

THE TURNING OF THE SCREW:
THE SIXTH GUGGENHEIM INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION,
DANIEL BUREN, AND THE NEW CULTURAL CONSERVATISM

By

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ABSTRACT

In this study I have sought to explore the theoretical foundations of the French artist Daniel Buren's work and its subsequent resonance in a context of emergent cultural conservatism. The study also traces the increasingly tenuous position of the avant-garde, the survival of which is contingent on the presence of certain liberal democratic institutions. For me these concerns led to a systematic investigation of the censorship of Buren's installation at the 1971 Guggenheim International Exhibition. This was the last in a series of exhibitions that was to promote international goodwill by bringing together the best of recently produced works by contemporary avant-garde artists from around the world, and awarding prizes to those considered outstanding. But the real ideological significance of this show was apparent in the aggressive attempt by the administrators of the Guggenheim to promote American cultural superiority.

Buren was invited to contribute a piece to the show in the belief that his work fit into the formalist mode around which the exhibition was organized. Yet the day before the show opened Museum officials suddenly decided to remove his work from the exhibition. The official explanation provided by the authorities of the Guggenheim cited the size and placement of Buren's work as being in direct conflict with the work of other artists in the exhibition. However, this

explanation was clearly specious given that the Guggenheim officials knew months in advance exactly what this work would look like, and its intended place of installation. Moreover, Museum officials used the complaints of four participating artists as justification for their actions. Meanwhile, fifteen other artists in the show objected to the Museum's use of censorship. The issue of the Guggenheim Museum's sudden decision to withdraw Buren's installation from the Sixth Guggenheim International is thus more complex than the official explanation would indicate.

My thesis contends that the abrupt removal of Daniel Buren's work is traceable to efforts by Guggenheim officials to protect other works in the exhibition, and the International series as a whole, from floating into the avant-gardist-traditionalist polemic that had again flared up in the New York art world. Chapters One and Two examine the organization of the 1971 Guggenheim International and the rationale behind that organization. Chapter Three looks at the threefold controversy surrounding the 1971 International: the conflict that arose between participating artists, the questions of censorship that were raised by the actions of Museum officials, and the overwhelmingly hostile critical response to the exhibition. This study investigates a period of social and epistemological rupture in American art, the reverberations of which continue to be felt today.

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*Today the only works which really count
are those which are no longer works at all.*

Theodor W. Adorno

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One immunizes the contents of the collective imagination by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged evil; one thus protects it against the risk of a generalized subversion. This *liberal* treatment would not have been possible only a hundred years ago. Then, the bourgeois Good did not compromise with anything, it was quite stiff. It has become much more supple since: the bourgeoisie no longer hesitates to acknowledge some localized subversions: the avant-garde, the irrational in childhood, etc.

--- Roland Barthes (1957)

The avant-garde in most western countries is now sought out and supported as part of official culture, and this is not only because all new ideas eventually become old and acceptable ones but because the myth itself has become part of our creed. The effects have been felt right down the line: the museums who put on modern exhibitions, the business firms who invest in modern art...the courts who reject attempts at censorship: outside Weimar Germany none of these would have given much support to the avant-garde earlier.

--- *Times Literary Supplement* (1964)

The important consideration is that, as an ideology, liberalism had become dominant over these past decades.... What the counter-culture embodies is an extension of the tendencies initiated sixty years ago by political liberalism and modernist culture, and represents, in effect, a split in the camp of modernism. For it now seeks to take the preachments of personal freedom...to a point in *life-style* that the liberal culture...is not prepared to go. Yet liberalism finds itself uneasy to say why. It approves a basic permissiveness, but cannot with any certainty define the bounds. And this is its dilemma. In culture, as well as politics, liberalism is now up against the wall.

--- Daniel Bell (1970)

In early October of 1970 Thomas Messer, the Director of the Guggenheim Museum in New York City, sent a letter to twenty-four artists from various parts of the globe. "I am writing to tell you," he said,

that we would like to extend a cordial invitation to you to participate in the SIXTH GUGGENHEIM INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION which is scheduled to open in this city February, 1971. As you know the Guggenheim Internationals are periodic reviews of the current state of art.... My colleagues, Edward Fry and Diane Waldman, both Associate Curators of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, have travelled through many parts of the world to search for artists and works that would be in harmony with our aims. On the basis of their findings we are now in a position to proceed with specific choices. I hope, therefore that we may have your acceptance in principle at your earliest convenience. I look forward to seeing you at the opening if not before.¹

