts toward the goal of self-definition. This criterion of the best art is, according to Greenberg, objective and universal, as is the taste which accompanies it. This view was reiterated a number of times by Greenberg after it was crystallized in his 1940 essay "Towards A Newer Laocoon":

The arts lie safe now, each within its "legitimate" boundaries, and free trade has been replaced with autarchy. Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art. To prove that their concept of purity is something more than a bias in taste, painters point to Oriental, primitive and children's art as instances of the universality and naturalness and objectivity of their ideal of purity.¹

Greenberg's argument here anticipates his later arguments for an idealist² conception of aesthetics, such as that which he put forward in his 1960 essay "Modernist Painting," formalizing his conviction that there is an universal "best taste" which can be objectively known, and toward which art progresses.³ Words such as "objective," "natural," "universal," and "international" are, in this system of ideas, indicators that a particular body of work is part of the teleological investigation to identify the irreducible elements of a given art form --- that is, it furthers the progress of the self-definition of that form.

There are a number of models of culture which discuss the use of what Jean Baudrillard calls "the democratic alibi of universals" within cultural systems in order to naturalize the process of discrimination which occurs there, and which,

following these models, I believe is the driving force behind much of what goes on within the sphere of high culture. These analyses provide powerful ways for determining the significances of Greenberg's terminology which go deeper than discussions of the latest developments within formalist modernism. In his analysis of the system of ideas which has developed with late capitalism in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972), Baudrillard argues that by appealing to the "democratic alibi of universals," one denies the contingency of one's system of values. More, one denies even that one's values are systematic. In his 1969 essay "Sign Function and Class Logic," Baudrillard writes:

The cultural class logic in bourgeois society is always rooted in the democratic alibi of universals. Religion was a universal. The humanist ideals of liberty and equality were universals. Today the universal takes on the absolute evidence of concreteness: today the universal is human needs, and all the cultural and material goods that respond. It is the universal of consumption.⁴

Baudrillard argues that a democratic alibi is required because the circulation of sign exchange value is driven by an anti-democratic aim, that of social discrimination. But it is also driven by the desire among people to be included in the discriminating group. Hence, two things are needed. First, the continually believable promise that the next purchase that the consumer makes will be the one that catapults that consumer in amongst the lucky few. Second, a system of constant aesthetic innovation is needed which always keeps one step ahead of the consumer. Like a cruel adult teasing a baby by holding candy out to it and then pulling it away when the baby reaches for it, the market place keeps the consumer on the run by constantly

promising that the next purchase will be the one that makes the essential difference. As Baudrillard writes:

(T)hat which at the level of form appears to be a surpassing towards a universal position, takes on its true value in an inverse social signification: the universal term (synthesis of difference) once again becomes an effective factor of discrimination because only a few elect will be able to accede to this stage of the aesthetic combinatory. The others find themselves relegated to the moral manipulation of domestic objects. With respect to objects and their calculus (as other places), the universal once again is the title of nobility held by a specific category. The aesthetic calculus is always submerged in social logic. In order to avoid taking this ideological process into account, designers exhaust themselves in popularizing audacious, "rational," "functional" forms, being all the while surprised that these forms do not spontaneously seduce the mass public. Yet behind their pious litany (educating public taste), these "popular" creators direct their unconscious strategy: beautiful, stylized, modern objects are subtly created (despite all reversed good faith) in order not to be understood by the majority --- at least not straight away. Their social function is first to be distinctive signs, to be objects which will distinguish those who distinguish them.⁵

Hence, formal innovation that presents itself with the rhetoric of universalism is concerned to establish itself as a cultural aristocracy. Throughout *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Baudrillard's concern is with the analysis of particular phenomena which are related to the social psychology of distinction at a personal level: what do these phenomena say about how the individual perceives itself in relation to the landscape comprised of other individuals who are perceiving it? What do these phenomena say about the ways in which the individual conceives of other individuals' perceptions of itself?

It is interesting to place Baudrillard's thought beside Edward Said's opinions on culture, because Baudrillard and Said have similar things to say, but discuss the social psychology of distinction on different levels. On the one hand, Baudrillard

asks: what do these phenomena say about the ways in which an individual conceives of other individuals' perceptions of itself? On the other hand, Said asks: what do these phenomena say about the ways in which a culture conceives of other cultures' perceptions of itself? However, the significance of the mechanism of distinction remains roughly the same, and therefore I conceive of the social psychology of distinction on the level of the individual as a localized instance of a phenomenon which operates on a much larger scale at the level of the cultural. The parallels between Baudrillard's and Said's models of distinction go further, because Said has identified, at the level of the cultural, the importance of a phenomenon identical to what Baudrillard calls "the democratic alibi of the universal." In his essay "Secular Criticism," (1983) Said makes explicit his view of the significance of this with respect to the relation between the levels of the individual and the cultural:

What is more important in culture (than the grid of research techniques and ethics by which the prevailing culture imposes on the individual scholar its canons of how scholarship is to be conducted) is that it is a system of values saturating downward almost everything within its purview; yet, paradoxically, culture dominates from above without at the same time being available to everything and everyone it dominates. In fact, in our age of media-produced attitudes, the ideological insistence of a culture drawing attention to itself as superior has given way to a culture whose canons and standards are invisible to the degree that they are "natural," "objective," and "real."⁶

This analysis has important implications for my argument, not only because Greenberg reiterates his position in universalist terms throughout his career, but also because Greenberg's use of this way of thinking is but one of many manifestations which arise in many different areas, and intersect in interesting ways, and further, because Greenberg's position

was useful to the United States Information Agency as a distinguishing sign because it is stated in universalist terms.⁷

Let us return, then, to Greenberg's essay "Modernist Painting." This essay was written in 1960 to be broadcast on the Voice of America radio network that year. It was republished in two influential cultural periodicals in the next three years.⁸ Consequently, "Modernist Painting" is something of a *prise de position* for Greenberg's way of thinking about art in the early 1960s. The thesis of "Modernist Painting" is that the project of Modern Art since Edouard Manet has been one of deductive self-definition, and that this parallels Modernist developments in other fields. The most notable of these developments is, in Greenberg's view, Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1770), because Greenberg sees Kant as the first modernist in any field. Greenberg writes:

I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of this self-critical tendency (of Western civilization to question its own foundations) that began with the philosopher Kant. Because he was the first to criticize the means itself of criticism, I conceive of Kant as the first real Modernist.

The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it, but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.⁹

In "Modernist Painting," then, Greenberg reiterates his argument for a model of cultural and aesthetic autonomy, which is part and parcel with his teleological conception of the history of Modern Art.¹⁰

I have spent a fair amount of time with a consideration of this essay because, despite Greenberg's after-the-fact protestations that "Modernist Painting" is not a prescriptive essay,¹¹ it has come to be viewed as a crystalization of a

particular viewpoint, and this partly has to do with the considerable popularity of models of culture like Greenberg's throughout the 1950s and early 1960s in the United States. Various high profile names in art writing at this time, such as Micheal Fried, Donald Judd, and Rosalind Krauss, adhere to some variation of the idea of formalist modernism. This was the dominant mode of thinking about art throughout this period. Although these people did not necessarily agree on what constituted the precise nature of the modernist project, or which art was the best art, they did constitute the dominant, which is not to say the only, voice of art writing, a voice of recalcitrant formalism.

At the same time, the state of affairs would not be adequately described without a discussion of Greenberg's 1962 article "After Abstract Expressionism," and the new tack that it represents in Greenberg's thought. In this article, Greenberg argues that Abstract Expressionism had been superceded as the furthest extension of Modernist painting, and that the flatter, less painterly surfaces of Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko are the new leading edge. Greenberg writes:

By now it has been established, it would seem, that the irreducible essence of pictorial art consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness; and that the observance of merely these two norms is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture: thus a stretched or tacked-up canvas already exists as a picture --- though not necessarily as a *successful* one. (The paradoxical outcome of this reduction has been not to contract, but actually to expand the possibilities of the pictorial: much more than before lends itself now to being experienced pictorially or in meaningful relation to the pictorial: all sorts of large and small items that used to belong entirely to the realm of the arbitrary and the visually meaningless.) As it seems to me, Newman, Rothko, and Still have swung the self-criticism of modernist painting in a new direction simply by continuing its old one. The question now asked

through their art is no longer what constitutes art, or the art of painting, as such but what irreducibly constitutes good art as such. Or rather, what is the ultimate source of value or quality in art? And the worked-out answer appears to be: not skill, training, or anything else having to do with execution or performance, but conception alone.¹²

Greenberg's new line comes at a time when there is a great deal of re-shuffling going on in the New York art world. Which is to say, within the dominant critical mode of formalism, there is a mounting opposition to Greenberg. In her thesis *The New Frontier Goes to Venice: Robert Rauschenberg and the XXXII Venice Biennale* (1985), Laurie Monahan discusses the nature of this dissent:

(Greenberg's) formidable influence as a critic --- perhaps the most important critic of the 1950s --- made his artistic "prophecies" for the 1960s almost an institution, demonstrating his powerful grip on the discourse of art. Yet at the same time, the very institutionalization of Greenberg's view of modernism became grounds for a rebellion of sorts on the part of many critics. Just as Abstract Expressionism was increasingly associated with the past, so too did Greenberg's criticism become entrenched as a tradition, made rigid by the very dialectics through which he pronounced the next successive move toward "freshness" in art. Since modernism, in Greenbergian terms, could only be expressed through abstraction, flatness, and colour, and painting was perpetually confined to limits between the painterly or linear dialectic, developments outside of Greenberg's conceptual framework were summarily ignored.¹³

By the mid-sixties, this dissent resulted in a weakening of Greenberg's grip on the art discourse. Artists and critics began to break off from the direction which Greenberg saw as the formalist imperative. One such artist is Donald Judd, who was developing a conviction that painting has a number of insurmountable problems which three-dimensional work does not have, or at least not to the same degree. The most pressing of these problems is, according to Judd, the inevitable illusionism of painting.¹⁴ Since 1959, Judd had been writing on a regular basis for a variety of publications, although most of his writing

at this time was for Arts magazine. The bulk of this writing is reviews, but there are a few essays in the mid-1960s in which Judd elaborates the ideas behind his own work. The most useful of these writings is Judd's essay "Specific Objects," which was first published in the 1965 Arts Yearbook.¹⁵ In this essay, Judd elaborates his conviction that one of the major problems facing contemporary art is the reliance on composition in the form of internal relations between discrete components. This, in turn, interferes with the immediate comprehension of the piece. The article is titled "Specific Objects" because this is the term Judd uses to refer to art which falls within his aesthetic framework. The term reflects Judd's conviction that he was working with art works which were phenomenologically stable, meaning that they could not be confused with anything else, would avoid all illusion, and would not refer to anything outside of themselves. Absolute specificity in this sense is, for Judd, the goal of the modernist project. Hence, in Judd's terminology, the difficulty with most artworks is that they are "general": they are illusionistic, allude to things outside of themselves, and hence are not phenomenologically stable. In particular, Judd felt very strongly that painting was inevitably illusionist. The only way to avoid the problem of illusionism, according to Judd's argument, is to engage actual space. This led Judd to the decision that the distinction between painting and sculpture is irrelevant, and to the redefinition of the Modernism in the visual arts as one project aimed at the production of the definitive art work, rather than as two different projects, one aimed at the production of the definitive painting, and the other aimed at the production of the definitive sculpture. For this

reason, Judd eschewed the term "sculpture" for his work, preferring to call it "three-dimensional work." In "Specific Objects," he writes:

Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors --- which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art. The several limits of painting are no longer present. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface.¹⁶

It is interesting to unpack the ways in which this phrase is more than just an aesthetic prescription. The offset dependent clause implies a sweeping rejection of all European art as backward, or at least archaic. The term "relics" here carries negative connotations of things which are fossilized, ossified, stale. But by identifying illusionism and literal space as one of the most objectionable relics, Judd implies that this is not just a minor difficulty. It is almost as if Judd finds the very idea that someone would produce a work of art which suggests literal space revolting. Furthermore, Judd's language suggests that there are other, equally revolting aspects of European archaicism, as well as a host of other slightly less grim characteristics, present in European art, an in-depth cataloguing and discussion of which would simply be too much to bear.

Along with the description of his work as sculpture, Judd eschewed the argument that his work was reductive. He rejected the term "Minimalism" and all similar terms, arguing that, while it was true that his work did not have a lot of the things that other work had, it also had many things that nobody else's work had. In his statement in the *Primary Structures* catalogue, he writes:

I object to several popular ideas. I don't think anyone's work is reductive. The most the term can mean is that new work doesn't have what the old work had. It's not so definitive that a certain kind of form is missing; a description and discussion of the kind present is pretty definitive. New work is just as complex and developed as old work.¹⁷

Furthermore, Judd argues that his work was better than much other work because it had eliminated the use of composition --- that is, the formal relation of discrete parts --- which he believes interferes with the immediacy of perception. In "Specific Objects," Judd writes:

In the three-dimensional work the whole thing is made according to complex purposes, and these are not scattered but asserted by one form. It isn't necessary for a work to have a lot of things to look at, to compare, to analyze one by one, to contemplate. The thing as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting. The main things are alone and are more intense, clear and powerful. They are not diluted by an inherited format, variations of a form, mild contrasts and connecting parts and spaces.¹⁸

A suspicion that even abstract mass is not two-dimensional seems to have remained with Judd throughout the 1960s. This is important because, in the terms of the formalist aesthetics which Judd argues for, a painting with any sense of space in it is a failure, given that virtual space (i.e.: illusion) is a characteristic which is extraneous to painting.¹⁹ Therefore, although Judd's first attempts to overcome illusionism by engaging actual space had considerable problems, he continued to work with forms which were attempts to produce art that was unambiguously three-dimensional. From this point on, his work has turned on the investigation of the effects of different materials, colours, and arrangements in space, and this brings us to the piece which I want to focus on in my paper, an untitled work done in 1965 (fig.2). This work consists of four identical units which are mounted on a wall at a uniform height, separated

from each other by evenly-spaced 8-inch intervals. The units themselves are cubical, 34 inches deep, 34 inches high, and 34 inches across. The ends are made of plexiglass, while the top, front and bottom are all made from stainless steel. The stainless steel has been machined so that it folds over the plexiglass, thus obsuring the joint between the plexiglass and the stainless steel. This is important, because such a joint is the place where imperfections are most likely to exist, either in the form of imperfect seams caused by the edges being less than absolutely straight, or perhaps in the form of epoxy dripping down inside the box, where it cannot be wiped away. Hence, the lip provides a small margin for error and imperfection. Furthermore, folding the steel over obscures the cross-section of the stainless steel from the viewer, which is important again because this is a source of trouble, especially in terms of finishing the cut surface to match the rest of the stainless steel. All of this is vital for Judd, because any visible imperfection would immediately collapse the illusion of specificity which Judd aims to achieve, by indicating the made nature of the object.

The reason why I want to focus my attention on this work is because it is an early example of the sort of work produced by Judd which seems most successful on his terms. Nothing he has done since has surpassed the degree of simplicity of form achieved here. Yet, even this work ultimately fails on Judd's terms, and it fails, I want to argue, because Judd's terms are impossible.

My argument is not that Judd, by virtue of being the artist, is the arbiter of taste on whose standards the work stands or fails. In other words, when I say that this piece fails in Judd's

terms, I am not saying that, by Judd's standards, it is bad art. That issue does not concern me at this juncture. Rather, my point is that Judd has a goal for his art, a crucial part of which is to produce work which refers to nothing outside of itself. This particular work is probably as close as Judd or anyone else comes to attaining this goal. However, this goal of non-referentiality remains out of reach because it is unattainable. Judd has started with the wrong question: one can no more find a solution to the problem of how to make a work which refers to nothing outside of itself than one can find a solution to a question which asks how one can make three plus one equal five. But again, my concern goes beyond merely pointing out that the philosophical bases of Judd's idea of the specific object are unsound. The ideas that the processes of perception and thought are absolutely reliable are ones which tend to suggest themselves to us very powerfully. As Charles Taylor writes, "We feel tempted to think of living things as 'taking account' of their surroundings precisely because of the intelligent adaptation which they can make to novel situations."²⁰ Different manifestations of these philosophical bases obtain currency at different moments in history or, to put it another way, one possibility for labelling various moments as significantly different is to search for shifts in the manifestations of these philosophical bases, particularly in relation to shifting conceptions of epistemology. It is the history of this particular manifestation, Donald Judd's untitled piece from 1965, and the notion that both it and the idea which gave rise to it do, in fact, have histories, which I am concerned to address in this paper.

I have said that Judd's aesthetics of specificity is a position which has certain presuppositions in common with Greenberg's modernism. However, there are two points of contention between Donald Judd and Clement Greenberg which emerge from an examination of their publications from the 1960s. The first is the issue of how best to dispense with illusion in visual art forms. As I noted above, Judd believes that working three-dimensionally is open to a wider variety of possibilities than working two-dimensionally, as well as more honest because it incorporates less illusion. But Greenberg indicated in an article published in 1960 titled "Louis and Noland" that, for him, the most important discovery in visual art was the development of a staining technique which allows the image to be made co-extensive with the surface on which it is painted:

The more closely colour could be identified with its ground the freer would it be from the interference of tactile sensations; the way to achieve this closer identification was by adapting watercolour technique to oil and using thin paint on an absorbent surface. (Morris) Louis spills his paint on unsized and unprimed cotton duck canvas, leaving the pigment almost everywhere thin enough, no matter how many different veils of it are superimposed, for the eye to sense the threadedness and wovenness of the fabric underneath. But "underneath" is the wrong word. The fabric, being soaked in paint rather than merely covered by it, becomes paint in itself, colour in itself, like dyed cloth.²¹

The second point of contention that emerges between Judd and Greenberg centres on the issue of reductivism. Greenberg's position, as explained in "Modernist Painting" and elsewhere, is that the Modernist project is the reduction of art forms to their "essential" characteristics, and that all of the best art participates in this project. Judd's position is significantly different. As I noted earlier, while simplicity of form is important to Judd, he does not consider his work reductive. Like

Greenberg, Judd expounds the virtue of a clarity of form which makes the art object immediately understandable to the viewer. But again, Judd argues against Greenberg that immediacy is achieved through an art form which is a unified whole with no discrete parts. This is largely the motivation behind the predilection at the time for squares and rectangles. Judd believes that such forms are immediately understandable to the universal standard of the rational mind, and a number of commentators share Judd's view. For example, Lucy Lippard writes in a 1967 article titled "Homage to the Square":

The square cannot be exaggerated; it remains stationary, enduring, unalterable, and provides a universal standard that is as attractive in its precision and neutrality to the space age as it was to early philosophers and theologians.²²

Other commentators shared this perspective, and argued that Judd achieved a great degree of purity in his art because this use of the "universal standard" enabled him to focus the viewer's attention on the art object with unprecedented intensity. For example, in "The Nart-art of Donald Judd," (1967) Martin Friedman writes:

(Judd's) economy of form is intended to focus the viewer's attention on the object itself without inviting digressions on the process by which the piece was made. By de-emphasizing the individualistic process of creation, he intends to make the object itself a more immediate thing(...). His forms are stubbornly cryptic, insistently regular and exist with cold authority. So concerned is he with formal purity that his works become lucid axioms about proportion and rhythm as much as they are assertions about the displacement of space.²³

Some of the language that Friedman uses to discuss Judd indicates interesting shifts in aesthetic criteria. With Abstract Expressionism, Action Painting, and the rhetoric of art production as existentialist action, the status of the art object

as the trace, or perhaps more accurately, as the proof, of such action was bound up with the celebration of --- or obsession with --- *facture*. However, during the 1960s, with the emergence of such critics as Micheal Fried, Rosalind Krauss, and Donald Judd, the heroic existentialist rhetoric which always remained present, even with Greenberg at his most incorrigibly formalist, was jettisoned. Not having a legacy of political discussion comparable to that which the generation of critics before them had, Fried, Krauss, Judd, and their contemporaries were able to complete the project of "turning Trotskyism into art for art's sake" in a way that Greenberg was not, as I will explain more fully shortly. Hence, subjective traces, proofs of the artist's presence, were to be frowned upon, since they are distractions which dilute a work's specificity. Therefore, Friedman lauds Judd's de-emphasis of the process of creation, and his production of work which gives the impression of having always existed, and thus which stands as a "coldly authoritative" argument for a particular definition of art.

When Judd integrated the consideration of site specificity into its realm of formal concerns, what was at issue was modern art's engagement of the spectator's consciousness with an art work's own internal set of relationships. These are either eliminated or made a function of simple structural repetition.²⁴ Questioning the spectator's engagement with the art object is Judd's way of addressing the manner in which the complexity created by internal formal relations interferes with the viewer's immediate comprehension of the work. As I noted above, Judd relates this to the essential characteristic of the painting: for Judd, any painted surface hung on a wall contains an illusionist

reference. Hence, Judd's aesthetic, though formalist, consciously diverges from the type of formalist aesthetics being put forward by Clement Greenberg during the early 1960s.

Judd's solution to the problem of how to avoid the illusionism of painting was to move the art object around the viewer space. This solution was based on the theory that by engaging actual space, he could eliminate the problem of virtual space and thus, as he notes in the quotation which I discussed earlier, get rid of "the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colours --- which is riddance of one of the salient and most objectionable relics of European art."²⁵

Judd's shift to three-dimensional work accomplishes two things. First, it foregrounds Judd's desire to find new ways of working, to overcome what he sees as the newly-revealed limitations of the old ways of working, namely painting and sculpture. This is why for Judd, the most advanced work is a form which he calls "three-dimensional work," and which he sees as superceding painting and sculpture. In "Specific Objects," Judd writes:

Painting and sculpture have become set forms. A fair amount of their meaning isn't credible. The use of three dimensions isn't the use of a given form. There hasn't been enough time and work to see limits. So far, considered most widely, three dimensions are mostly a space to move into. The characteristics of three dimensions are those of only a small amount of work, little compared to painting and sculpture. A few of the more general aspects may persist, such as the work's being like an object or being specific, but other characteristics are bound to develop. Since its range is so wide, three-dimensional work will probably divide into a number of forms. At any rate, it will be larger than painting and much larger than sculpture, which, compared to painting, is fairly particular, much nearer to what is usually called a form, having a certain kind of form.²⁶

Although in a general way Judd sees this new "three dimensional work" as having more in common with sculpture than painting, he also argues that the most advanced painting of the early 1960s is closer to what he has in mind than is the most advanced sculpture. This is because what Judd sees as the most advanced painting of that time, such as the all-over painting of Rothko, Still, and Newman, are more in line with Judd's ideal of a work composed of a definite whole and very few parts than are the sculptures of Mark Di Suvero or Anthony Caro, for example. Hence, Judd's own work serves for Judd as an example of what he means by "three dimensional work," but so too does work such as Frank Stella's shaped canvases of the early 1960s, such as *Charlotte Tokayer*, 1963 (fig.3). Judd writes of Stella:

Stella's shaped paintings involve several important characteristics of three-dimensional work. The periphery of a piece and the lines inside correspond. The stripes are nowhere near being discrete parts. The surface is farther from the wall than usual, though it remains parallel to it. Since the surface is exceptionally unified and involves little or no space, the parallel plane is unusually distinct. The order is not rationalistic and underlying but is simply order, like that of continuity, one thing after another. A painting isn't an image. The shapes, the unity, projection, order and colour are specific, aggressive and powerful.²⁷

This view is very much in conflict with Greenberg's view of what constitutes successful three-dimensional work. In contrast to Judd, Greenberg believes that immediacy is achieved through the successful relation of discrete parts. In a 1967 article on Anthony Caro, Greenberg writes:

Rarely does a single shape in Caro's sculpture give satisfaction in itself; the weight of his art lies preponderantly in what Micheal Fried calls its "syntax," that is, in the relation of its discrete parts.²⁸

The second thing which is accomplished by Judd's shift to three-dimensional work is that it foregrounds the nature of the

relation between viewer and art object as contingent upon the viewer's temporal movement in the space shared with the object. According to Judd's way of thinking, the work belongs to its site; if its site changes, so do the relations between object, context, and viewer. Therefore, by integrating the consideration of site specificity into the realm of formal concerns, Judd raises the issue of modern sculpture's engagement of the spectator's consciousness with sculpture's own internal set of relationships, and consequently addresses the manner in which the complexity created by internal formal relations interferes with the viewer's immediate comprehension of the work.

However, Judd's concerns with site stem from a new direction being taken under the aegis of the formalist project. Within Judd's line of theorizing, "site" is only an abstract term to denote the potential existence of a viewer-object relation. Hence, a line of investigation which seems to be an examination of the idealist underpinnings of U.S. American formalism in fact subscribes to those same idealist presuppositions. Judd was not concerned to produce a critical analysis of the privileged position which formalism accords the artist as the sole generator of the artwork's formal relationships. He notes, "'Non-art,' 'anti-art,' 'non-art art,' and 'anti-art art' are all useless. If someone says his work is art, its art."²⁹ It was, as Douglas Crimp notes in his excellent article "Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity," (1986) left to a group of different artists to uncover the political specificity of the site. Crimp writes:

The real material condition of modern art, masked by its pretense to universality, is that of the specialized luxury commodity. Engendered under capitalism, modern art became

subject to the commodification from which nothing fully escapes. And in accepting the "spaces" of art's institutionalized commodity circulation as given, Minimal art could neither expose nor resist the hidden material conditions of modern art.

The task was taken up in the work of artists who radicalized site specificity, artists such as Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke, Micheal Asher and Lawrence Weiner, Robert Smithson and Richard Serra. Their contributions to a materialist critique of art, their resistance to the "disintegration of culture into commodities," were fragmentary and provisional, the consequences limited, systematically opposed or mystified, ultimately overturned. What remains of this critique today are a history to be recovered and fitful, marginalized practices that struggle to exist at all in an art world more dedicated than ever before to commodity value.³⁰

I have noted that while there are important overlaps in the presuppositions made by Judd's aesthetics and Greenberg's aesthetics, there are also marked differences. However, neither Judd nor Greenberg are willing to explicitly condemn the other's argument. Greenberg is hostile to Judd's work, feeling it to be both too intellectual --- intellectualism in Greenberg's eyes being an agent of obfuscation --- and too slick. Nonetheless Greenberg concedes that "Minimalism" has something of value to it, as in the conclusion to his 1967 article "Recentness of Sculpture," which was Greenberg's contribution to the catalogue which accompanied the Los Angeles County Museum's exhibition *American Art of the Sixties*. Greenberg writes:

(Minimal Art) makes clear as never before how fussy a lot of earlier abstract sculpture is, especially that influenced by Abstract Expressionism. But the price may still not be worth it. The continuing infiltration of Good Design into what purports to be advanced and highbrow art now depresses sculpture as it does painting. Minimal follows too much where Pop, Op, Assemblage, and the rest have led (as Darby Barnard, once again, has already pointed out). Nevertheless, I take Minimal art more seriously than I do these other forms of Novelty. I retain hope for certain of its exponents. Maybe they will take still more pointers from artists like Truitt, Caro, Ellsworth Kelly, and Kenneth Noland, and learn from their example how to rise above Good Design.³¹

Similarly, in a 1967 book review Judd recognizes Greenberg's contribution to discussions on art, but his hostility to Greenberg is also clearly visible:

There isn't anything reasonable, then, on Pollock's work but a few early reviews by Greenberg. They're all right as reviews; Greenberg was beginning to think about the paintings; but he quit.³²

Up to this point, I have been discussing the debate arising from the re-thinking of modernism in terms of the differences and similarities between Greenberg and Judd. There is, however, a third voice which should be added in to adequately represent the complexity of the debate, namely, that of Michael Fried. As this debate was developing, Fried was a promising young intellectual, just out of Harvard, who did not hesitate to confront Greenberg openly. It is necessary to consider Fried's position for two reasons. First, his quickly became a prominent voice in the pages of *Arts* and later *Artforum*. More importantly, though, Fried's position is one powerfully argued within this debate, similar in some ways to Judd's and in other ways to Greenberg's (aside from the agreement amongst all three of them, of course, that it is important to consider the question of what, precisely, constitutes modernist art), but in the end (for example, by the time "Art and Objecthood" appears in 1967) a solid position within this debate, which takes issue in important ways with both Greenberg and Judd. For Fried, as for Greenberg and Judd, the modernist project is a project of definition. However, for Fried the process of definition occurs through the flirtation with what he calls "theatricality" rather than with "extinction." Fried's idea of "theatricality" denotes the point at which a given type of art begins to utilize techniques and effects which are not of

its domain, thus becoming partly something else, either non-art or a different form of art from that which it sets out to be, and hence no longer pure. When Fried opposes his idea of modernism as the flirtation with theatricality to the idea of modernism as flirtation with extinction, he is opposing the idea of modernism as a project which reduces the artwork until it is on the verge of disappearing, of becoming nothing at all, of becoming a flat piece of canvas tacked onto a wall. In other words --- and on this point Fried is in agreement with Judd --- Fried believes Greenberg's conception of modernism as a reductive project to be erroneous.³³ The issue of an art object being a pure art object that is fundamentally different from objects in general, is the crux of Fried's argument against Judd's work, which Fried calls "literalism". In his 1967 article "Art and Objecthood," Fried writes:

(M)odernist painting has come to find it imperative that it defeat or suspend its own objecthood... (T)he crucial factor in this undertaking is shape, but shape that must belong to *painting* --- it must be pictorial, not, or not merely, literal. Whereas literalist art stakes everything on shape as a given property of objects, if not, indeed, as a kind of object in its own right.³⁴

What further bothers Fried about Judd's work is its attention to the relation between the viewer and the piece. Fried believes that primacy should be accorded to the art work. Thus, Judd's concern with using the shape and placement of the art object to establish a particular art object-viewer relation strikes Fried as adding into art concerns which are extrinsic to its nature and which therefore dilute its purity and, consequently, its quality as a work of art.

We have seen in the last few pages how the dispute between Judd, Greenberg and Fried, was framed. This dispute is one in

which the differences of opinion may be rather difficult to pick out from a distance, because what is at stake is the nature of modernist aesthetics as a sort of formalism. Thus the differences between the positions may seem rather subtle because the disputants hold some key beliefs about the nature of art in common. The most important of these beliefs for the purposes of my paper are that art is historically autonomous, and that the central project of Modernist art is the self-definition of forms. Nor did the discussion remain framed within the terms of formalism merely as a result of inertia. As Laurie Monahan shows, U.S.American criticism adhered to these boundaries even when talking about an artist such as Robert Rauschenberg, in spite of his highly suggestive imagery and in spite of the fact that European critics talked about his work in other terms. Hence, the insistence on keeping the debate within formalist boundaries under any circumstances, and the fierce determination to exclude history, was a way of talking about art which was not only myopic but almost uniquely U.S. American.³⁵ I do not want to argue that there were no European formalists. Nor do I want to want to argue that there were no people writing about art in the United States during the mid-1960s who were interested in the social field of view which critical modernism surveys. However, as I noted above, during the 1960s, with the emergence of such writers as Krauss, Fried and Judd, the overlap in these fields of view which occurs in Greenberg, for example, in the form of an ever-present undertone of existentialism, is done away with. The phrase "art for art's sake" was interpreted in a way which is subtly but significantly different from how Greenberg interpreted it, in that all traces of external references were purged from

Modernism. For Greenberg, "art for art's sake" meant art for the sake of an entire way of thinking of life. Perhaps this is in spite of himself, but nonetheless, the association of the avant-garde artist with the existential hero never leaves Greenberg's writing. However, as I mentioned in the Prologue in relation to Alberro's elegant formulation, with the emergence of Fried, Krauss, Judd, Friedman, and others in the 1960s, "art for art's sake" was reinterpreted to mean "art as tautology." I think that this is important, so allow me to clarify briefly. In his introduction to the first volume of Greenberg's collected writings, John O'Brian writes of Greenberg's early work:

The dissenting tone of Greenberg's voice, quick to reject what seemed meretricious in contemporary culture, was a tone characteristic of a group of New York critics and writers brought together by broadly shared convictions about art and politics. Among them were Paul Goodman, Dwight Macdonald, William Phillips, Philip Rahv, Harold Rosenberg, Isaac Rosenfeld, Meyer Schapiro, Lionel Trilling, Robert Warshaw, and Greenberg himself.³⁶

This is where Greenberg cut his teeth as an intellectual --- in a group that perhaps could discuss politics without discussing art, but which it seems unlikely could discuss art without discussing politics. This heritage, as I have said, provided the foundations for the philosophical and political concerns which are always present in Greenberg's writings. The tenor of this intellectual milieu is very different from the pragmatism to which Judd, studying philosophy at Columbia during the early 1950s, or Fried and Krauss, studying philosophy at Harvard a few years later, would have been exposed. In the mileaus of Columbia and Harvard, it would have been a matter of course to discuss art without discussing politics.³⁷

There are three historical considerations about the formalist modernism of the 1960s which are important to my discussion. First, during the first half of the 1960s, formalist modernism was the predominant way of thinking about art in the United States, and had been for some time. Second, certain proponents of formalist modernism claimed that this position was derived from an aesthetics which had once been leftist, but had turned itself into a neutral position. For example, in his 1961 essay "The Late Thirties in New York," which is a revised version of his 1957 essay "New York Painting Only Yesterday," Greenberg writes:

Radical politics was on many people's minds, but for these particular artists Social Realism was as dead as the American Scene. (Though that is not all, by far, that there was to politics in art in those years; some day it will have to be told how "anti-Stalinism," which started out more or less as "Trotskyism, turned into art for art's sake, and thereby cleared the way, heroically, for what was to come.)³⁸

The ascendancy of this belief led to the stabilization of the view of art as autonomous although, as I noted above, not in Greenberg's thought. Nonetheless, by the 1960s, a dominant aesthetic position existed in the United States in which the concepts of avant-gardism and Modernism are defined in terms of "self-criticism" in a new way which signals the arrival of a self-conscious claim to have separated Modernism from critical judgement of anything outside of its tautologically-defined circuit of interest. Third, formalist Modernism not only retained but insisted upon using the terminology which was held over from its politically-oppositional legacy. As Serge Guilbaut writes in *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*:

For the avant-garde the important thing was that it now (in the late 1940s) became possible to perpetuate the practice

of paintings without losing face, that is, without abandoning the vocabulary of radical politics. The alienation of the artist, the avant-garde believed, was necessary to his liberation. All avant-garde artists agreed on this point, for them characteristic of modernity. Greenberg and Rosenberg, moreover, based their hopes for a renewal of American art on this belief.³⁹

To be sure, there are occasional political references in the writings of the three people who I am using to represent the interests of U.S.American formalism. Of the three, Michael Fried seems to be the most rigourously critical in the early sixties. Take, for example, the review Fried wrote in 1961 of John Berger's *Permanent Red*. Fried is not a Marxist, but this is precisely what makes his argument in this review intriguing. For, rather than turning his analysis into a diatribe for formalism, Fried chooses to hold his argument on the Marxist territory that Berger's book claims to represent in order to make the case that John Berger is an irresponsible Marxist.⁴⁰ Hence, Fried elects to demonstrate that Berger's book does not do what it claims to be doing, rather than to raise the question of whether what Berger is attempting to do is worthwhile. As he makes clear in the review itself, Fried is able to do this because, methodologically, he has some truck with Marxism:

(A)fter Marx, it is no longer possible for anyone to delude himself that his attitudes toward art or society are a-political. What Marx accomplished was nothing less than the enlargement of the realm of the political until it embraced all human activities, attitudes and institutions.⁴¹

However, Fried takes care in the third paragraph of his review to disabuse his readers of the idea that this methodological similarity correlates with a political sympathy.⁴² While the tone of this review might at first glance suggest that Fried is interested in integrating political concerns into a discussion of art, a closer look suggests that what Fried is in

fact after is a sanitized historical materialism --- historical materialism, that is to say, without political commitment, leftist political commitment in particular. As one surveys his writing through the 1960s, this reading of Fried is confirmed. In *Three American Painters* (1965), "Shape as Form" (1966) and "Art and Objecthood" (1967) there is an effort to juggle formalism and materialism in a way which would distance Fried from Greenberg's reductive formalism.⁴³ In a 1987 article titled "Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop," Fried writes:

The implication of (Greenberg's) account was that such a (timeless, irreducible) core had been the essence of painting all along, a view that seemed to me ahistorical, and I wanted to find an alternative theoretical model that on the one hand would not dissolve into mere relativism and on the other would not lead to what I will call the wrong sort of essentialism.⁴⁴

Greenberg, for his part, is often read as a former social critic whose Leftist sympathies changed into something else as a response to the climate of the Cold War. His statement which I quoted above concerning radical politics in the 1930s suggests that there was a time when what later became art for art's sake was politically committed. One can accept this claim without a great deal of difficulty. But at the same time, it is a particularly pessimistic type of radicalism which finds itself unable to do more than lament the passing of bourgeois society and the rise of the petit-bourgeois. For example, a look at "Avant-garde and Kitsch" and "Towards A Newer Laocoon"⁴⁵ quickly reveals that what seems to concern Greenberg most is the difficulty of remaining civilized while living in the dissipated culture of the Depression-era United States during the late 1930s. This is a concern which was very much in the air in the circles that Greenberg was moving in at the time that he was

writing "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" and "Toward a Newer Laocoon."⁴⁶ My concern is with where Greenberg identified the problem and what he prescribed as the solution. According to Greenberg, the culture is in disarray, aristocratic patronage has withered, and the avant-garde must therefore retire from public altogether, leaving someone else to do the spade work to create the new socialist order which will either accept high culture, or abolish the need for it altogether.⁴⁷ The problem with Greenberg is not that he is "elitist" in some vague, indifferentiated way, and that he would have been more "ideologically correct" had he formulated an argument for a sort of "anti-elitist" aesthetics, which accepted all things proffered as "art" as equally valid or banal. That is, my argument is not a matter of appealing to the weak liberalism that Jeffery Minson analyzes so well, which holds that any attempt to prescribe limits for any form of activity is potentially a threat to all liberties, since the essential foundation of all liberty is the acknowledgement that all people are free agents.⁴⁸ I do not wish to be allied with an ideology of unbridled pluralism which, as Serge Guilbaut puts it in his 1980 essay "The Relevance of Modernism," "conveniently forgets why it once seemed so important for modernism to protect itself with self-criticism."⁴⁹ But "elitisms" are diverse phenomena generated by various mechanisms, and delimit all different sorts of boundaries. So what is at issue here is the type of elitism proposed by Greenberg, which is a social, or aristocratic, elitism protected by, to use Baudrillard's phrase again, "the democratic alibi" of universalist aesthetics. At this point, some confusion may arise: after all, I have criticized Greenberg for buying into a particular sort of elitism, after I dismissed

liberal arguments which proposed an anti-elitist aesthetics. Yet, at times, it seems that an anti-elitist aesthetics is what Greenberg is advocating, rather than an aesthetics of boundaries and taste.⁵⁰ But what Greenberg is actually saying is that the aesthetics upon which his taste is based transcends the personal, therefore they are *a priori* and absolute.⁵¹ Tom Crow is correct when, in "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," he writes, "The problem remains, however, that the elite audience endorses, in every respect but its art, the social order responsible for the crisis of culture."⁵²

Certainly it is true that there are places in Judd's criticism of the early 1960s where he extolls the virtues of an art practice which addresses social issues, and he has a history of active involvement with various politically-oriented movements. But reading through his writings of the 1960s, what becomes clear is that the argument that art practice should address social issues appears as occasional comments rather than as a leitmotif through Judd's corpus of writing. What primarily concerns Judd are questions which never leave the legacy of formalism represented by Greenberg. Judd and Greenberg generally place the same artists at the top of the heap, for the same reasons. For example, both Judd and Greenberg contend that Kenneth Noland is the best painter of the early 1960s. And even when Judd discusses painters who Greenberg does not care for, he uses formalist arguments which are similar to those of Greenberg. For example, in a discussion of Al Jensen in his 1964 article "Local History," Judd writes, "Most of the best painting has got to the point where it is nearly flat and nearly without illusionistic space. The majority of Al Jensens' paintings are completely flat. They

depend entirely on the texture, the colour and the complex patterning."⁵³ Certainly, differences between Judd and Greenberg are revealed here. The major one is the degree of importance placed upon a painting being flat. In "After Abstract Expressionism," Greenberg writes that total flatness is no longer his concern. As he puts it, the question is no longer what irreducibly constitutes painting *per se*, but rather, what irreducibly constitutes good painting.⁵⁴ But again, the difference is one brought about by manoeuvring within a tightly-enclosed formalist field of view.⁵⁵

Judd's aesthetic of the specific object utilizes a conception of the ideal state for the viewer and the artist which relies on a denial of history. It is based on a phenomenological and epistemological innocence that is not concerned with arguments about the historical contingency of the subject.⁵⁶ Judd's intention is that the specific object, *by the very fact of its specificity*, will preclude the viewer's perceptions being interfered with by material limits, presuppositions, and conditions independent of the viewer's will. However, Judd maintains that in order for this ideal state to occur, the art object must be *specific*; it must fulfill certain criteria. Some of these criteria are fairly abstract, and are laid out in relation to other aesthetic systems. Other criteria are fairly concrete: the work must not be complicated, it must not be hard to comprehend, and it must not make use of composition.