Twenty-one artists agreed to participate -- among them, the French artist Daniel Buren. But Messer would not have the opportunity to meet Buren at the opening.²

No one, least of all Messer, could have anticipated that this cordial formality would be so easily undone by the appearance of two pieces of striped fabric. It was Buren who would become the unwitting victim of the Museum's political agenda. Despite its benign appearance, Buren's work became a pawn of the exhibition's anachronistic continuation of an ideology of avant-gardism that flourished in America in the 1950s and into the 1960s.³

Emerging in the United States during the early years of the Cold War, this basically liberal view of the avant-garde and its (high) modernist defenders was controversial during its ascendancy. Politically conservative traditionalists in the 1940s and early 1950s argued that the avant-garde's rejection of traditional forms in art proved that it surreptitiously sought to promote chaos and ultimately the downfall of American society in the face of communism.⁴ The identification of the avant-garde as subversive was exacerbated by the fact that, to the American public, the very newness of the avant-garde in the United States made it seem conspicuously foreign.⁵

However, following the coming to maturity of the highly practical improvements of liberal reform introduced by the New Deal and the postwar boom of Keynesian capitalism, by the late 1950s the United States had become the world industrial paradigm. America's extraordinary success as an industrial nation was followed by an increased expression of generous feelings, especially towards the nation's poor and underprivileged. Through the mediation of President Eisenhower, even right-wing Republicans accepted the creation of a social welfare system. The era came to be identified as the age of the end of ideology. It was maintained that there was no longer any need for ideological thinking since those small reforms still necessary could best be organized by a scientifically trained elite of policy professionals.⁶ This mood was underscored by American

sociologist Daniel Bell in *The End of Ideology* (1960). Bell wrote that an intellectual consensus among American liberals in the late 1950s underpinned a political consensus:

In the West, therefore, there is today a rough consensus among intellectuals on political issues: the acceptance of a Welfare State; the desirability of a decentralized power; a system of mixed economy and of political pluralism. In that sense, too, the ideological age has ended.⁷

Infused with liberal ideology, this stellar prosperity was readily translated into the popular belief that America was capable of absorbing any cultural tendency regardless of how subversive it may have previously been perceived to be.⁸ The liberal milieu made possible the deposing of the dominant traditionalist aesthetic. As Jane De Hart Mathews observes in her study "Art and Politics in Cold War America" (1976), in this predominantly liberal context the traditionalists found that they

had been outmaneuvered by more sophisticated individuals eager to capitalize on the fact that avant-garde art and culture exist only in a society that is liberal-democratic (politically) and bourgeois-capitalist (socioeconomically).... So rapid and complete was this identification that by the mid-sixties modern art itself had somehow become inextricably linked with the United States as if only in America could the avant-garde "spirit" truly flourish.⁹

Whatever overt ideological positions the avant-garde might have initially been identified with in its European forms were substituted with an aestheticism which was, in fact, an implementation of the market principles of

capitalist economy.¹⁰ These factors did much to popularize the notion among American elites and the American middle class that avant-garde art was in principle indistinguishable from any other range of commodities in capitalist economy and therefore non-threatening.¹¹

This union between liberalism and avant-gardism in America, as sanctioned by the laws of entrepreneurial capitalism, was also manifest in Richard Nixon's bid for the presidency in 1968. Nixon campaigned for the White House as a liberal. Arguing that he was a "pragmatic centrist," he pledged that, if elected, he would immediately end the war in Vietnam, foster a "generation of peace," and

seek to encourage and develop individual artistic talent and new concepts in art, just as we do in science and technology.... [Everything that we will] do to aid the artist and his art [will] be done to enlarge, not restrict, the area of freedom which is the essence of artistic expression.¹²

With his promise of enlarging the realm of artistic freedom and his encouragement of new concepts in art, Nixon seemed to be reaffirming the liberalism that in the late 1950s and 1960s made American avant-gardism possible.