Gradually, these criteria evolved into a fairly stable set of formal properties. One is the rectangular form. Another, which need not be present, but which adds to the apparent phenomenological stability of the specific object, is the

repetition of a regular form. The idea is that if one sees one cube, 34 inches deep, 34 inches high, and 34 inches long, with the top, front, and bottom fashioned out of stainless steel, and the ends fashioned out of coloured plexiglass, there is no reason to assume either that the cube is anything other than a banal object of indeterminate purpose mounted on a wall, or that the person who was responsible for its production would necessarily feel strongly one way or the other about being responsible for the production of another object very similar or exactly similar to that one. Even after being told that this object originally had been conceived of as one piece in a series of four related art works, the viewer would not necessarily be able to predict what the other three would look like, or how they would be placed relative to the extant object. However, if a person sees four such cubes mounted on a wall at a regular distance from one another, the sense of intention is much stronger. For example, upon being told that the original conception involved five objects, the viewer would be able not only to visualize what the fifth object would look like, but also to visualize the placement in space of the fifth object.⁵⁷

A third criterion of the specific object concerns the range of materials from which the specific object can be made, which generally are materials common in the manufacture of post World War II mass-produced appliances: for example, stainless steel, aluminum, and plexiglass. This range of materials is important to my discussion for two reasons. First, it is the nexus between Judd's aesthetic of the specific object and the U.S.American commodity aesthetics which were current during the 1960s. Wolfgang Haug uses the term "commodity aesthetics" to refer to

the appearance of use-value designed to sell products in an economy where the corporate profit of the distributor takes precedence over the welfare of the worker who makes the product or of the consumer who buys it. In a 1978 essay titled "Ideological Values and Commodity Aesthetics: The Example of the 'Jeans Culture'," Haug writes:

The aesthetics of the monopoly commodity constructs an imaginary space around the commodity body. It thereby prepares the way not only for the connotation of properties or values, but also for the imagination of wish-actions or, more precisely, for acts of satisfaction, which initially stay within in the realm of the imaginary-wishful.⁵⁸

The imaginary space around the commodity is constructed not only with sales pitches and advertisements, but also with the surface of the commodity itself. Hence, surfaces must be designed to connote certain properties or values. Plexiglass, aluminum, and stainless steel are all surfaces which can be used effectively to connote the values of efficiency and modernity.

Secondly, the materials which Judd identifies as appropriate for use in specific objects require the employment of commercial fabricators. They are a nexus between Judd's aesthetics and the world-historical phenomenon of the division of labour.

What lends particular urgency to these two observations --- that Judd's materials hook directly into the commodity aesthetics which were current during the 1960s, and that they are a nexus between Judd's aesthetics and the division of labour --- is that they are precisely what Judd wanted to deny, both in his artwork and in his writing, since they link his work to the material conditions of its production. Judd consistently maintains that the materials he uses are value-free. For example, in a review of a Roy Lichtenstein show, Judd's ruminations on the banality of

everyday life affirm this view of industrial materials. He writes:

A lot of visible things are (pleasant, bland and empty): most modern commercial buildings, new Colonial stores, lobbies, most houses, most furniture, most clothing, sheet aluminum and plastic with leather texture, the formica like wood, the cute and modern patterns inside jets and drugstores. Who has decided that aluminum should be textured like leather? Not Alcoa, who make it: to them there is just a demand. It's not likely any of the buyers think much about it. The stuff just exists, not objectionably to many people, slightly agreeably to many. Basically, again, no one has thought about it. It's in limbo.⁵⁹

Let us spend a moment unpacking the presuppositions in this quote. Clearly, Judd has a rather unusual view of the marketplace. Roughly speaking, one can divide theories of markets into two camps. A liberal view holds that a market economy works through a feedback mechanism whereby what is produced shifts in response to patterns of consumption: the consumer runs the marketplace. In his article "In Defense of Socialist Planning," Ernest Mandel explains that such a point of view sees itself in opposition to "direct" or "planned" allocation: direct allocation is *ex ante*, market allocation is *ex post*.⁶⁰ These two modes of allocation correlate with two different ways of adapting output to need. As Mandel notes, "Either these needs are taken as given at the outset, as assessed *ex ante* by whatever is the dominant social body, and output is organized to satisfy them. Or else they are deemed to be unknown or at any rate uncertain, and the market is supposed to reveal these *ex post* through the expenditures of 'effective demand'."⁶¹ Judd, however, offers a third view: no one has thought about it --- it's in limbo."

The argument that the market is a continuous cycle of random production and consumption seems to me to be rather indefensible.

Pace Judd, I would say that at least a few people have thought about it very hard indeed. As Mandel writes:

Already today, in the most advanced capitalist countries, the bulk of both consumer and producer goods are not produced in any way in response to "market signals" shifting violently from year to year, let alone month to month. The bulk of current production corresponds to established consumption patterns and predetermined production techniques that are largely if not completely independent of the market(...)

*Moreover, the initial push toward them never comes from the market or the consumer. It comes from the innovator and the associated producing unit.*⁶²

The way Judd considers these materials in relation to everyday life extends to his consideration of them in relation to his art. In "Specific Objects," Judd writes:

*Little was done until lately with the wide range of industrial products. Almost nothing has been done with industrial techniques and, because of the cost, probably won't be for some time. Art could be mass-produced, and possibilities otherwise unavailable, such as stamping, could be used. Dan Flavin, who uses fluorescent lights, has appropriated the results of industrial production. Materials vary greatly and are simply materials --- formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglas, red and common brass, and so forth. They are specific. If they are used directly, they are more specific. Also, they are usually aggressive. There is an objectivity to the obdurate identity of a material.*⁶³

In Judd's parlance, the term "specific" means "phenomenologically pure": a material's "specificity," like an object's "specificity," precludes the possibility of the viewer's perception being interfered with by conditions independent of the viewer's will. Yet, notice two things. First, Judd insists on the specificity of these materials even though he has just identified them as unmistakably of a particular, industrial, historical context. Second, and more important, Judd writes that these materials are specific in themselves, but "If used directly, they are more specific." It seems to me that there is a contradiction here: to say that these materials are phenomenologically pure is

already an absolute statement. Therefore, they cannot be more phenomenologically pure under particular conditions. The contradiction arises because, again, Judd is confusing the appearance of specificity with specificity *per se*.

Roland Barthes, in his essay "Myth Today," (1957) explains his use of the term "sign" in reference to the denotative, or first order, level of communication to refer to the concrete entity which is the associative total of the signifier, that is, the image which acts as the formal carrier of meaning, and the signified, that is to say, the concept. It is the sign, the correlation which unites signifier and signified, which we grasp. But understanding the structure of language does not stop here. For Barthes proposes that there is a second-order semiological system, the connotative. Here, the denotative sign becomes a mere signifier which provides the structure with which one speaks about the denotative level of language.⁶⁴ Of particular interest to Barthes is the use of this methodology to discuss what he calls "myth":

Semiology has taught us that myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal. Now this process is exactly that of bourgeois ideology. If our society is objectively the privileged field of mythical significations, it is because formally myth is the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion which defines this society: at all the levels of human communications, myth operates the inversion of *anti-physis* into *pseudo-physis*. What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a *natural* image of this reality. And just as bourgeois ideology is defined by the abandonment of the name "bourgeois," myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things: in it, things lose the memory that they were made.⁶⁵

If one were to phrase Judd's argument using the terminology of Barthes' semiology, one would say that Judd is arguing that by

constructing a specific object, he has constructed a sign the signified for which is simply, "This is an art object." Further, one would say that Judd is arguing that this signified is immutable, because the shape, placement, and surface of the specific object all refer to nothing apart from their collective status as an art object. Judd's intention is that the specific object should be a *natural* image of itself as a definitive work of art. The specific object is an art object which has lost the memory that it was *made* or, perhaps more accurately, has been prohibited from ever having that memory.

With his critique of myth, Barthes is arguing that images which appear natural appear that way because they are reified. And they are reified because the very language with which they are communicated is inflected by mythology. In myth, the form of the denotative chain of signs carries with it, at the connotative level, a message about its own production, which is, "This information was never produced: it is eternal." Judd's aesthetics of specificity is an aesthetics based on a failure to see that myth is a lie or, more accurately, an inflection, which naturalizes language.⁶⁶ Given that this is a particular sort of mythology, a mythology which is laid claim to by a type of surface that is produced with the purpose of being read as efficient, Baudrillard's effort to complicate Barthes' semiology is useful here:

(D)oesn't the object have that air, in its "being servicable," of having said something objective? This manifest discourse is the subtlest of its mythologies. A false ingenuity, and a perversion of objectivity is involved. Utility, like the literality of which Barthes speaks, is not a nature; it is a code of natural evidence which has the privilege over many other possible codes (the moral, the aesthetic, etc.) of appearing *rational*, while the others seem like mere rationalizations of more or less

"ideological" purposes. Denotation or use value; objectivity or utility: it is always the complicity of the real with the code under the sign of evidence which generates these categories.⁶⁷

Judd's statements are significant because he fails to recognize that the "high technology" surfaces which encase appliances and his work appear neutral not because either the technology or the surface are neutral, but because the surfaces (stainless steel or plexiglass, for example) are designed to be read by the consumer as efficient --- an essential selling point in the technocentric world of post-World War II North America --- and efficiency is denoted by the semblance of neutrality. In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Baudrillard goes beyond this general analysis of the surface designed to denote efficiency in order to show why the commodity aesthetic of the mechanical is effective in the marketplace of appliances during the 1960s, and why the true value of this purportedly universal aesthetic lies precisely in its potential for functioning socially as a distinguishing sign.⁶⁸ So, too, must we go beyond this general analysis in order to explain the ascendance of Judd's work at this time. By the 1960s, it had been evident for some time that good packaging could effectively link up the sensibility of social differentiation with the techniques of mass-production.⁶⁹ So a question which could be raised here is: does Judd's work attain popular success within the sphere of high culture because he provides objects which, on the one hand, are sanctioned as high art by the "art world," attract some of the most sophisticated rhetoric of art and knowledge that the art world can muster --- and hence effectively take their place as objects of luxury --- and yet, at the same time, because of the

familiarity of their appearance, are visually very easy to accept?

Harold Rosenberg, in the opening paragraph of his essay "Virtuous of Boredom," (1966) describes a phenomenon which he refers to as the confusion of difficulty with tediousness, wherein boredom is "proof that the artist has made no concession to popularity or success."⁷⁰ This confusion of difficulty with tediousness works because intellectual and aesthetic rigour are negatively encoded in the public mind as boring. This presents a dilemma since, as Baudrillard points out, intellectual and aesthetic rigour function socially as effective indicators of social distinction. Immediately, a way out presents itself: once the differences between difficulty and tediousness are effaced by the aforementioned confusion between difficulty and tedium, then the amount of tedium one is willing to endure can be seen as a reliable measure of one's appreciation of the intellectually complex. This formulation suggests a second question in relation to the issue of Judd's popular success within the sphere of high culture: is the ability of Judd's work to attract the sophisticated rhetoric of art and knowledge within the art world and hence to function effectively as objects of luxury, related to the efficacy of tedium disguised as --- or confused with --- difficulty as an indicator of social distinction?

The production of materials which connote banality has a particular history which we need to analyze in order to fully understand the significance of Judd's use of these materials in his work. In 1958, C. Wright Mills wrote an article on U.S. American commodity design in which he points out that capitalism entered a new phase in the United States during the

1920s, a phase in which the distributor became ascendant over both the consumer and the producer. Mills argues that this new phase got into full swing after World War II, at which time the designer became a key player, because the designer is an individual who is optimally positioned to push all of the techniques and frauds of marketing to their furthest extensions as a way of generating the continuous and expanding consumption which late capitalism demands. Mills writes:

--- (The designer) designs the product itself as if it were an advertisement, for his aim and his task --- acknowledged by the more forthright --- is less to make better products than to make products sell better. By brand and trademark, by slogan and package, by color and form, he gives the commodity a fictitious individuality, turning a little lanolin and water into an emulsified way to become erotically blessed; concealing the weight and quality of what is for sale; confusing the consumer's choice and banalizing her sensibilities.⁷¹

Judd employs surfaces such as stainless steel and plexiglass in his work in the belief that they will contribute to the phenomenological stability of his objects: his use of these materials is not ironic. Hence, the apparent parallel with the Pop Art of Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein (i.e.: the appearance of mass-production in the context of high art) is apparent only. Judd does not employ these surfaces in his work in order to call attention to the contrived nature of these surfaces' claim to efficiency. Rather, Judd employs these surfaces in his work because he accepts their claim to neutrality, and therefore feels that they will aid his attempt to produce phenomenologically stable art objects.

So then, to return the discussion to Judd's untitled work from 1965: a close look shows how this piece functions as a "specific object" by collecting Judd's criteria for specific

objects together. Here, however, the intent is to banalize the sensibilities of Judd and his viewers, with the result that the historical nature of the work will be concealed.⁷²

The piece is fabricated out of stainless steel and plexiglass. Each unit is a cube, 34 inches in every dimension. This cubical form is repeated four times, thus emphasizing its intentional nature. But in spite of itself, it refers the viewer elsewhere: its shape, its surfaces, its precise mounting, all relate to a particular set of available techniques intended to convey a sense of technological efficiency and transhistorical rationality.

Certain theories of cultural history distinguish between critical modernism and formalist modernism by focusing on formalist modernism's refusal to consider the social field of view which critical modernism addresses. At the same time, it is clear that there are a number of ways in which formalist modernism and critical modernism overlap. One of these is the formalist element which comes into play in some forms of critical modernism, namely, an attempt to transgress the conventional aesthetic limits of a given art form, often through the inclusion of unorthodox media. Thomas Crow, in his 1981 article "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," provides an interesting discussion of this point. Crow writes:

Modernism as a word carries connotations of an autonomous, inward, self-referential and self-critical art practice; our usual use of the term avant-garde is on the other hand much more inclusive, encompassing extra-artistic styles and tactics of provocation, group closure, and social survival. We might choose to see the record of avant-garde appropriation of devalued or marginal materials (as part of these extra-artistic styles), extrinsic and expedient in relation to (the self-critical art practice).⁷³

It might seem paradoxical that, in Judd, we see materials from everyday life being used to make the argument that true art objects refer to nothing outside of themselves. The appropriated low cultural materials are not meant to allude to or include any of the styles and tactics of provocation that Crow refers to. The inclusion of Judd's work in the sphere of high culture is not a restorative act, because the sphere of high culture was never left. That is, Judd's work represents a point at which the spheres of high culture and mass-production overlap in an interesting way. In both spheres the aesthetics of precision, of neutrality, of intellection (the differences between these terms fade within the system of thought which I am describing), have a great deal of attraction. What Judd's work uses is a constellation of visual information which appeals to these aesthetics with astonishing force, but without an awareness that it is using this information. Hence, there is a confusion between the *appearance* of specificity, and specificity *per se*. This work is based on the utilization of forms and surfaces which, within their historical contexts, are read as neutral. But this reading is illusory, given that it is historically determined.

The term "Minimalism" was used by many commentators and artists to refer to a variety of art produced in the 1960s. It generally included Judd's specific objects, albeit against his wishes. The work which fell under this rubric was seen, by Judd as much as anybody else, as a cool, objective calm after the hot subjective storm of Abstract Expressionism. However, this apparent difference between Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism depends heavily on the fact that the aesthetics of Minimalism have internalized the ideology of objectivity which the look of

Abstract Expressionism cannot signify, and which therefore has to be reinforced by a supporting literature. As Ian Burn and Karl Beveridge point out:

The image America has reproduced of itself is that of exporting technology, a technology which is democratic because it is good, neutral, and progressive, a technology which is equally available to everyone --- the means for a better life, and free from ideological bias. The American artists of the sixties and seventies have reproduced this pattern, becoming the "cultural engineers" of "international art." With the image of neutrality --- selling art, not ideology (...) When Abstract Expressionism was sent to Europe, it had to be packaged, it had to be given a form in the media, a publicity wrapping of "free expression in a free society." The art of the sixties and seventies was media-conscious, the packaging was a feature of the "expression," internal to actual production.⁷⁴

Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, Abstract Expressionism became a weapon of the Cold War. The supporting ideology of objective and universal aesthetics coincided with the predominant ideologies of Cold War United States. Hence, Abstract Expressionism was a convenient vehicle for the promotion of U.S.American interests.⁷⁵ However, the end of the fifties did not see the end of these sorts of ideologies or cultural strategies in the United States. As Laurie Monahan writes:

While the aims of the U.S. government had not changed substantially (with regard to the co-optation of the avant-garde in order to advance U.S. American claims of freedom and democracy) by the 1960s, the way in which they were expressed was altered under the Kennedy administration. In part this was an organizational change in strategy: in the fifties, private institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art created the impression that avant-garde exhibitions were organized freely and independently, while in fact they represented government interests. By the sixties the government cast off this facade of non-interference, a move made possible by the liberal image which Kennedy projected and enhanced by the tone of his administration...⁷⁶

Nor does Donald Judd's art distance itself from the coincident rhetoric of Abstract Expressionism. To some extent, it internalizes the rhetoric of neutrality which Abstract

Expressionism required a supporting literature to carry. Hence, the look of efficiency which is characteristic of Judd's work reflects its status as a vehicle for reproducing the ideology of value-freedom. To the extent that Judd's work cannot internalize the rhetoric of neutrality, it, too, requires a literature to support its aesthetic claims to neutrality.

Donald Judd's aesthetic of the specific object is based on a phenomenology which proposes that the relation between viewer and art object can be transparent. This view denies that the process of perception is contingent upon the historical conditions of the perception, in favour of a faith in objectivity. This faith in objectivity appears also in the conviction that technological development and empirical research are value-free. Hence, the "value-free" surfaces of Judd's work are a visual precedent for the appearance of the literary aesthetic of objectivity in the linguistic art forms of the late 1960s and early 1970s (e.g.: the conceptualism of Kosuth, Atkinson, and others associated with the Art-Language group), since these linguistic art forms use a language which is inflected with a sense of neutrality that, as Roland Barthes points out in his argument which I referred to earlier, serves to cancel the historical contingency of the writer.

The free-floating, crudely Enlightenment-derived, U.S. American ideal of intellectual processes sees these processes as neutral, value-free, objective. Hence, like the linguistic art forms mentioned above, the terminology and linguistic forms related to the description and execution of these processes are inflected with a sense of neutrality which serves to cancel the historical situation of the speaker or writer. The use of clearly

delineated areas of primary colours, as in the Hard-Edge Abstraction of Stella, Held or Kelly, the repetition of banal motifs or forms, as in Stella, Noland or Judd, and the use of apparently "hi-tech" materials, such as Stella's use of aluminium paint or Judd's use of plexiglass, aluminum and stainless steel, are the visual counterparts to these empiricist linguistic forms. The discussion of these pieces, in magazines and catalogues, for example, and the use of terms such as "conceptual" to describe them, is the nexus between the visual forms and the language of objectivity ---- a language which is used to describe both the art object and the processes which culminated in its production, and thus to impart a sense of intellectual rigour to the object and its production. Hence, this literature serves to support the specific object's aesthetic claims to neutrality, as well as to provide a precedent for the appearance of the literary aesthetic of objectivity in the linguistic art forms of conceptualism during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁷⁷

As an example of this nexus between 1960s Modernist three dimensional work and the language of objectivity, let us consider the *Primary Structures* exhibition catalogue. This exhibition was hosted by the Jewish Museum in the Spring of 1966, and focused on works by artists such as Judd, Truitt, Flavin, Caro and Smith. In the introduction to the catalogue, Kynaston McShine, the curator of painting and sculpture at the Jewish Museum, argues for an understanding of this work as fundamentally intellectual:

As a result (of the rejection of the traditional limits of media), many of the sculptors of the sixties have been the most critical and radical among artists, in relation to work of the recent past. Their activity has become purposely more philosophical and conceptual in content. They are anxious to find out what sculpture is and to discover how to make it. Most of the sculptors are university-trained, have read

philosophy, are quite familiar with other disciplines, have a keen sense of history, express themselves articulately and are often involved in dialectic. The work is extremely sophisticated and intellectual, of difficult and problematic content if not form, and sometimes polemical with its implied criticism of past modes.⁷⁸

For McShine, then, "conceptual" equals "intellectual," and "intellectual" equals "good," aesthetically-speaking. To add legitimacy to these equations, McShine makes bold claims for the intellectual abilities of the artists and art involved in the exhibition. Unfortunately, these bold claims are no more than strings of vacuous signifiers employed by a hopeful McShine to construct a veneer of such imposing appearance that the catalogue reader will not dare to look behind it to scrutinize its foundations. It seems that what is really driving McShine's ill-wrought argument is that the image of the artist as Renaissance man is one of the avant-garde images of 1966.

My point is not that McShine is completely wrong. Certainly some of the artists in *Primary Structures* can, in fact, accurately be characterized as articulate and philosophically-sophisticated --- Robert Morris, Robert Smithson, and Dan Flavin, for example. But it is not true of all of the artists in this show, and not even of all of the artists in the show who would claim that it is. In fact, it is the sophistication of Robert Morris that would, in a few years, provide a compelling argument against Donald Judd's philosophical views as expressed in his aesthetics of the specific object.⁷⁹ Hence, McShine's role is that of a broker of aesthetic theory, trimming the untidy ends off of a hard-to-handle bundle, and providing an artificially neat package for the museum-goer with up-to-the-minute taste: taste which, during the mid-1960s, looked for the

intellectual/rational appearance of technologically produced geometric forms built out of materials designed to hook into the dominant commodity aesthetics of North America during the mid-1960s.

As I noted above, there is more to the significance of Judd's use of certain materials than that he accepts the idea of objectivity, and accepts at face value the claims of certain surfaces to be neutral. In claiming that certain materials and surfaces are "objective" and "neutral," Judd fails to understand that, as Nietzsche has it, "The will to overcome an emotion is ultimately only the will of another emotion or of several other emotions."⁸⁰ Judd's method of working, necessitated by his choice of materials, results in his being distanced from the actual production of his specific objects. Not having the requisite skills to work the materials which he chooses, Judd has to turn the physical fabrication of his objects over to skilled labourers. Given that the fetishization of the "hand" of the artist had been brought to a feverish pitch during the 1950s with the ascendance of Abstract Expressionism, the division of the process of artistic production could not fail to attract comment. In doing so, it directed attention to the organization of industrial economies around the division of labour. What was valued in the fetishization of the artists' "hand" was the guarantee, signified by the *facture* of the painting, that the production of the piece was achieved through a unified production process carried out by a particular person.⁸¹ The extent to which this is true is small: the painter puts the paint on the surface, but behind that, the division of labour is directly present in the production of the paint, the surface, the brush, etc, as well.

as in the display and distribution of the finished product. The unity of labour which an art work may represent, though small, is powerfully fetishized. What is made evident by Judd's work, however much Judd denies it, is the extent to which this fetishization is anomalous in the context of U.S. American late capitalism, since rationalization in this context takes the form of increasingly fine divisions of labour, a major step in the history of which is the separation of intellect, or conception, from production.

However, Judd's conception of the specific object denies that the reading of the surfaces which he uses as banal is historically contingent. Therefore, we return to the problem just mentioned above: Judd found himself requiring the aid of a supporting literature to reinforce the claims to value-freedom which, ultimately, his work cannot signify, because the counter-argument that the objects are historically contingent is quite literally made by the same surface which is used to signify that the object is outside of history through a powerful evocation of what Barthes called the metalinguistic mythic form. Judd uses these surfaces because he accepts their claims to neutrality, seeing them as surfaces which refer to nothing outside of themselves. Hence, they are useful to his attempt to produce art objects which are visual tautologies. However, these surfaces are available because of the importance of aesthetics of neutrality in post-war commodity production. Thus, Judd's specific objects make explicit the overlap between high culture and mass-production by making manifest the fact that the same form of the aesthetic of banality holds powerful attractions in both cultural spheres. Therefore, the overlap in the attraction of the

aesthetic of banality points out the fallacy of the idea that the specific object, as an object which resides in the realm of culture, is historically autonomous. Furthermore, the overlap in Judd's work between the spheres of high culture and mass-production arose because the materials of mass-production powerfully appeal to the aesthetic of banality which is highly effective, as Baudrillard points out, as a sign of a particular "intellectual" type of cultural distinction. Hence a subsequent question to be asked would be one addressing the conclusions to be drawn from examining Judd's work and the responses to it in relation to the ways in which objects considered to be works of art function as socially distinguishing signs.

Now, at the same time as Judd was pursuing his variant of the essentialist project set by Greenbergian modernism, he was taking his distance from Greenberg. This was part of a fragmentation within formalist modernism which is significant because it cleared the way for the re-emergence of critical modernism in the years to follow --- a modernism which would have something to say about the implications of precisely this overlap manifested in Judd's work between the spheres of mass-production and high culture, particularly with respect to the idea of cultural autonomy upon which Judd's aesthetic of the specific object, and indeed formalist modernism as a whole, relied.

Epilogue

In the Prologue, I noted the significance of understanding the historical effect of Judd's work and writing. Judd's argument concerning the idea of the specific object emerges during the moment when the fragmentation of a particular type of formalist aesthetics was occurring, and it is Judd's position within this arena of fragmentation which I have been concerned to discuss up to this point. However, I have also mentioned that I see Judd's aesthetic of the specific object as significant because it led to a further fragmentation which moved away from formalism, but which took on many different forms in spite of the fact that they had this significant underlying characteristic in common.

Now, in "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," Thomas Crow describes the avant-garde as a "kind of research and development arm of the culture industry: it searches out areas of social practice not yet completely available to efficient manipulation and makes them discrete and visible."¹ Hence, one can almost see Judd as an avant-garde in reverse: areas of mass culture, in this case mass fabrication, which had been successfully absorbed into the sphere of high culture, were, through critiques formulated at least partially in response to Judd's work, appropriated by the cultural margins and used as the raw materials for a critical examination of the sphere of high culture. I say one can almost see Judd as an avant-garde in reverse because I am not completely sanguine about these critiques. Nevertheless, through these critiques, the fragmentation of formalism subsequently engaged with analyses which examined the aesthetic of formalist modernism as a way of examining the social bases upon which cultural institutions at

large tend to be founded. This questioning of cultural institutions took place at the same time that so many other institutions --- most notably the institutions of education and democracy --- were also being questioned, at times with an urgency which many people found either frightening or exhilarating, depending upon their perspective.

The analysis of, and response to, the aesthetic of the specific object generated some interesting and important discussions which were participated in not only by art critics, but also by artists acting both as artists and as writers, in some cases simultaneously. Hence, at the same time that these lines between formalists which I have been discussing were being drawn, other ways of thinking about art were emerging which were concerned to question the formalist underpinnings shared by the aesthetics of Greenberg, Fried and Judd.

In contemporary Nietzschean epistemologies, the term "discourse" is used to mean a contingent body of knowledge and expertise whose material presence is more responsible for what is produced out of it than is the originality of any given author or artist.² This concept points up the importance of being aware of the "discourse" which forms the broader cultural context of which Judd's aesthetics of the specific object was a part. The particular combination of confidence many of the artists had at this time in their ability to articulate their own positions, both verbally and in writing, along with the immense popularity of some of the artists and critics involved, makes this a wide-ranging discourse encompassing articles, radio interviews, major art exhibitions, as well as frenetic art production on the part of the artists and their favourite fabricating plants. More

particularly, I am thinking of the developments which resulted in lively debates with, and outright rejections of, all varieties of the formalist paradigm. Judy Chicago and Dan Graham provide two instructive examples of this second-order fragmentation of formalism, because they are similar insofar as they are both concerned to critique the institution of "Minimalism," but different insofar as the motivations, methods, and conclusions of their critiques are different in significant ways.

I discussed earlier the idea that Chicago's piece *Rainbow Picket* (1966) is a part of her attempt to formulate a system-immanent feminist critique of the social implications of formalist modernism's idealist grounding. Hence, this piece is part of Chicago's attempt to use the visual language of that modernism to express her feminist concerns. However, as I will explain more fully below, Chicago abandoned this project in favour of more openly hostile projects when she realized that what she had at first perceived as complacency on the part of the art world with respect to feminist issues was in fact a deep-seated antagonism.

Judy Chicago began her career as Jud Gerowitz, an artist in the mid-1960s attempting, as she writes in her book *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (1972), to find a way to use the visual language of 1960s formalist modernism to address feminist issues.³ Chicago is an interesting person to study because she came to art with her feminism already strongly developed, and took as her project the attempt to find a way to use the language of formalist modernism to express those concerns. Immediately, there is a contradiction, since this was after the point that "art for art's sake" have become "art as

tautology." It is precisely the fact that this is a contradiction that would become the focus of Chicago's attention in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as a result of her experiences with the institutions of formalist modernism.

In the early 1960s, Chicago began working with hard-edged biomorphic abstractions, such as her painting *Flight* from 1963 (fig.4) in which abstract forms simultaneously suggest the forms of butterflies and vaginas. A few year later, she began to work with Minimalist sculpture as well. In 1966, her piece *Rainbow Picket* was included in the Primary Structures show at the Jewish Museum. This piece consists of six elements, arranged to form a series of diagonals of different lengths running from wall to floor, placed from longest to shortest. The only clue of Chicago's feminist concerns in this piece are the colours: various light, pastel tones, which hint at Chicago's desire to assert her gender identity by their stereotypical "femininity." This is very different from the overtly female imagery of *Flight*, and, as Chicago explains in *Through the Flower*, this is related to her increased sense of being a trespasser who could be found out at any moment, with disastrous consequences:

By 1966, I had had a one-woman show, had been in several group and museum shows, and had made a lot of work that could be classified as "minimal," although hidden behind that facade were a whole series of concerns that I did not know how to deal with openly without "blowing my cover," as it were, and revealing that I was, in fact, a woman with a different point of view from my male contemporaries. At that time, I firmly believed that if my difference from men were exposed, I would be rejected, just as I had been in school. It was only by being different from women and like men that I seemed to stand a chance of succeeding as an artist.⁴

Subsequently, a series of experiences which she had as an artist led her to believe that the cultural milieu which supported this type of art practice had deeply-ingrained sexist

tendencies. Hence, Chicago felt compelled to move into other forms of art practice which questioned the authority of the cultural institutions and aggressively addressed the consistency within which women have been shut out of these institutions. This led Chicago to more radical activities aimed at setting up parallel institutions such as *Womanspace*, which were run by women, and which therefore would enable women to engage in artistic practice in a supportive environment, without having to submerge their real interests or "be like men" in order to gain respect for their work.

The critique of Donald Judd that is developed in Dan Graham's photojournalist article "Homes for America," which appeared in *Arts* magazine in 1966,⁵ is very different from Chicago's critique as it is manifest in *Rainbow Picket*. Like Chicago, Graham's starting point is a critique of the idealism immanent in formalist aesthetics, and in particular, in "Minimalism." However, Graham's project differs from Chicago's in two important ways. First, the armature of Graham's critique is a refutation, rather than a utilization, of Judd's formal language. Second, where Chicago ultimately extricates herself from the entire cultural community that supports this formal language, Graham remains within it. This difference has to do, I believe, with the fact that Graham sees his critique as an extrapolation from Judd's work, as a realization of conclusions which Judd should have drawn from his work but did not, whereas Chicago's critique has as its focus the more contentious project of addressing the deeply-ingrained sexism of the most powerful and prominent cultural institutions.

"Homes for America" was developed out of an earlier project of Graham's called *Projected Sites* (1965), in which a series of photographs of suburban tract houses in the areas around New York City were projected onto a gallery wall. These two projects were attempts to arrive at a critical modernist strategy by examining the social construction of culture as autonomous. These photographs demonstrate that serialist art production such as that of Judd is not a unique relation of forms. For example, Graham's photograph of setbacks in Bayonne, New Jersey (figs. 5, 6) document the repetition of cubes at regular intervals. The composition of this photograph mimics the standard documentation photograph of one of Judd's serial pieces, thus making clear the similarity of the relations of forms. Once this connection has been made, other similarities are suggested. The repetition of rectangular forms is not the only similarity which these houses have to Judd's work. The same sorts of surfaces are essential in the fabrication of both. So, for example, tract housing and the untitled work by Judd which I was discussing earlier share not only the serial production and the repetition of a standard form at regular intervals: plexiglass and stainless steel are materials likely to be found in the New Jersey homes. Furthermore, the fabrication techniques used to assemble Judd's sculptures are identical to those used to assemble various household components, since Judd's sculptures are manufactured in commercial fabrication plants.

At this time, Graham was also interested in the idea of a magazine, such as *Esquire*, as a social context in which to present his work.⁵ Subsequently, through Mel Bochner, Graham was invited to present his project as a photojournalism piece in the

pages of Arts, which became "Homes for America." The text which Graham wrote to accompany the photographs which he had taken describes the serial nature of the production of tract housing. As the article appears in Arts, however, none of Graham's photographs are shown. There is only one photo of rural housing with the article, and that by Walker Evans from the 1930s, so much of the effect as Graham had planned it is lost.

The text of the magazine article discusses the serialist nature of suburban tract housing, describing the way in which developers offer sets of houses which are based on a standard plan. The plan is designed so that a number of trivial details (i.e.: colour, orientation on the lot) can be offered for the consumer to choose from. Graham's text uses the language of North American journalism that connotes the plain observer. However, in the last few paragraphs, the tone of Graham's language shifts to become infused with regret, as he criticizes the consumerism which has generated the need for "disposable houses:"

(H)ousing developments as an architectural phenomenon seem peculiarly gratuitous. They exist apart from prior standards of "good" architecture. They were not built to satisfy individual needs or tastes. The owner is completely tangential to the product's completion. His home isn't really possessable in the old sense; it wasn't designed to "last for generations": and outside of its immediate "here and now" context it is useless, designed to be thrown away. Both architecture and craftsmanship as values are subverted by the dependence on simplified and easily duplicated techniques of fabrication and standardized modular plans. Contingencies such as mass production technology and land use economics make the final decisions, denying the architect his former "unique" role.⁷

Graham's disgust with the "simplified and easily duplicated techniques of fabrication and standardized modular plans" refers not only to the tract houses, but also to the entire system of mass-fabrication: a system which produces household items such as

tables and counter-tops, but which also produces the serial objects of Donald Judd's work. By extrapolation, then, Graham's text condemns the very surfaces upon which Judd's aesthetic depends, and identifies them with an unfortunate turn in the history of commodity production. Furthermore, had the original photographs been included, Graham's article would have intervened in the construction of cultural autonomy which is maintained there in the magazine, in the same manner as *Projected Sites* intervened in the construction of cultural autonomy which is maintained by the gallery space --- by providing an intervention in the mask of cultural autonomy.

There is a lot of value in this article of Graham's, but nonetheless this critique comes to ground as a result of weaknesses inherent to the rather Jeffersonian liberalism immanent in Graham's article. Graham's critique of mass-produced architecture implies that mass-produced architecture is the effect of capitalism gone slightly awry.⁸ Hence, Graham fails to recognize the possibility that this form of housing is the unavoidable effect of rationalizing capitalism and therefore is symptomatic of the tendency of this form of social organization to limit, in a very real way, the number of courses of action that people have to choose from. Certainly it would be consistent with the analysis of late capitalism developed by Baudrillard in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* to argue that the production of housing units in series with slight alterations adventitious to the basic structure is the sort of production which one should expect to find in a region where the ideology in support of the system of circulation which is late capitalism is as pure as it is in North America.⁹

The critiques developed by Chicago and Graham both have a certain value to them, which is that they contributed to the development of a sense of the significance of understanding the politics and history of cultural institutions --- a sense which is important for the way in which it pierces the facade of cultural autonomy, and therefore opens the door to the possibility of beginning to analyze what interests are at work behind that facade. Hence, it is these anti-formalist interests of which Graham and Chicago are examples, and of which Judd unwittingly became a part by becoming a platform for this second-order fragmentation of formalism, that I was referring in the Prologue when I said that Judd's position is interesting partly because it represents the moment at which the re-emergence of the element of critical modernism which had lain dormant within formalist modernism for so many years began to crystallize.

I am not sure that there is any real significance to the fact that it was Judd who bore the brunt of these and other, similar critiques. Or rather, the significance lies in the fact that Judd's work commanded a very prominent position within the cultural institutions which supported formalist modernism. Hence, when open season was declared on formalism, Judd was extremely high-profile, and hence the most visible target. However, in becoming the target of anti-formalist sentiment, Judd got attacked by a monster of his own making: he could not, or did not, foresee that his palace-revolt within formalism would lead to the very foundation of that aristocracy being urgently called into question.

Endnotes

Prologue

- 1 Barbara Haskell *Donald Judd* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art), 1988. Apparently, there are limits to the extent of Judd's concern with the misrepresentation of his ideas, since he does go along with the show. I suspect that Judd's sense of business and politics dictates to him the times when it is best for one's career simply to keep quiet, as it does for most of us.
- 2 Barbara Haskell *Donald Judd* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art), 1988, p.80.
- 3 See the section of photographs included in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* Gregory Battcock, ed. (Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Co.), 1968, esp. pp.402-444. The photograph of Chicago's *Rainbow Picket* appears on p.422. See also *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* (New York: Jewish Museum), 1966.
- 4 Donald Judd "In Defense of My Work," 1977, rep. in *Complete Writings 1975-1986* (Eindhoven: van Abbemuseum), 1987, p.9. At the conclusion of this statement, Judd writes:
I and a few artists are the reason for the existence of numerous expensive museums of contemporary art and of the jobs of their staffs. We are the only activity that performs for nothing. Half of the retail money goes to dealers who usually connive for more. The half I get goes into my work and its installation and yet I'm taxed outrageously and arrogantly by three governments and moderately by three more. What little I can do is the reality of a gross and inflated situation. I have to defend what I've done; it is urgent and necessary to make my work last in its first condition. ("In Defense of My Work," p.10.)
- 5 Harold Rosenberg "Virtuosos of Boredom," *Vogue* vol.148, no.4 (Sept.1, 1966), p.297:1. I cannot say that I wholeheartedly agree with Rosenberg's opinion that there is nothing of worth in the work of any of the people he castigates in this article. Nonetheless, Rosenberg's acerbic wit makes good reading, and his perspicacity hits home in at least a few places. Especially wonderful in this article, if only for its pithy wit, is his definition of the virtuoso of boredom. "The virtuoso of boredom," Rosenberg writes, "is a neo-aesthete who cares for nothing but art and strives for art that cannot be cared for" (p.297:1).
- 6 In his essay "Myth Today," Roland Barthes writes:
To parody a well-known saying, I shall say that a little formalism turns one away from History, but that a lot brings one back to it. Is there a better example of total criticism than the description of saintliness, at once formal and historical, semiological and ideological, in Sartre's *Saint-Genet*? The danger, on the contrary, is to consider forms as

ambiguous objects, half-form and half-substance, to endow form with a substance of form, as was done, for instance, by Zhdanovian realism. Semiology, once its limits are settled, is not a metaphysical trap: it is a science among others, necessary but not sufficient. The important thing is to see that the unity of an explanation cannot be based on the amputation of one or other of its approaches, but, as Engels said, on the dialectical co-ordination of the particular sciences it makes use of. This is the case with mythology: it is a part both of semiology inasmuch as it is a formal science, and of ideology inasmuch as it is an historical science: it studies ideas-in-form ("Myth Today," 1957, in *Mythologies* trans. Annette Lavers [New York: Hill & Wang], 1972, p.112).

- 7 I am borrowing the language here from a letter from Serge Guilbaut, June 1989.
- 8 I wish to acknowledge the usefulness of discussions with Alex Alberro which took place throughout the Spring of 1989 in arriving at this formulation.
- 9 "Interview with Edward Said," *Diacritics* vol.6, no.3 (Fall 1976), pp.36-37.
- 10 For a discussion of this history, I cannot recommend too highly Charles Taylor's *Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 1975, esp. Ch.1 "Aims of a New Epoch," pp.3-50, and Ch.20 "Hegel Today," pp.537-571. The classic discussion by Hegel on this is his Preface to *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807) J.B. Baille, trans. (San Francisco: Harper), 1967, pp.67-130.
- 11 Friedrich Nietzsche *The Genealogy of Morals: An Attack*, 1887, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday), 1956, pp.202-3. The anti-bourgeois aspect of Nietzsche's thought is crucial to his work as a whole. As Paul Tillich writes, "It is indeed impossible to neglect this element (of the criticism of bourgeois society) in Nietzsche's work; explicitly or implicitly it permeates every part. Even his sense of being 'out of season' (*unzeitgemass*) is primarily a way of expressing his negation of his own time" ("Nietzsche and the Bourgeois Spirit," *Journal of the History of Ideas* vol.6 no.3 [June 1945], p.307).
- 12 Max Horkheimer & Theodor Adorno *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1944, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum), 1972, p.189.
- 13 Roland Barthes "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, 1957, trans. Annette Lavers (Granada: Toronto), 1972, pp.148-9. Which is not to say that Barthes argues that myth is not "on the Left." After arguing that the language of man as producer, as transformer, is non-mythical, and that therefore revolutionary language proper cannot be mythical, Barthes goes on to address the question of myth on the Left: I have been asked whether there are myths "on the left." Of course, inasmuch, precisely, as the Left is not revolution.

Left-wing myth supervenes precisely at the moment when revolution changes itself into 'the Left,' that is, when it accepts to wear a mask, to hide its name, to generate an innocent metalanguage and to distort itself into "Nature" (.....)

Yes, myth exists on the Left, but it does not at all have there the same qualities as bourgeois myth. *Left-wing myth is inessential*. To start with, the objects which it takes hold of are rare --- only a few political notions --- unless it has itself recourse to the whole repertoire of the bourgeois myths. Left-wing myth never reaches the immense field of human relationships, the very vast surface of "insignificant" ideology. Everyday life is inaccessible to it: in a bourgeois society, there are no "Left-wing" myths concerning marriage, cooking, the home, the theatre, the law, morality, etc. Then, it is an incidental myth, its use is not part of a strategy, as is the case with bourgeois myth, but only of a tactics, or at the worst, of a deviation; if it occurs, it is as a myth suited to a convenience, not to a necessity" (pp.146-7).

- 14 "It is difficult to speak of a politics of interpretation without a working notion of ideology as larger than the concepts of individual consciousness and will. At its broadest implications this notion of ideology would undo the oppositions between determinism and free will and between conscious choice and unconscious reflex. Ideology in action is what a group takes to be natural and self-evident, that of which the group, as a group, must deny any historical sedimentation. It is both the condition and the effect of the constitution of the subject (of ideology) as freely willing and consciously choosing in a world that is seen as background. In turn, the subject(s) of ideology are the conditions and the effects of the self-identity of the group as a group. It is impossible, of course, to mark off a group as an entity without sharing complicity with its ideological definition. A persistent critique of ideology is thus forever incomplete. In the shifting spectrum between subject-constitution and group-constitution are the ideological apparatuses that share the condition/effect oscillation" (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak "The Politics of Interpretations," 1982, rep. in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* [New York: Routledge], p.118).
- 15 For a discussion of Nietzsche's shift from a dualist to a monist conception of psychology, see Walter Kaufmann *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1974, esp. pp.178-333.
- 16 Friedrich Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* trans. R.Hollingdale (Markham, Ont.: Penguin), 1973, pp.141-142.
- 17 The language here suggests a parallel between Nietzsche's view of self-overcoming in *Beyond Good and Evil* and Clement Greenberg's view of Modernism in his 1960 essay "Modernist Painting." This persistent overlap is one of the obstacles in

separating out critical modernism and formalist modernism, an obstacle which I address below. In fact, Greenberg's view of Modernism as self-criticism and Nietzsche's view of self-overcoming are diametrically opposed since Greenberg's idea of self-criticism is founded upon the very view of Kantian absolutism that is one of the primary targets of Nietzsche's dialectical genealogies. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, the companion volume to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes: Let us, from now on, be on our guard against the hallowed philosophers' myth of a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knower"; let us beware of the tentacles of such contradictory notions as "pure reason," "absolute knowledge," "absolute intelligence." All these concepts presupposes an eye such as no living being can imagine, an eye required to have no direction, to abrogate its active and interpretative powers -- precisely those powers that alone make of seeing, seeing something. All seeing is essentially perspective, and so is all knowing (Friedrich Nietzsche *The Genealogy of Morals: An Attack*, 1887, trans. Francis Golffing [New York: Doubleday], 1956, p.255.).

- 18 Friedrich Nietzsche *The Genealogy of Morals: An Attack*, 1887, trans. F. Golffing (New York: Doubleday), 1956, p.149.
- 19 Nietzsche *The Genealogy of Morals*, 1887, p.149.
- 20 Walter Kaufmann *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Anti-Christ* 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 1974, p.82.
- 21 Not coincidentally, G.C.Spivak, in many of the essays collected in her recent book *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* ([New York: Routledge], 1988), rails against such willful misconstruings of the idea of deconstruction. Of particular note in this regard is "Finding Feminist Readings: Dante-Yeats," written by Spivak in 1980, and reprinted pp.15-29 of Spivak's book.
- 22 Edward Said *Orientalism* (New York: Random House), 1978, pp.93-94.

Monologue

- 1 Clement Greenberg "Towards A Newer Laocoon" *Partisan Review* vol.vii, no.4 (July-August 1940), p.305.

- 2 "The ontological cleavage of ideal from material values tranquilizes idealism in all that regards the material processes of life. In idealism, a specific historical form of the division of labour and of social stratification takes on the eternal, metaphysical form of the relationship of necessity and beauty, of matter and Idea" (Herbert Marcuse "The Affirmative Character of Culture," 1937, rep. in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* trans. Jeremy Shapiro [Toronto: Saunders], 1968, p.93). Raymond Williams succinctly explains the importance of this in relation to the development of critique: "(I)n many areas of social and political thought...in all that kind of social apparatus, and in a decisive area of political and ideological activity and construction, if we fail to see a superstructural element we fail to recognize reality at all. These laws, constitutions, theories, ideologies, which are claimed as natural, or as having universal validity or significance, simply have to be seen as expressing and ratifying the domination of a particular class...if these institutions and their ideologies are not perceived as having that kind of dependant and ratifying relationship, if their claims to universal validity or legitimacy are not denied and fought, then the class charcter of the society can no longer be seen" ("Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory" *New Left Review* no.82 [Nov. Dec. 1973], pp.7-8, emphasis mine).

- 3 Clement Greenberg "Modernist Painting" (1960) rep. in *Modern Art and Modernism* ed. Francis Francina and Charles Harrison (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 1982, pp.5-11.

- 4 Jean Baudrillard, "Sign Function and Class Logic," 1969, rep. in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1972, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos), 1981, p.58. I would like at this juncture to introduce what I believe to be an important difference that I hold with Baudrillard. In *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Jean Baudrillard argues that Marx ultimately locates absolute value in the utility of a commodity, and hence contradicts his own Hegelian conception of the cycle of exchange. This argument provides the platform from which Baudrillard launches into the crux of his argument, a discussion of the construction of needs and desires within the system of circulation. Baudrillard argues --- rightly, I think --- for a model in which the very objects which are exchanged are bound up in the system itself. Hence, the capitalist system of exchange generates and delimits the terms which can circulate within it, just as the terms generate and delimit the nature of the system of exchange. Hence, needs and desires are generated and delimited by the system itself. However, I think that in avering this, Baudrillard is much closer to Marx than he believes. Baudrillard writes:
 Utility, needs, use value: none of this ever comes to grips

with the finality of a subject up against his ambivalent object relations, or with symbolic exchange between subjects. Rather, it describes the relation of the individual to himself conceived in economic terms

--- better still, the relation of the subject to the economic system. Far from the individual expressing his needs in the economic system, it is the economic system that induces the individual function and the parallel functionality of objects and needs. The individual is an ideological structure, a historical form correlative with the commodity form (exchange value), and the object form (use value). The individual is nothing but the subject thought in economic terms, rethought, simplified, and abstracted by the economy. The entire history of consciousness and ethics (all the categories of occidental psycho-metaphysics) is only the history of the political economy of the subject (*For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1972, trans. Charles Levin [St. Louis: Telos], 1981, p.133).

Aware that there are culturalist readings of Marx in circulation, Baudrillard attempts to explain away the conflict by putting it down to a lack of clarity in Marx's writing. Baudrillard notes:

It should be pointed out that Marx's formulations in this domain (and the anthropology that they imply) are so vague as to permit culturalist interpretations of the type: "Needs are functions of the historical and social context." Or in its more radical version: "Needs are produced by the system in order to assure its own expanded reproduction" --- that is, the sort of interpretation that takes into account only the multiple content of needs, without submitting the concept of need itself and the system of needs as form to a radical critique (*For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.136, fn5).

And Charles Levin, Baudrillard's translator, adds: "As in Marx's Grundrisse, p.527, where both the "culturalist" and the "more radical" positions are mixed" (*For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, p.136, fn5). However, I do not feel that this are accurate characterizations of Marx's view, though I think that explanations can be offered for the confusion. Most important of these is the argument that there are points where Marx is rather unclear, and some of these occur in crucial places. Indeed, in the second paragraph of volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx seems to announce his intention to dispense with any discussion of needs:

A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production (Karl Marx *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol.1, 1867, Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, trans.; Frederick Engels, ed. [Moscow: Progress Press], 1954, p.43).

It appears that Marx is saying that the nature of the relation between commodities and human wants is self-evident. However, what he is actually saying, as becomes clear from reading the

rest of *Capital*, vol.1, is that he is leaving that question to one side. And had Baudrillard and Levin been more diligent in their readings of this volume, they would have noted that Marx does mention the social nature of needs in that very volume, albeit not in a particularly complex way:

If the owner of labour-power works today, to-morrow he must again be able to repeat the same process in the same conditions as regards health and strength. His means of subsistence must therefore be sufficient to maintain him in his normal state as a labouring individual. His natural wants, such as food, clothing, fuel and housing, vary according to the climatic and other physical conditions of his country. On the other hand, the number and extent of his so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of historical development, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of civilization of a country, more particularly on the conditions under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed (*Capital*, vol.1, p.168).

Other, more complex, discussions of the problem of the historical character of exchange under capitalist production appear in Marx's "Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," (1857, appended to A *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859, S.W.Ryazanskaya, trans.; Maurice Dobbs, ed. [Moscow: Progress Press], 1970, pp.188-217); and in the fragment which Engels gives the title "The Trinity Formula," (*Capital*, vol.3, 1894, Frederick Engels, ed.; Progress Press, trans. [Moscow: Progress Press], 1959, pp.814-831.). The fact that Baudrillard overstates his difference with Marx does not, however, invalidate Baudrillard's discussion of value which is, I think, quite strong. That is, I think that *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* is less a refutation of Marx than it is a fleshing out, with reference to contemporary (i.e.:1960s) society, of certain ideas which Marx touched on. There are differences between Marx in, say, *Capital*, and Baudrillard in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, but they lie elsewhere (for example, in the disagreement that Baudrillard expresses in the last three chapters of *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* with the sort of syndicalism that Marx argues for in the closing chapters of *Capital* vol.1).

- 5 Jean Baudrillard, "Sign Function and Class Logic," 1969, rep. in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1972, trans. Charles Levin (St.Louis:Telos), 1981, p.48. My reluctance at relying on anthologized fragments to construct an argument keeps me from using Jacques Mourrain's translation of sections of Baudrillard's *La Societe de consommation* (1970) in the body of my thesis. Nonetheless, I think it is worth drawing attention to Baudrillard's succinctly stated sociological hypothesis on this point as it appears in Mourrain's translation of this later work:
In view of the repeated and naive confusion one finds when faced with the continual forward flight and unlimited renewal of needs --- which in fact is irreconcilable with a

rationalist theory claiming that a satisfied need produces a state of equilibrium and a resolution of tensions --- we can advance the following sociological hypothesis (although it would be interesting and essential to articulate both desire and the social): if we acknowledge that a need is not a need for a particular object as much as it is a "need" for difference (the *desire for social meaning*), only then will we understand that satisfaction can never be fulfilled, and consequently that there can never be a definition of needs (*Consumer Society*, 1970, trans. Jacques Murrain, in *Selected Writings*, Mark Poster, ed. [Stanford: Stanford University], 1988, p.45).

- 6 Edward W. Said "Secular Criticism," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard), 1983, p.9.
- 7 On this, see Serge Guilbaut *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago), 1983.
- 8 John O'Brian Clement Greenberg: *Bibliography of the Collected Essays and Criticism, 1950-1973* (unpublished), 1986, p.10.
- 9 Clement Greenberg "Modernist Painting," 1960, rep. in *Arts Yearbook vol.4* Hilton Kramer, ed. (New York: Arts Digest), 1961, p.103:1.
- 10 Greenberg is on common ground with Adorno in proposing a model of aesthetic autonomy. However, an important difference in their positions arises over the question of teleological conceptions of history. As Tom Crow writes:
 (I)f both (Adorno and Greenberg) begin from a derivation of modernism in the pervasive conditions of mass-cultural production, Adorno parts company from Greenberg's kind of analysis by keeping the larger cultural landscape in view, by according it equal status as an object of inquiry. Greenberg, by taking up the subject of kitsch only at the outset and then bracketing it off, tacitly re-established the old opposition between a high culture with all the virtues and a bereft, impoverished low culture. His implication is that modernist art, apart from its reduction in scope, is otherwise unaffected by its origins in the late-capitalist crucible: the line of 'culture,' from past to present is, thanks to modernism, unbroken and high art is not implicated in a continuing way with the general culture it evades. Adorno is under no such illusion (Tom Crow "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity: the Vancouver Conference Papers* B.Buchloh, S.Guilbaut, and D.Solkin, eds. [Halifax:NSCAD], 1983, p.261).
- 11 For example, in 1981 Greenberg says, "I didn't reprint the 'New Laocoon' because it was misunderstood...to mean that I saw purity as a value myself. I was describing something. And that subsequently in another piece I wrote ("Modernist Painting") I was describing something, not subscribing to it" ("Discussion after T.J.Clark," *Modernism and Modernity: the*

Vancouver Conference Papers B.Buchloh, S.Guilbaut, and D.Solkin, eds. [Halifax:NSCAD], 1983, p.190).

- 12 Clement Greenberg "After Abstract Expressionism," *Art International* vol.8 (October 25, 1962), p.30.
- 13 Laurie Monahan *The New Frontier Goes to Venice: Robert Rauschenberg and the XXXII Venice Biennale* M.A.Thesis (University of British Columbia), 1985, pp.47-8. In an accompanying note, Monahan makes the interesting observation that "(Greenberg's) essays, once consolidated in (*Art and Culture*) lost much of their 'resiliency,' taking on an imposing permanence which made many critics uncomfortable" (Monahan, p.75, n.23).
- 14 Judd notes, "I'm using actual space because when I was doing paintings I couldn't see any way out of having a certain amount of illusionism in the paintings. I thought that also was a quality of the Western tradition and I didn't want it" (Bruce Glaser "Questions to Stella and Judd" [1964], rep. in *Minimal Art: a critical anthology* Gregory Battcock, ed. [Vancouver: Clarke, Irwin & Co.], 1968, p.155.
- 15 Donald Judd "Specific Objects," 1965, rep. in *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax:NSCAD), 1975, pp.181-189. I will pay more attention to Judd's essays here, at the expense of attending to his reviews. The reason is simply that I find his position to be more coherently stated in his essays, since Judd is especially obtuse in his reviews. Evidently either Judd or his editors or both feel that "Specific Objects," which I rely on heavily, is one of the most important of Judd's essays, since it is reprinted in *Complete Writings 1969-1975: Gallery Reviews, Letters to the Editor, Reports, Statements, Complaints* (Halifax:NSCAD), 1975, pp.181-9, as well as being appended to Judd's *Complete Writings 1975-1986* (Eindhoven: van Abbemuseum), 1987, pp.115-124.
- 16 Donald Judd "Specific Objects," 1965, rep. in *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax:NSCAD), 1975, p.184:2.
- 17 Donald Judd "Statement," in *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* (New York: Jewish Museum), 1966, p.18.
- 18 Donald Judd "Specific Objects," 1965, rep. in *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax:NSCAD), 1975, pp.184,187.
- 19 A formal analysis of some of Judd's work from the early 1950s through to the first half of the 1960s is useful in understanding the logic of Judd's aesthetics. Judd's earliest works were very conventional figurative representations. For example, *Bosa A.M.*, 1952 (fig.7) is an unremarkable image of a naked young man, sitting in a chair, his head propped up in his hand. Although the brushwork is fairly heavy, the painting does little else to suggest any attempt at, or concern with, flattening out the pictorial space, and the use

of orthogonals to represent planes receding into space suggests a fairly conventional conception of illusionistic space, the orthogonals delimiting a box which recedes into the picture plane at a slight angle. However, paintings executed by Judd shortly thereafter show a very different engagement with pictorial space. For example, Judd's untitled painting from 1955 (fig.8) consists of a series of planes and marks, more or less abstract. In spite of their abstractness, the shapes of the planes and marks, as well as the ways in which they interfere with each other, give the picture a strong sense of depth. The dark, rectangular form which moves diagonally toward the centre from the bottom right hand corner is very much in the foreground, just as the dark, painterly mass which occupies the middle of the painting is very much in the background. A much more successfully flat painting is Judd's untitled painting from 1960 (fig.9). Here, the image is four thin lines curving diagonally across a slightly darker field. Yet, in the terms of 1950s formalist aesthetics, the painting is not an unqualified success. In spite of the simplicity of forms, Judd seems unable to flatten the painting out. An unmistakable sense of depth remains. Sidney Tillim writes in a 1964 that "only two-dimensionality is spatially consistent with abstract mass" (Sidney Tillim "The New Avant-Garde," *Arts* vol.38 no.5 [February 1964], p.20:1). However, what seems to be indicated by this painting of Judd's is that not even abstract mass is two-dimensional.

Judd's solution to this problem was to engage actual space. His logic here was that, given that any work of art, no matter how flat one attempted to make it, would always suggest a sense of illusionistic space, the only phenomenologically honest sort of art production would be one which engaged actual space and therefore avoided suggesting illusionistic space. Hence Judd's disavowal of the division of art work into the categories of "painting" and "sculpture," and his correlative suggestion that the Modernist project be redefined as one project aimed at the production of the definitive art work. This is what Judd is getting at in the opening paragraph of "Specific Objects" when he writes:

Half or more of the best new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture. Usually it has been related, closely or distantly, to one or the other ("Specific Objects," 1965, rep. in *Complete Writings 1959-1975*, [Halifax: NSCAD], 1975, p.181:2).

Judd's earliest attempts to solve this problem revolved around his affiliation with painting. The attempt took the form of trying to overcome painting's inherently illusionistic nature by making paintings which declared themselves to be three-dimensional objects. An example of this is an untitled painting done by Judd in 1961 (fig.10). Here, a fairly regular field was laid down on a masonite board, and a banal u-shaped motif oriented horizontally across the top half of the field provides a limited amount of visual interest. This motif contrasts with the field around it in two ways. First, it is a dark, consistent, hard-edged form, which therefore has a mechanical aesthetic that the

mottled, rough field around it does not have. Second, it is physically closer to the surface of the masonite than the field is. Judd has mixed sand in with the paint that he used to colour the field, as a way of giving it a strong, textured quality, thus providing it with a sense of being deliberately three-dimensional. It is interesting to note that Judd made a number of similar paintings, but sometimes he relies simply on heavy brushwork to provide the texture. It is easy to see why neither of these solutions would provide a consistent reading of the surface of the painting as three-dimensional: Greenberg's readings of Pollock's surfaces as flat had long since established a precedent for reading impasto, no matter how heavy, as a two-dimensional picture. In fact, it was in 1960 that Greenberg made clear that, for him, the "flattest" picture was not the flattest painting. For, one of the things he liked so much about the work of Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland was the fact that physically, it was not flat, since the dying technique allowed "the eye to sense the threadedness and woveness of the fabric" ("Louis and Noland," *Art International* vol.4, no.5 [May 25, 1960], p.28:1). The flattest surface, it seems, did not make for the flattest painting. Therefore, some sort of ostensive gesture was required to call attention to the intent to make the surface of the painting three-dimensional. This was the function of the sand which Judd mixed in with the paint that he used for the field of this particular painting.

Evidently, Judd found this manner of working unsatisfying, as he produced these sorts of three-dimensional objects for a brief period, and then abandoned them in favour of objects which are more unambiguously three-dimensional. It seems clear that Judd's earliest pieces of this more unambiguously three-dimensional type are only moderately successful in his terms. For example, *Untitled* 1963 (fig.5), which was included in a show at the Green Gallery in the winter of 1963-1964, is clearly an attempt at producing a simple form, but it is an attempt which fails. As Gene Swenson wrote at the time: (T)hese works are neither lean nor intellectual enough to look as demandingly simple as they should. One construction is like a slice off the bottom of a huge cube, with half of a second slice (divided along a diagonal) fitted on top of the first; where the second was "cut," the red is replaced by shiny dark purple plastic. Seen from different angles, it appears to change from a more to less "absolutely simple" shape. It never seems to exist as pure fact (what it is in complete simplicity) nor as an illusion (more or less than what it is) --- which is a logical if not a visual paradox. Indeed, my disappointment is that the visual paradox is so weak (G[ene] R. S[wenson] "Reviews and previews," *Artnews* vol.62 no.10 [February 1964], p.20:1. Sidney Tillim's response to this show is similarly dubious in his article "The New Avant-Garde" *Arts* vol.38 no.5 [February 1964], esp. pp.20-21).

20 Charles Taylor Hegel, (New York: Cambridge University Press), 1975, p.81.

- 21 Clement Greenberg "Louis and Noland" *Art International* vol.4 no.5 (May 25, 1960), p.28:1.
- 22 "Homage to the Square" *Art in America* vol.55 no.4 (July-Aug 1967), p.50.
- 23 Martin Friedman "The Nart-Art of Donald Judd," *Art & Artists* vol.1 no.11 (February 1967), pp.59, 60.
- 24 See Douglas Crimp "Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity" in *Richard Serra Sculpture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 1986, p.43:1.
- 25 Donald Judd "Specific Objects," 1965, rep. in *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax: NSCAD Press), 1975, p.184:2.
- 26 Donald Judd "Specific Objects," 1965, rep. in *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (Halifax: NSCAD Press), 1975, p.184:1.
- 27 Judd "Specific Objects," 1965, rep. in *Complete Writings*, p.183-4.
- 28 Greenberg "Anthony Caro," rep. in *Studio International* vol.174 no.892 (Sept.1967), p.116:2.
- 29 Donald Judd "Statement," in *Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors* (New York: Jewish Museum), 1966, p.18.
- 30 Douglas Crimp "Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity" in *Richard Serra Sculpture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 1986, p.43:2.
- 31 Clement Greenberg "Recentness of Sculpture" in *American Art of the Sixties* Maurica Tuchman, ed. (Los Angeles: L.A. County Museum of Art), 1967, p.26. This article was printed more or less simultaneously in *Art International* vol.11 Apr. 20, 1967, pp.19-21. While I do not wish to dispute the accuracy of Greenberg's opinion on this score, it does seem that Greenberg's own taste at this time (i.e.: the tidy pieces by Noland, Louis, and Caro) tends to have the same weakness. Both Greenberg, here, and Douglas Crimp in the quote immediately above, are concerned with the issue of commodification. That is, they are concerned with the possibility that the pressure of forces external, or extraneous, to the concerns of art will or are acting on art production, to the detriment of that art. However, what is at stake for these two writers in the issue of commodification is somewhat different. Greenberg is concerned that this pressure, "the continuing infiltration of Good Design," is enticing artists to deliberately turn away from the modernist project and produce work that is immediately acceptable by the public at large, rather than work that is advanced, and therefore difficult for all but a few sophisticated intellects to understand and accept. Crimp, on the other hand, is concerned with the difficulty of formulating a critique of the capitalist form of circulation within

capitalist society. Implicit in his position is the view that, as Murray Bookchin writes, "capitalism, far from fragmenting and collapsing under hammer blows from 'within' itself, appears to be expanding, extending itself over the entire planet, and what is even more challenging, developing technology on a scale unprecedented even in its own history" (*The Limits of the City* (Montreal: Black Rose) 1986, p.16). Briefly stated, the difference between Greenberg's fear of commodification and Crimp's fear of commodification is this: Greenberg fears that commodification is causing modernist aesthetics, which he argues should be autonomous from all other concerns, to lose that aspect of autonomy as artists lower their sights from continually searching for ways to advance the modernist project to searching for ways to achieve financial and popular success in the here and now. Crimp, on the other hand, is concerned that capitalism, as an ideology, is all too able to absorb and diffuse critiques of itself when they are made within the sphere of art production. Now, this raises a difficult problem for Crimp, because he evidently sees the sphere of cultural production as an area which is greatly in need of rigorous critiques, precisely because, as a "specialized luxury commodity," it functions as an instrument of social distinction, and therefore as an instrument of stabilization of capitalist circulation, aided by precisely what Greenberg is lamenting the decline of (though of course Greenberg would not characterize it so cynically), namely, "the pretense to universality."

- 32 "Jackson Pollock" *Arts* vol.41 no.6 (Apr.1967), p.32.
- 33 "I take a reductionist conception of modernist painting to mean this: that painting roughly since Manet is seen as a kind of cognitive enterprise in which a certain quality (e.g., literalness), set of norms (e.g., flatness and the delimiting of flatness) or core of problems (e.g., how to acknowledge the literal character of the support) is progressively revealed as constituting the essence of painting --- and, by implication, of having done so all along. This seems to me gravely mistaken, not on the grounds that modernist painting is not a cognitive enterprise, but because it radically misconstrues the kind of cognitive enterprise modernist painting is. What the modernist painter can be said to discover in his work --- what can be said to be revealed to him in it --- is not the irreducible essence of all painting, but rather that which, at the present moment in painting's history, is capable of convincing him that it can stand comparison with the painting of both the modernist and pre-modernist past whose quality seems to him beyond question. (In this sense one might say that modernist painting discovers the essence of all painting to be quality)....It should be clear that the conception of modernist painting which I have just adumbrated is not only anti-reductionist but anti-positivist..." ("Shape as Form: Frank Stella's New Paintings" *Artforum* Nov.1966, p.27 fn11). Although Fried's anti-reductionism aligns him with Judd against Greenberg, his sense of the contingent nature of the

modernist project puts him on his own against the idealism of Judd and Greenberg.

34 "Art and Objecthood" *Artforum* vol.5 no.10 (June 1967), p.15:1.

35 Laurie Monahan *The New Frontier Goes to Venice: Robert Rauschenberg and the XXXII Venice Biennale*, 1985, pp.92-98 and *passim*.

36 John O'Brian introduction to *Clement Greenberg's Collected Essays and Criticism vol.1: Perceptions and Judgements 1939-1944* John O'Brian, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago), 1986, p.xix.

37 Again, I am less than sanguine about relying on anthologized fragments to construct an argument in the body of my thesis. However, I do want to draw attention to the way in which we can extrapolate from Alberro's formulation concerning the shift in meaning of the phrase "art for art's sake" in order to locate this shift in the meaning of the phrase "art for art's sake" within the context of a more generalized shift in wide-spread epistemological presuppositions that occurred in the 1950s in North America.

Behind Alberro's formulation, which pithily summarizes the nature of a subtle but significant alteration in the epistemological presuppositions of North American formalism, is a conception of history derived from Jean Baudrillard's essay "Gesture and Signature: Semiurgy in Contemporary Art" (1972). Baudrillard argues that there has, during the 1950s and 1960s, been a shift in the significance of the artist's signature, from a signification of uniqueness, to a sign which identifies the image as part of a particular series, or system, of objects. Within the earlier system of signification, the role of the signature was to certify the status of the individual art work as unique, standing apart from all other art objects. Presently, however, the role of the signature is to locate each art object within a "system of objects" from which each object within that system acquires its legitimacy.

Now, the term "system of objects" has a particular meaning in Baudrillard's analysis of the social psychology of consumption. Baudrillard's idea of the "system of objects" is that, with the emergence of a type of capitalist production which takes as its aim raising the velocity of circulation through the machinations of mass-production, a social psychology of distinction has evolved which relies upon the consumption of mass-produced objects in order to locate individuals within a matrix of stereotypical personalities. Therefore, consumption has become an amorphous, yet immediate, effective and pervasive mode of communication. In *The System of Objects* (1968), Baudrillard writes:

The object/advertising system constitutes a system of signification but not language, for it lacks an active syntax: it has the simplicity and effectiveness of a code. It does not structure the personality; it designates and classifies it. It does not structure social relations: it demarcates them in a hierarchical repertoire. It is formalized

in a universal system of recognition of social statuses: a code of "social standing" (p.19).

To say that a particular art object is part of a system of objects is to say that by purchasing that art object, one seeks to identify oneself to others as a particular type of person *by the very act of purchasing that particular art object*. Of course, this mode of signification is hardly unique to the art world. Baudrillard writes of art production within the society of systems of objects:

In (the sense that the work of art offers itself of its own initiative as immediately integrable in a global system that conjugates it like any other object or group of objects), modern works have indeed become everyday objects: although laden with cultural connotations, they pose no problems to the environment. A modern painting, pop, abstract, a "tachiste," contradicts nothing: it enters into the play of the syntagmatic distribution of objects in space (in the modern interior) just as --- and because it issues from the inventory of a circumscribed subjectivity --- one sign passes into another, from one moment to another. Two chains cross: the necessary dimension of signification is also the "fatal" dimension of integration and consumption.

Modern art, midway between critical terrorism (ideological) and *de facto* structural integration, is quite exactly an art of collusion vis-a-vis this contemporary world. It plays with it, and is included in the game. It can parody this world, illustrate it, simulate it, alter it; it never disturbs the order, which is also its own. We are no longer dealing with the bourgeois art which, in its redundancy, presents beings and objects, reconciled with their image (all "representation" carries this ideology of reconciliation). In modern art it is a subjectivity which, unreconciled with the world, endeavors to reconcile itself with its own image: it is a subjectivity whose redundancy, while committed in an implicit seriality, is dedicated to homologically illustrating the seriality of all other objects and the systematic of an increasingly well integrated world through its own withdrawal and defiance (p.110-111).

The shift in the way the phrase "art for art's sake" is interpreted, which we see starting during the 1950s and stabilizing during the 1960s, is simultaneous with, and part and parcel of, the shift from commodity production as the reproduction of an original to the production of a series of objects, all of which are "copies" of each other. (For Baudrillard's explication of his ideas concerning the history of this shift, see "The Orders of Simulacra," in his *Simulations* Philip Beitchman, trans. [New York: Semiotext(e)], 1983, pp.81-159.) Hence, the deliberate systematization of the work of certain modern artists (Baudrillard mentions Warhol and Rauschenberg, but I think he would agree that Stella and Judd fit in here as well) is reflective of the systemization of all other objects. The idea of "art for art's sake" now presents art as a tautology --- as a system which is only grounded in itself. What I am concerned to question with my analysis of the notion of cultural autonomy is its presupposition that a system which is tautological is more than merely formally set off from its

context. The implication of this is that, since systematization is widely held to be the criterion of authenticity, the idea relied upon by the presentation of "art for art's sake" as art as tautology, far from being tautological, is in fact consistent with the epistemological presuppositions of post-World War II North American commodity production, and the epistemological presuppositions which go along with it.

I would also at this point like to acknowledge my indebtedness to conversations with Mark Globberman of the University of British Columbia department of philosophy during the Spring of 1989 for information regarding the nature of concerns which were being addressed at Columbia University during the 1950s.

- 38 Clement Greenberg "The Late Thirties in New York," 1957, rep. in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press), 1961, p.230. This is a slightly altered version of an essay by Greenberg called "New York Painting Only Yesterday" (*Art News* vol.56 no.4 [Summer 1957], pp.58-9; 84-6). The material in parenthesis only appeared in the 1961 version.
- 39 Serge Guilbaut *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1983, p.158. The retention of this oppositional terminology necessitates the drawing out of similarities and differences between this position and contemporary positions such as the socially-critical conceptualism of Dan Graham, which used the same labels, had some of the same concerns, but differed in that they attempted to retain or regain the element of social opposition. As I note in my recent article on Dan Graham: (T)he significant difference between Graham's and Judd's cultural analysis is Graham's underlying assumption that the autonomy of high culture is only apparent. Thus, a reflexive critical process within cultural institutions may be an effective method for denying the legitimizing character of culture. This is the aesthetic of critical modernism(...) Critical modernism has a complicated relation with Greenbergian modernism, a relation made all the more complex by the persistent overlap in terminology, by the legacy of critique which lies dormant in formalism, and by the formalist element which exists in the critical modernism of conceptual art ("T.V. Eye" *Parachute* no.53 [Dec.-Jan.-Feb.1988-89], p.21:2).
- 40 See "Marxism and Criticism: rev. of John Berger's *Permanent Red*" *Arts* vol.36 no.4 (Jan.1962), pp.70-72.
- 41 "Marxism and Criticism: rev. of John Berger's *Permanent Red*" *Arts* vol.36 no.4 (Jan.1962), p.72
- 42 "Marxism and Criticism: rev. of John Berger's *Permanent Red*," *Arts* (Jan.1962), p.70:1.
- 43 See *Three American Painters* (Boston: Harvard University), 1965; "Shape as Form: Frank Stella's New Paintings" *Artforum*

(Nov.1966), pp.18-27; "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* vol.5 no.10 (June 1967), pp.12-23.

- 44 Michael Fried "Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, no.1 Hal Foster, ed. (Seattle: Bay Press), 1987, p.57.
- 45 See Greenberg's "Avant-garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* vol.vi no.5 (Fall 1939), pp.34-49; "Towards a Newer Laocoon," *Partisan Review* vol.vii no.4 (July-August 1940), pp.296-310.
- 46 See Serge Guilbaut *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* trans. Arthur Goldhammer [Chicago: University of Chicago Press], 1983, especially Chapter 1 "New York, 1935 - 1941: The De-Marxification of the Intelligensia," pp.17-47.
- 47 See Clement Greenberg "Avant-garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review*, (Fall 1939), pp.34-49.
- 48 Minson's analysis is in his *Genealogies of Morals: Nietzsche, Foucault, Donzelot and the Eccentricity of Ethics* (New York: St.Martin's), 1985. My language here is adapted from pp.158-9 of Minson's book.
- 49 See Serge Guilbaut's "The Relevance of Modernism," in *Modernism and Modernity: the Vancouver Conference Papers* B.Buchloh, S.Guilbaut, and D. Solkin, eds. (Halifax:NSCAD), 1983, p.XIII.
- 50 Thomas Crow "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity: the Vancouver Conference Papers* B.Buchloh, S.Guilbaut, and D. Solkin, eds. (Halifax:NSCAD), 1983, p.269.
- 51 See for example the General Panel Discussion in *Modernism and Modernity: the Vancouver Conference Papers* B.Buchloh, S.Guilbaut, and D. Solkin, eds. (Halifax:NSCAD), 1983, pp.270-1.
- 52 Thomas Crow "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity: the Vancouver Conference Papers* B.Buchloh, S.Guilbaut, and D. Solkin, eds. (Halifax:NSCAD), 1983, p.223.
- 53 Donald Judd "Local History," *Arts Yearbook 7: New York --- the Art World* James Mellow, ed. (New York: Art Digest), 1964, p.34:1.
- 54 Clement Greenberg "After Abstract Expressionism," *Art International* vol.8 (Oct.25, 1962), p.30:2.
- 55 At first glance, Judd's use of the hermeneutic constructs of formalist aesthetics to discuss art seems to conflict with the presence of a critique of the formalist assumptions about the viewer-art object relation. Although Judd's work goes some distance toward pointing out the predominant idealist

presuppositions of the viewing subject, it does not express an interest in developing a materialist analysis of these presuppositions. The attempt to formulate a critique of the idealist presuppositions of the viewing subject and subsequently to integrate such a critique into an art practice is the intellectual milieu from which emerges conceptual art as a socially critical art practice --- as distinct from conceptual art as an abstract formal investigation, a la Joseph Kosuth.

- 56 Be it a dialectical materialist critique of the subject that proposed by Marx and Engels in, for example, volume one of *The German Ideology*, or a genealogical critique of the autonomy of the subject such as that proposed by Nietzsche in *The Genealogy of Morals*, Judd is not interested. The fundamental premises of dialectical materialism "are men, not in any fantastic isolation and fixity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a collection of dead facts, as it is with the empiricists, (themselves still abstract), or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists" (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels *The German Ideology* vol.1, 1846, Progress Press, trans. [Moscow: Progress Press], 1976, p.43). Nietzschean genealogy emphasizes the use of philology to demonstrate the ontological instability of ideas. (See Friedrich Nietzsche *The Genealogy of Morals: An Attack*, 1887, trans. F. Golffing [New York: Doubleday], 1956, *passim*.) Despite Nietzsche's idealism, the two conceptions of history coincide in their shared bases in relativist phenomenologies and epistemologies, and in their shared conviction against universalizing systems of thought.

- 57 Barbara Haskell notes:
Judd had realized that structural logic was not forfeited even when the number of units in the configuration expanded or decreased to adjust to the height of the room (...) Radical alterations of syntax, however, were not acceptable -- as Judd would verify in 1973 and 1974 when he designated two configurations of the same seven plywood units as separate works. Yet, within limits, he permitted alterations in the formal deployment of a work... (Donald Judd [New York: Whitney Museum of American Art], 1988, p.88.)

- 58 There is another material which Judd sporadically makes use of which I do not touch on in my text, which is plywood. The main reason I do not address this issue is because Judd's use of plywood is occasional at best, and I think it unlikely that an investigation of Judd's use of plywood would either add much to my argument or invalidate it. However, for the sake of being thorough, I will offer a few brief remarks. Judd's use of plywood falls into two periods. In the first period, which ends around 1964, it seems likely that Judd uses plywood mostly as a second choice necessitated by the fact that it is simply cheaper than aluminum or stainless steel. Judd abandons plywood in late 1963 or early 1964, and

returns to it only after a number of years, at which point the pieces he has made are every bit as precise as the pieces made of other materials. This second period of use seems consistent with my arguments concerning the other materials. Judd leaves these later plywood structures unpainted, so that the materials are readily identifiable. I would think that plywood holds a similar appeal for the idea of the specific object as stainless steel or aluminum do, and I imagine one could forge an argument that plywood in Judd's work is a nexus between formalist aesthetics and mass-production in a way which is very similar to the way in which I am arguing Judd's uses of aluminum, plexiglass, and stainless steel are nexus between these two spheres. However, one would need to investigate the social history of plywood during the 1960s in North America in order to comment on this issue more extensively.

- 59 Wolfgang Haug "Ideological Values and Commodity Aesthetics: The Example of the 'Jeans Culture'," 1978, rep. in *Commodity Aesthetics, Ideology and Culture*, trans. K. Ruoff Kramer (New York: International General), 1987, p.152.
- 60 Donald Judd "In the Galleries," *Arts* vol.39 no.3 (Dec.1964) p.66:2.
- 61 Ernest Mandel "In Defense of Socialist Planning," *New Left Review* no.159 (Sept./Oct. 1986), p.7.
- 62 Ernest Mandel "In Defense of Socialist Planning" *New Left Review* no.159 (Sept./Oct. 1986), p.8.
- 63 Ernest Mandel "In Defense of Socialist Planning" *New Left Review* no.159 (Sept./Oct. 1986), p.11. Again, Baudrillard adds a further dimension here. Baudrillard argues that, under the system of exchange which is developed capitalism, the false promise of use value provides an alibi for sign exchange value. According to this ideology, we usually need what we buy, though we may not need quite as elaborate a version: perhaps we do not need a refrigerator with an ice maker, but we do need a refrigerator. The ice maker is just a little whistle to set us apart from the average refrigerator owner. But Baudrillard takes issue with the very concept of assigning primacy to use-value, as it is a term developed with the capitalist system of language. For Baudrillard, then, needs are to a great extent the result of faith in the sign exchange value's alibi of use-value, and hence is itself a term indigenous to the capitalist system of language, insofar as it was produced by and with that system of language:
 The legitimacy of production rests on a *petitio principii*, i.e., that people discover a posteriori and almost miraculously that they need what is produced and offered at the marketplace (and thus, in order that they should experience this or any particular need, the need must already exist inside people as a virtual postulation). And so it appears that this begging of the question --- this forced rationalization --- simply masks the *internal finality* of the

order of production. To become an end in itself, every system must dispel the question of its real teleology. Through the meretricious legitimacy of needs and satisfactions, the entire question of the social and political finality of productivity is repressed ("The Ideological Genesis of Needs," 1969, rep. in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1972, Charles Levin, trans. [St. Louis: Telos], 1981, p.71).

- 64 Donald Judd "Specific Objects," 1965, rep. in *Complete Writing 1959-1975* (Halifax: NSCAD Press), 1975, p.187.
- 65 See Roland Barthes "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, 1957, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang), 1972, p.112-115.
- 66 Roland Barthes "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, 1957, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang), 1972, p.142.
- 67 Roland Barthes "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, 1957, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang), 1972, p.129.
- 68 Jean Baudrillard *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1972, trans. Charles Levin (St.Louis: Telos), 1981, p.158.
- 69 Jean Baudrillard *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1972, trans. Charles Levin (St.Louis: Telos), 1981, p.48.
- 70 See, for example, Serge Guilbaut *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago), 1983, especially pp.90-97.
- 71 Harold Rosenberg, "Virtuosos of Boredom," *Vogue* vol.148 no.4 (Sept.1, 1966), pp.296-7.
- 72 C. Wright Mills "Man in the Middle: The Designer," *Industrial Design* vol.5 no.11 (Nov.1958), p.73:1. In spite of his perspicacious discussion of the role of the designer in this article, it must be mentioned that Mills' article takes a turn for the worst in the sixth and final section, wherein Mills offers a solution for the problem. It is the sort of suggestion that would leave Baudrillard shaking his head: (D)esigners ought to take the value of craftsmanship (i.e.: the manifestation both of the sensibilities of man in the production of material objects, and of the nature of man as a creature related to nature itself and to changing it by a humanly considered plan) as the central value for which they stand; that in accordance with it they ought to do their work; and that they ought to use its norms in their social and economic and political visions of what society ought to become (p.75:2).
It should be noted that Mills' paper was written to be read at the Design conference held in Aspen, Colorado, in the Summer of 1958, which may have something to do with this rather weak conclusion.

- 73 I think that an interesting discussion could be made on the way that this photograph presents Judd's work, showing it from a 3/4 view so that the work recedes dramatically into the photograph in precisely the same way that orthogonals receding dramatically toward a vanishing point draw a viewer into a history painting. That, however, is another topic.
- 74 Thomas Crow "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity: the Vancouver Conference Papers*, B.Buchloh, S.Guilbaut, D.Solkin, eds. (Halifax:NSCAD), p.216.
- 75 Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn "Don Judd" *The Fox* vol.1 no.2 (1975), p.138:2.
- 76 See Serge Guilbaut *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: abstract expressionism, freedom and the cold war* trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1983, p.3 and *passim*.
- 77 Laurie Monahan *The New Frontier Goes to Venice: Robert Rauschenberg and the XXXII Venice Biennale* M.A. Thesis (University of British Columbia), 1985, p.6.
- 78 On this, see Jeff Wall "Dan Graham's *Kammerspiel*," in *Dan Graham* (Perth: Art Gallery of Western Australia), 1986, *passim*.
- 79 Kynaston McShine "Introduction to *Primary Structures: younger American and British sculptors*" (New York: Jewish Museum), 1966, p.1.
- 80 See in particular Robert Morris' "Anti Form," *Artforum* vol.6 no.8 (Apr.1968), pp.33-35, and "Notes on Sculpture pt.4: beyond objects," *Artforum* vol.7 no.8 (Apr.1969), pp.50-54.
- 81 Friedrich Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, 1886, trans. R. Hollingdale [Markham, Ont.: Penguin], 1973, p.79.
- 82 On this, see Jean Baudrillard "Gesture and Signature: Semiurgy in Contemporary Art," in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, 1972, trans Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos), 1981, pp.102-111.

Epilogue

- 1 Thomas Crow "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity: the Vancouver Conference Papers* B.Buchloh, S.Guilbaut & D.Solkin, eds. (Halifax:NSCAD), 1983, p.253.
- 2 Edward Said *Orientalism* (Toronto: Random House), 1979, p.84.
- 3 See Judy Chicago *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (New York: Doubleday), 1975. Also of interest in this regard are: Judy Chicago and Lloyd Hamrol's "Two Artists," in

Criteria vol.1, no.2 (Nov.1974), pp.8-14; and Lucy Lippard's "Judy Chicago, Talking to Lucy Lippard," *Artforum* vol.13, no.1 (Sept.1974), pp.60-65.

- 4 Judy Chicago *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a woman Artist* (New York: Doubleday), 1975, pp.40-41. For an informative discussion of the dynamic which Chicago describes in this passage, namely, the very great ability of masculinist centralism to construct itself as value-free and hence to be able to choose whether to validate/recuperate or invalidate/marginalize work which openly declares itself to have been produced by a woman, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "Explanation and Culture: Marginalia," 1977, rep. in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge), 1988, pp.103-117. Also of interest in regard to this issue is Susan Bordo's "Feminist Skepticism and the 'Maleness' of Philosophy," in *The Journal of Philosophy* vol.lxxxv no.11 (November 1988), pp.619-629.
- 5 See Dan Graham "Homes for America" *Arts* vol.41, no.3 (Dec.1966-Jan.1967), pp.21-22.
- 6 Dan Graham in an unpublished interview with the author, Spring 1988.
- 7 Dan Graham "Homes for America" *Arts* vol.41, no.3 (Dec.1966-Jan.1967), p.22:3.
- 8 Historically, one can relate this to the wide-ranging appeal of liberal capitalism after World War II, one effect of which was the narrowing of the political field of view. Claus Offe has astutely noted the precise character of this political field in an essay that, while specifically intended to analyze the politics of Western Europe is nonetheless appropriate, as Offe recognizes, as a model for understanding the politics of North America:
 (That the social, economic, and political order adopted in the late 1940s and early 1950s was built on a highly encompassing liberal-democratic welfare state consensus that remained unchallenged through the late 1960s by any significant forces on the political Right or Left) is true at least of three central elements of the constitutional postwar accords, all of which were adopted and defended in terms of their conduciveness to economic growth and welfare. First, despite some marginal elements of indicative planning, codetermination, or nationalization, investment decisions were left as the prerogative of owners and managers acting in free markets and according to criteria of profitability. Second, the acceptance of capitalism as a machine for growth was complemented by organized labor's acceptance of it as a means for income distribution and social security. The prevalent concern with growth and real income led working-class spokesmen to renounce more extensive projects of societal change, in exchange for a firmly established status in the process of income distribution, while it made investors more willing to accept the new status of organized labor. The third element of the postwar design (adopted in the German case from

the Weimar Republic) was a form of political democracy predominantly mediated through party competition. This arrangement was well suited to limit the conflicts transferred from the sphere of civil society into the arena of public policy, especially where, as in West Germany, there was a significant separation between the organizations representing societal interests (unions, employers, churches, etc.) and the political parties concerned with winning votes and office according to the model of the "catch-all-party" ("Challenging the boundaries of institutional politics: social movements since the 1960s," in *Changing boundaries of the political: Essays on the evolving balance between the state and society, public and private in Europe* Charles Maier, ed. [New York: Cambridge University], 1987, pp.66-7). I would like to thank Alex Alberro for drawing my attention to this article. See also, particularly in regard to the political field in the United States at this time, Alexander Bloom's informative "rev. of Peter Steinfels' *The Neoconservatives: the men who are changing America's politics*" *Telos* (Winter 1979-80), pp.181-88.

- 9 What Graham's article misses in terms of understanding the history of the architecture he is discussing, is aptly summarized by Mark Wasuda in a note to me concerning an earlier draft of this paper:
 When you suggest that Graham is critiquing the entire system of mass-fabrication a whole series of other questions concerning the status of mass production within 20th century art and architecture arise (...) I am reminded of the history of social housing, especially in Germany or Holland. Although suburban housing suffers at the hands of the American commodification system its failure is made poignant not by Graham's regret for the American landscape of unique buildings but by the distance it travels from its origin in workers housing projects. The "socialist" architects were surely guilty of utopianism and romantic anti-capitalism and were defeated by their naive appreciation of their relation to the market. However, their failure doesn't indicate to me a thorough critique of mass-production (in a note to the author, Spring 1989).

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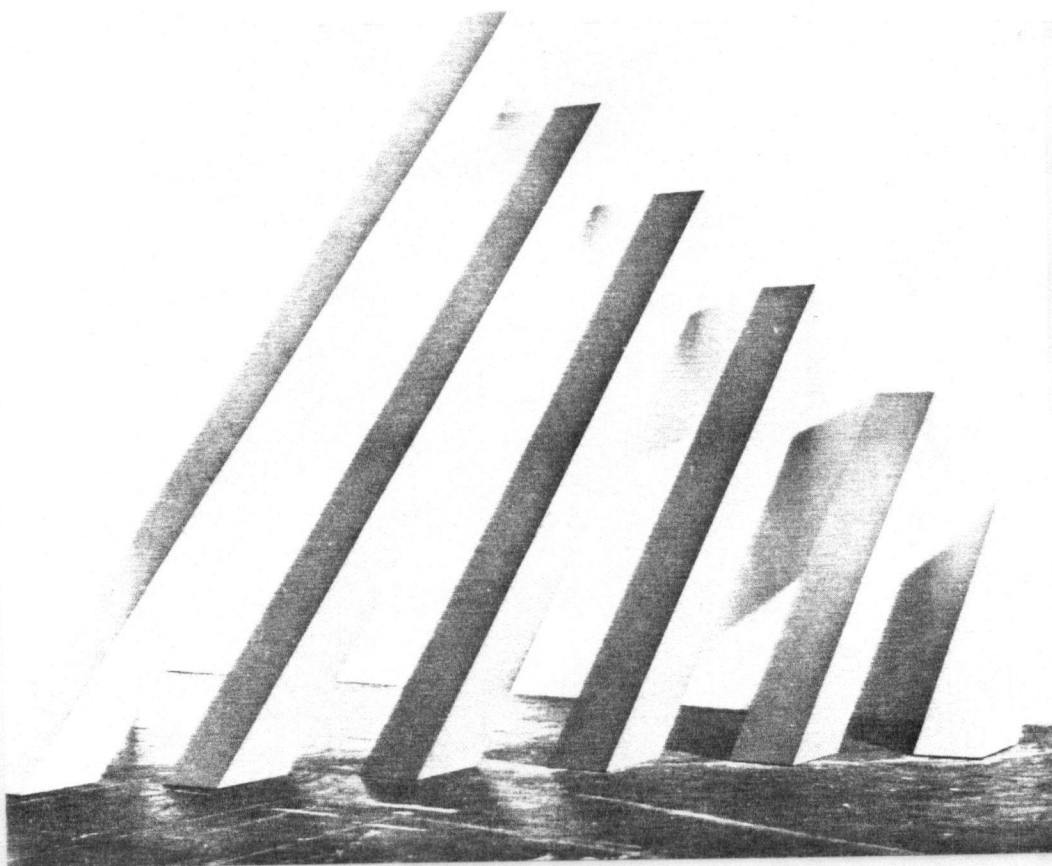


fig 1 Judy Chicago Rainbow Picket 1966 Plywood, canvas, latex. 126" x 110"
Collection of Jewish Museum, New York. (Source: Minimal Art Gregory
Battcock, ed. (New York: Doubleday), 1968.)

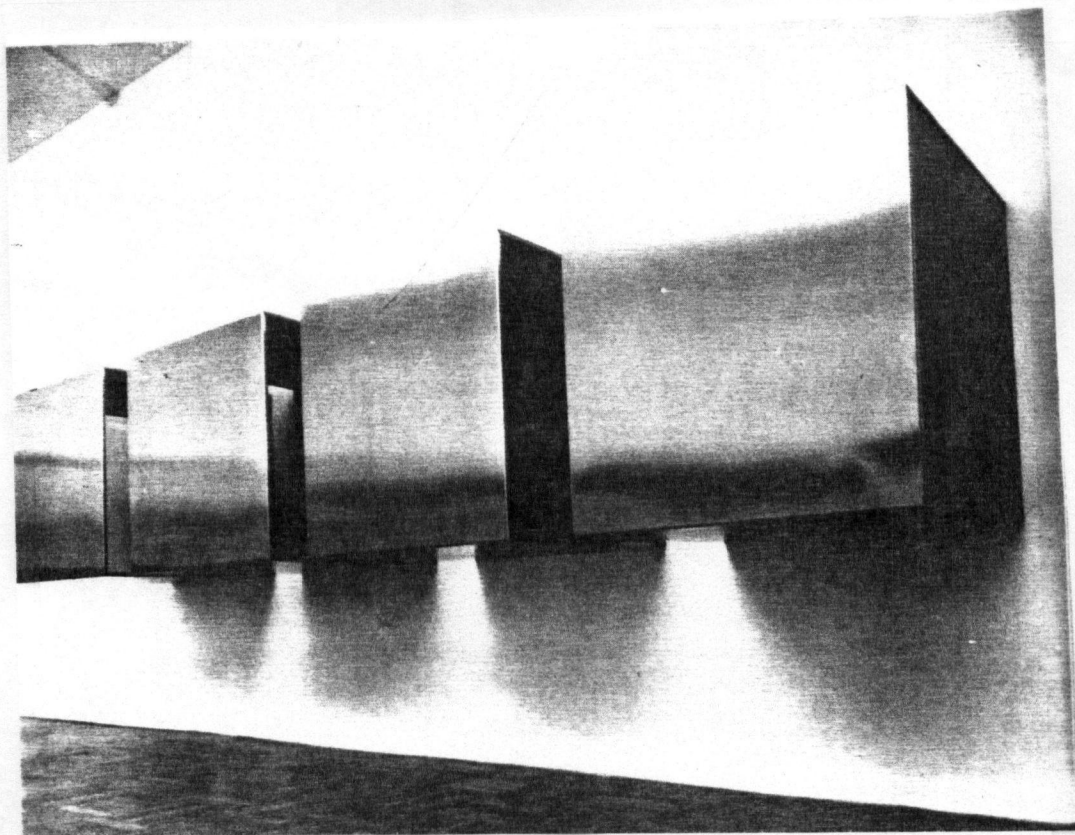


fig 2 Donald Judd (untitled) 1965 Stainless steel, plexiglass. 34" x 160"
x 34" Collection of Castelli Gallery, New York. (Source: Minimal Art
Gregory Battcock, ed. (New York: Doubleday), 1968.)

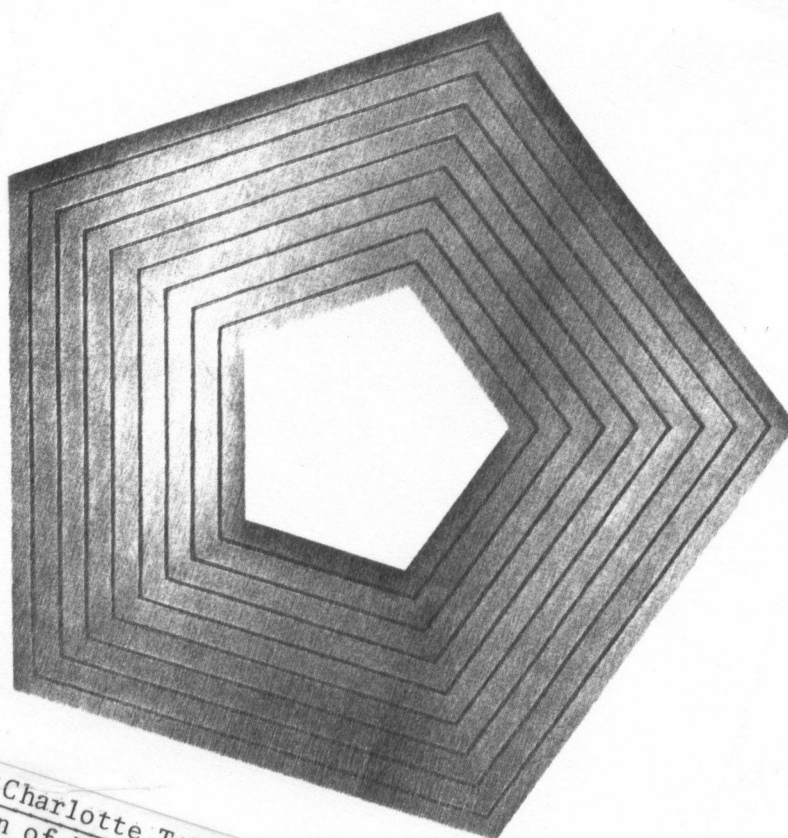


fig 3 Frank Stella Charlotte Tokayer 1963 Metallic paint on canvas. 87" x 91" Collection of Peter Brant, Greenwich, CT. (Source: Lawrence Rubin Frank Stella Paintings (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang), 1986.)

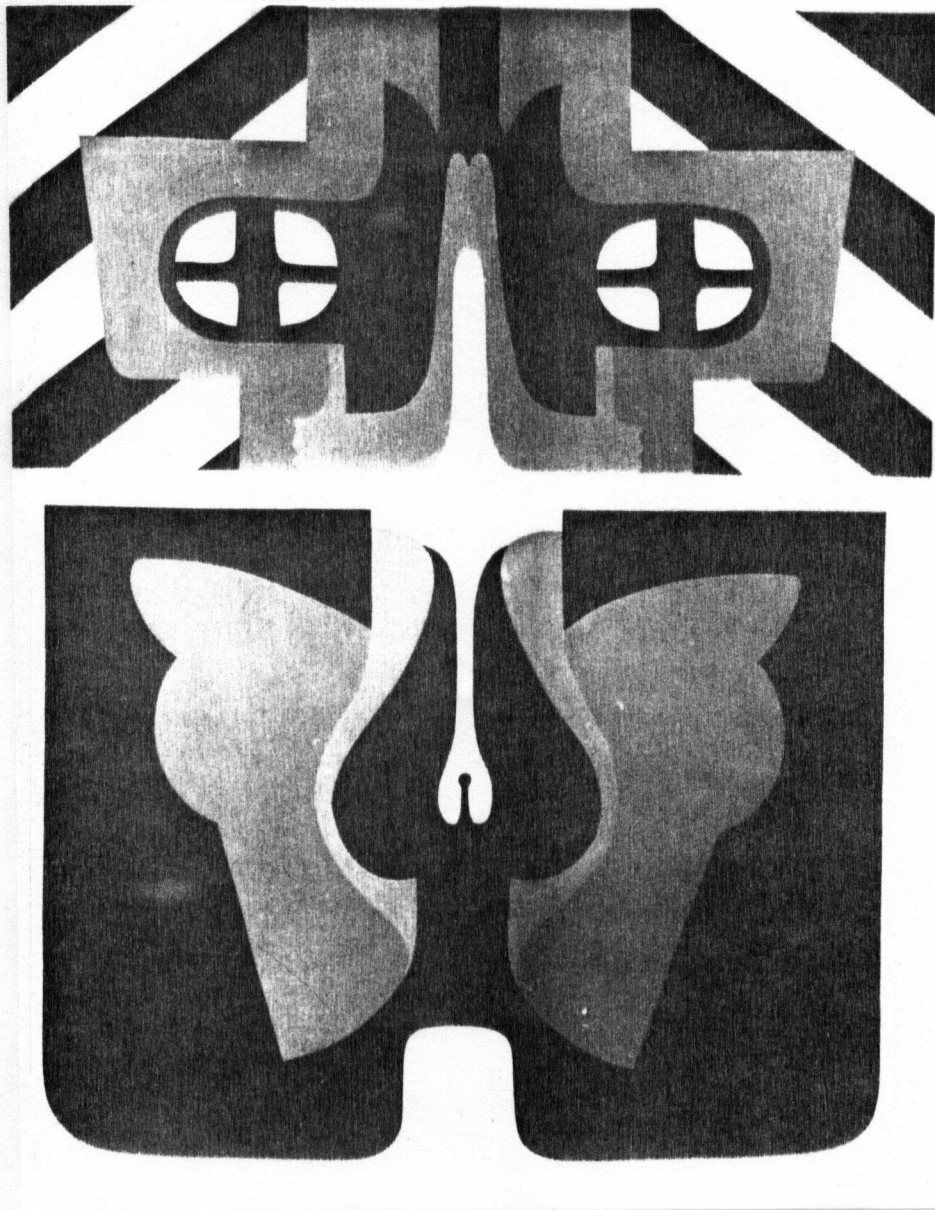
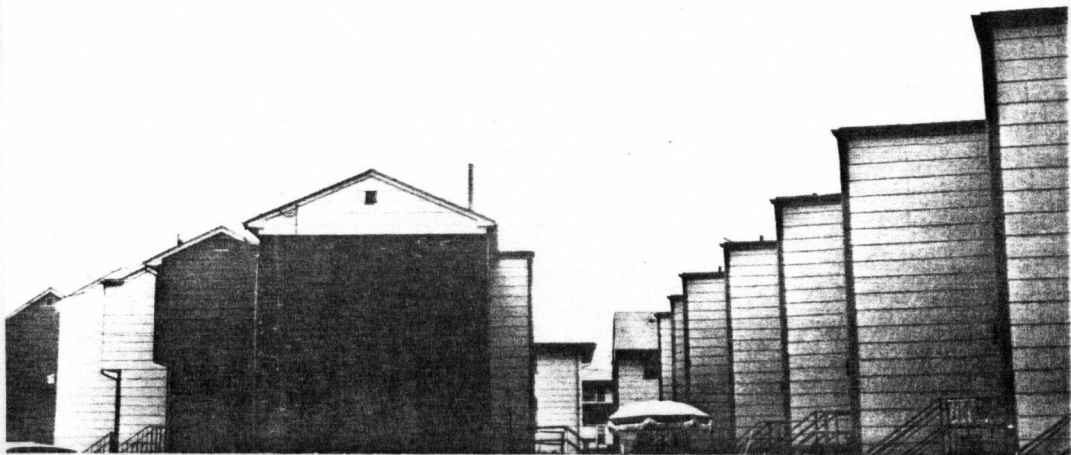
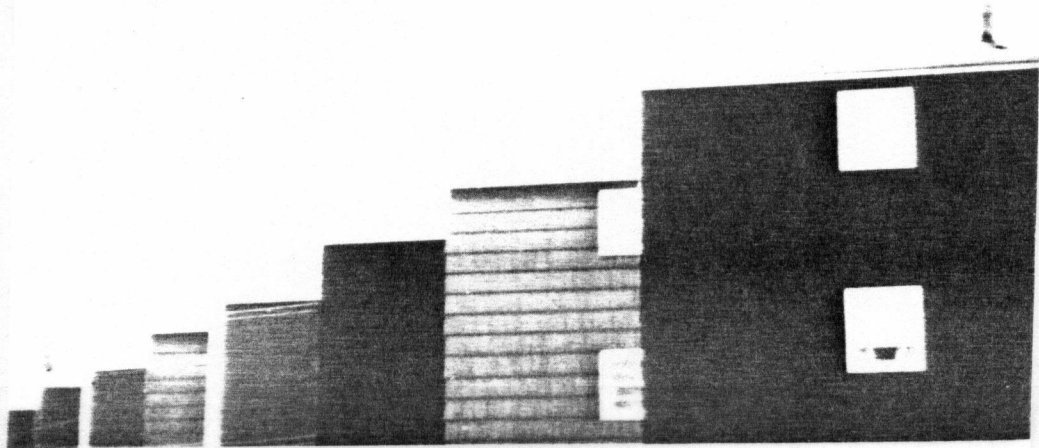


fig 4 Judy Chicago Flight 1963 Acrylic on masonite. 48" x 96"
Collection of Gene Kassebaum, Hawaii. (Source: Judy Chicago
Through the Flower (New York: Doubleday), 1975.)



figs 5,6 Dan Graham Photos of setbacks in Bayonne, N.J. 1965
(Source: Minimal Art Gregory Battcock, ed. (New York: Doubleday), 1968.)

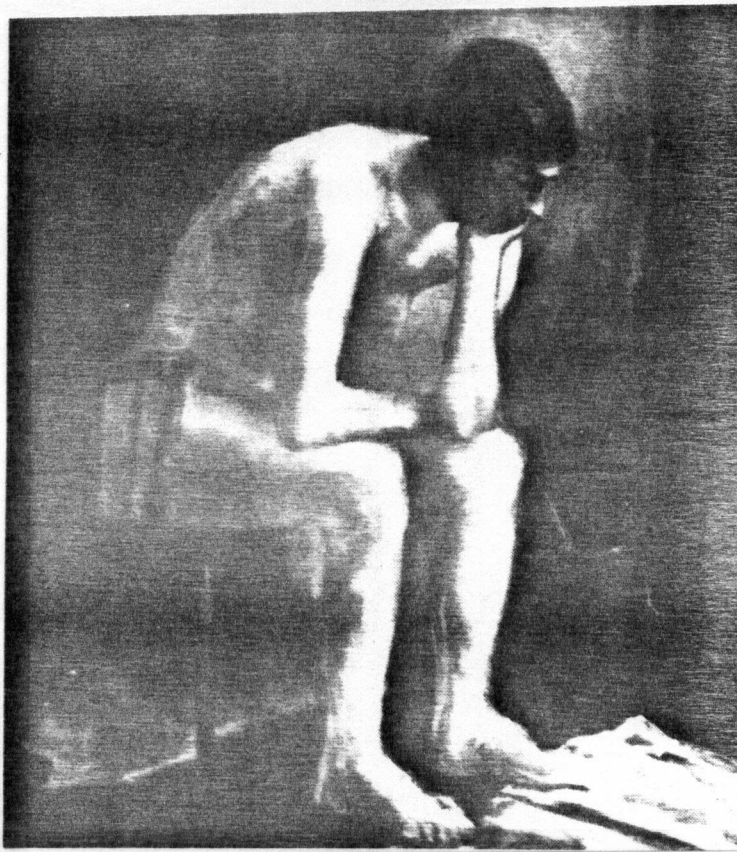


fig 7 Donald Judd Bosa A.M. 1952 Oil on canvas
(Source: Barbara Haskell Donald Judd (New York:
Whitney Museum), 1988.)

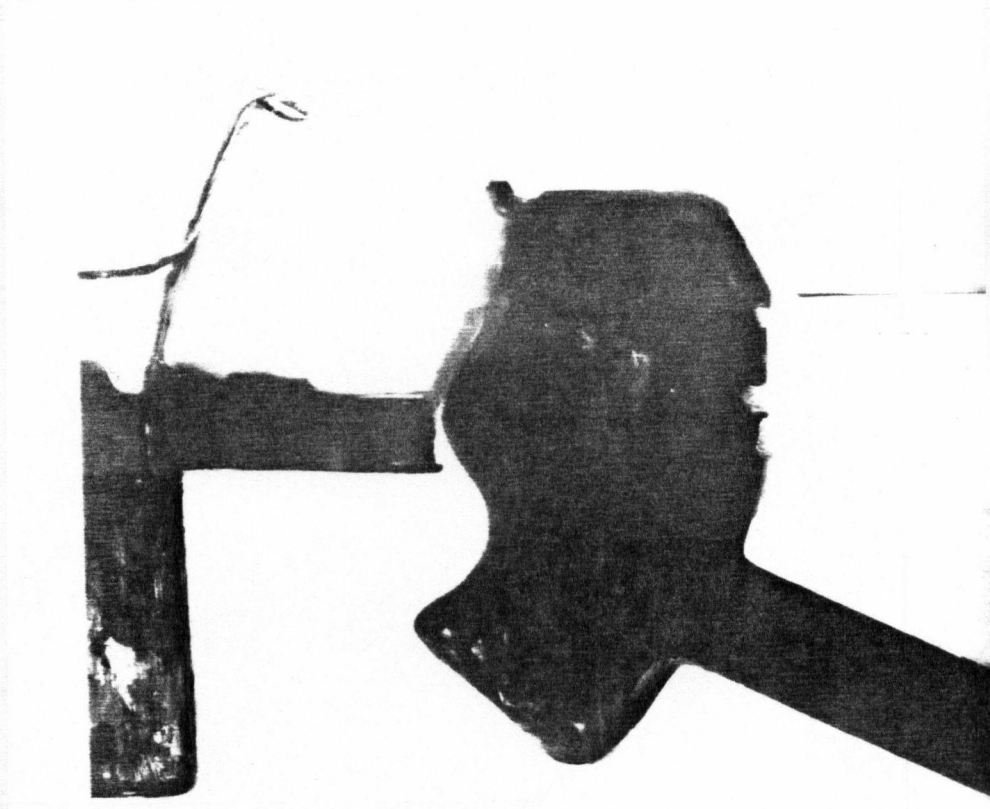


fig 8 Donald Judd (untitled) 1955 Oil on canvas. 30" x 37" Collection of the artist. (Source: Barbara Haskell Donald Judd (New York: Whitney Museum), 1988.)

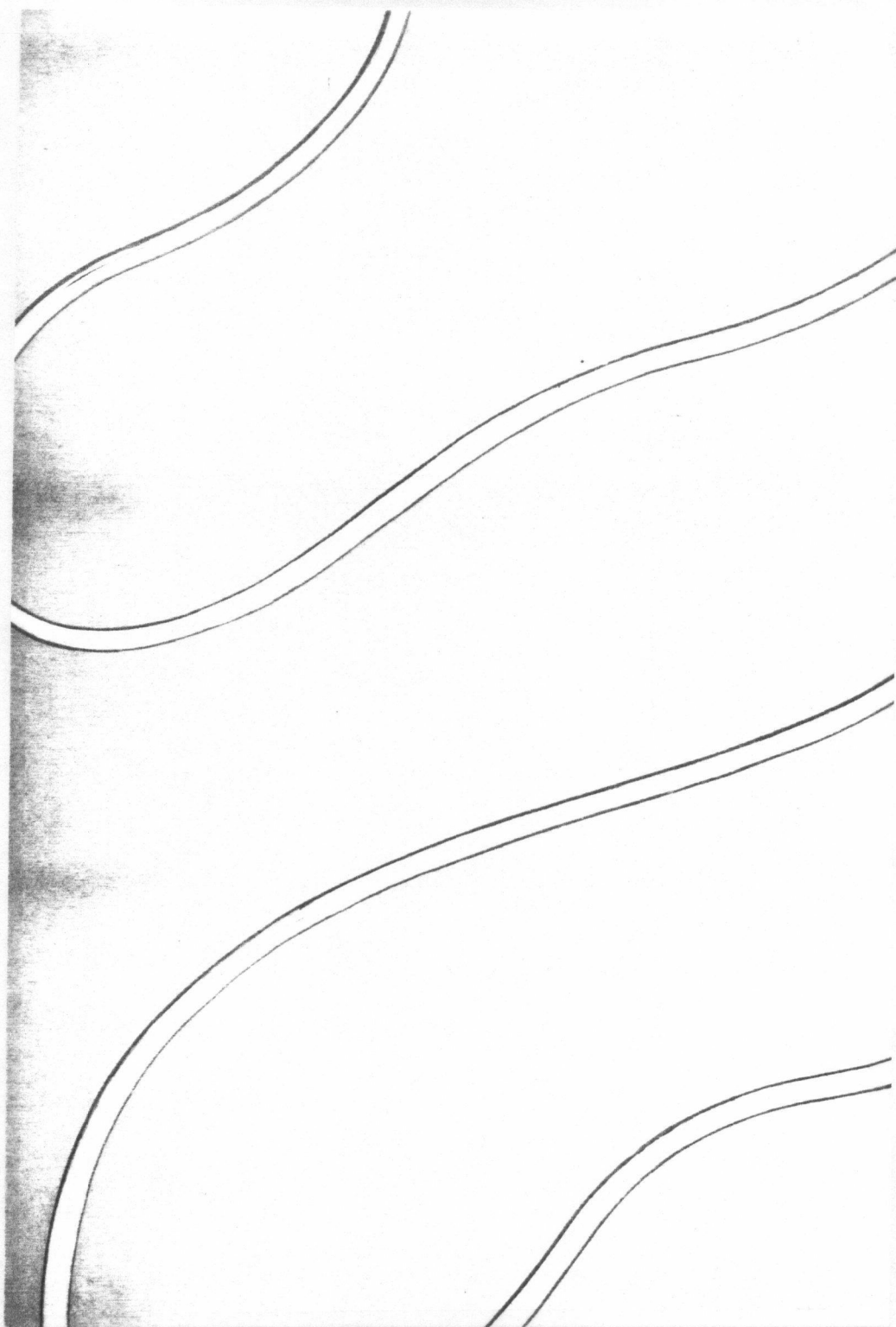


fig 9 Donald Judd (untitled) 1960 Oil on canvas. 70" x 48" Collection of National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. (Source: Barbara Haskell Donald Judd (New York: Whitney Museum), 1988.)

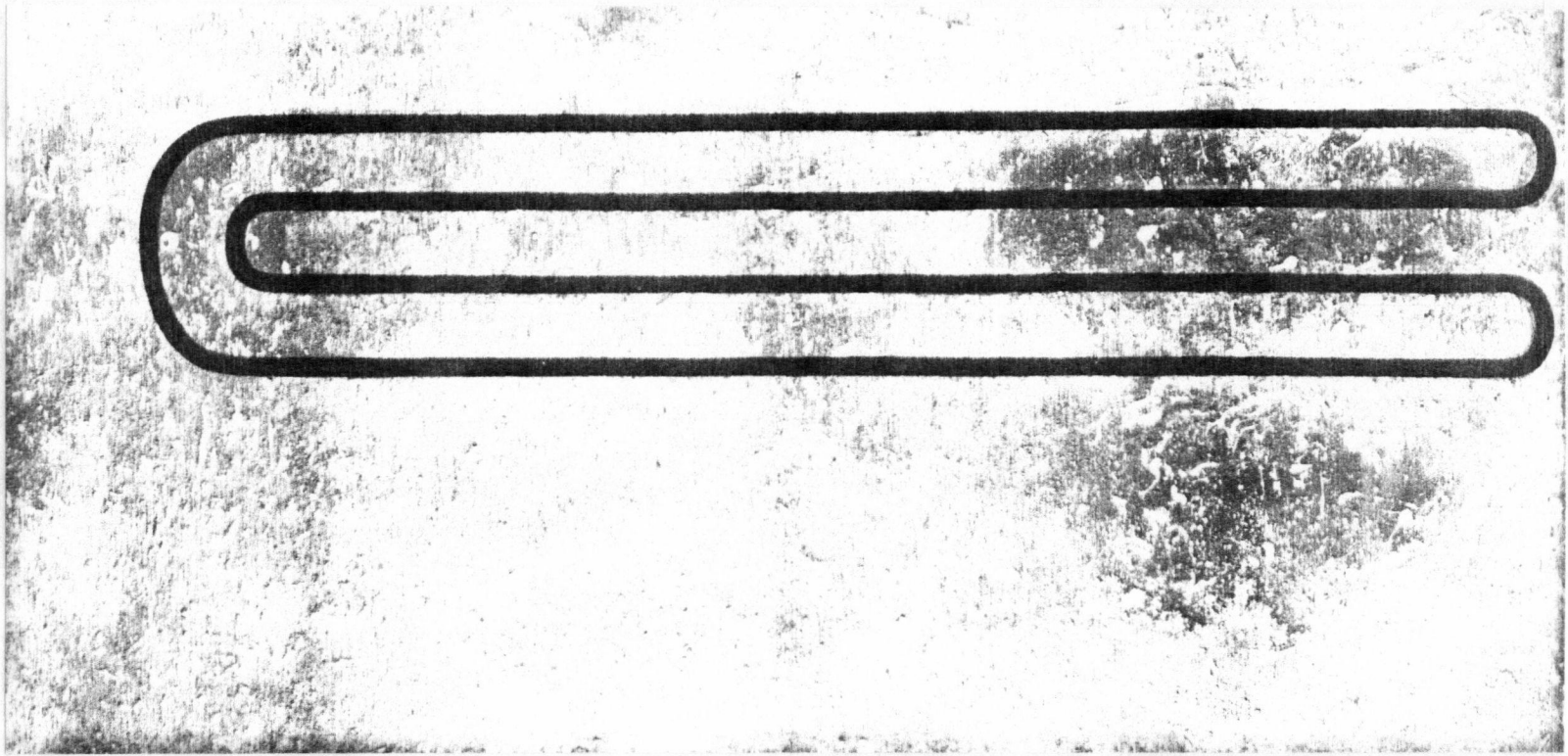


fig 10 Donald Judd (untitled) 1961 Liquitex and sand on masonite, 48" x 96" Collection of Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York. (Source: Barbara Haskell Donald Judd (New York: Whitney Museum), 1988.)

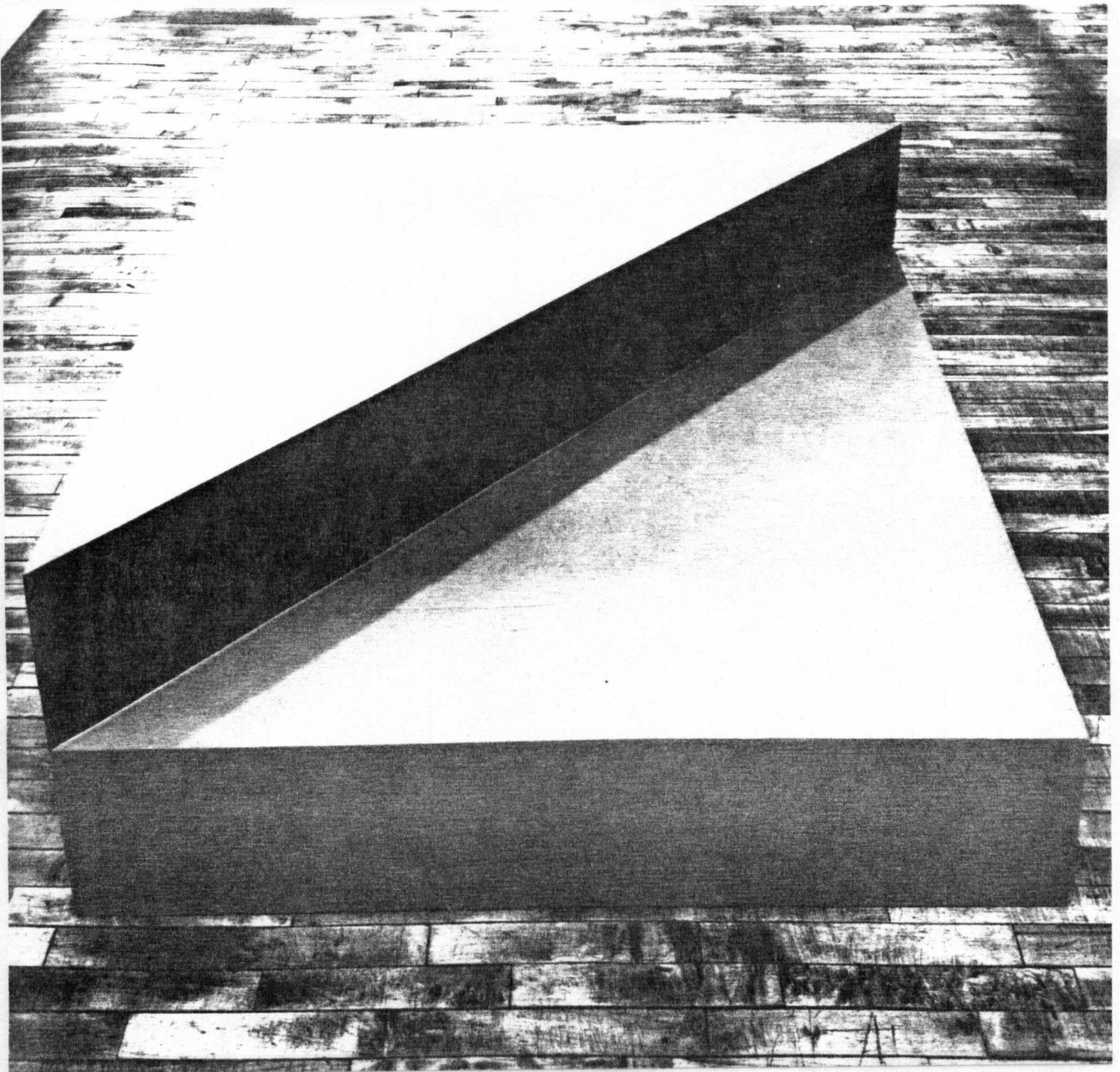


fig 11 Donald Judd (untitled) 1963 Painted plywood and latex.
(Source: das Kunstwerk vol.xviii nos.10-12.)