But the 1970s in the United States began with a massive wave of reaction marked by a turn to extremely conservative politics and a pervasive call for the re-emphasis of traditional values. By the 1970s, much of the optimism that had characterized the previous decade had soured. Himself a refugee from fascism, Herbert Marcuse expressed the

increased disillusionment most pointedly in his *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (1972):

The Nixon Administration has strengthened the counterrevolutionary organization of society in all directions. The forces of law and order have been made a force above the law. The normal equipment of the police in many cities resembles that of the S.S. -- the brutality of its actions is familiar.... A vast army of undercover agents is spread over the entire country and through all branches of society.¹³

In retrospect, we can see that the election of President Nixon symbolized the increasing power of the right in America.¹⁴ Soon after Nixon moved into the White House, the principles of "law and order" became the rhetorical theme of the federal Administration.¹⁵ The Administration immediately set out to subvert the hard won civil rights legislation passed in the 1960s.¹⁶ Also subverted were many of the liberties guaranteed to individuals by the American Bill of Rights.¹⁷

In early 1970, the Administration began secret B-52 bombing missions in Cambodia, falsifying official reports to make it appear that the attacks were occurring elsewhere. When the news that American involvement in Indochina was increasing beyond Vietnam into neighbouring countries was finally made public, it touched off the most widespread campus uprising in American history. Students across the United States took over universities, and organized public demonstrations and protests.¹⁸ However, by 1970 tolerance of dissent had worn out for a large segment of the American establishment, and across the country the National Guard was

called upon to quench campus demonstrations.¹⁹ In a tone that eerily presages the events of 1989, when asked about the campus uprisings following on the news of the American push into Cambodia, Ronald Reagan, the Governor of California, answered: "If it takes a blood bath, let's get it over with. No more appeasement."²⁰ Yet it was Attorney General John Mitchell who most succinctly summed up the hawkish mood that was growing in America. Speaking to a reporter in the summer of 1970 about the Administration's political agenda, Mitchell quite candidly noted that "This country is going so far right you are not even going to recognize it."²¹

In the political sphere, by the Fall of 1970 it was evident that the Nixon Administration was not only on a crusade against civil liberties, civil rights, the student movement and persons whom they deemed "political enemies," but had also placed liberalism on the hit list. For example, in September of 1970, when several Democratic Senators were up for re-election, Nixon sent Vice President Spiro Agnew on a cross-country campaign portraying liberals as radical extremists who refused to support "law and order." In a way that recalled another Republican demagogue, Joseph McCarthy, Agnew informed Americans that the "great question" before the nation was:

Will America be led by a President elected by a majority of the American people or will he be intimidated and blackmailed into following the path dictated by a disruptive radical and militant minority

-- the pampered prodigies of the radical liberals in the United States Senate?22

The turn to the right spread across the no-longer-silent American majority, leading *Los Angeles Times* columnist William Shirer to comment in the spring of 1970 that "we may be the first people to go Fascist by the democratic vote."²³ Shirer's comments were supported by the findings of psephologists Richard Scammon and Benjamin Wattenberg in *The Real Majority* (1970). Following a large demographic survey, Scammon and Wattenberg found that Americans were increasingly nervous about the breakdown of tradition brought about by successive liberal governments.²⁴

The demise of an effective liberal politic led to a resurgence of popular contempt for the avant-garde. By the early 1970s, the idea of avant-garde culture in America was again being rejected from most quarters. Nowhere was this so evident than in the events surrounding the 1971 Guggenheim International Exhibition, the focus of this analysis. Having presented the public with an ill-received swan-song for the avant-garde, the Guggenheim International series proceeded to make the ultimate statement on the relationship between contemporary America and avant-garde culture: it rolled over and died to accomodate the new conservatism.

My study will begin with a thorough examination of the Sixth Guggenheim International, tracing its connections to the International series as a whole and reconstructing its ideological framework. From there I will consider the shift

of the Museum's relationship to the broader cultural milieu in New York and in the United States as a whole, examining why Museum officials organized the International the way they did.

Chapter Three examines the threefold controversy surrounding the 1971 International: the conflict that arose between participating artists, the questions of censorship that were raised by the actions of Museum officials, and the overwhelming hostility of critical response to the exhibition.

The time of the 1971 Guggenheim International was a strange one in American art -- a period of social and epistemological rupture, the reverberations of which continue to be felt today.

CHAPTER I

"A Tradition in the Artworld"

The Guggenheim Internationals are attempts to gather the best recently produced works of art from available sources.

Thomas M. Messer 25

Focusing on the latest avant-garde trends in art, the Guggenheim International series was the oldest of its kind in New York City. From the series' inception in 1956, the aim of these exhibitions had been to find "one painting or sculpture of greatness...that could be accepted and acclaimed by knowledgeable critics throughout the world."²⁶ The contemporary artist who was deemed to have produced the best avant-garde work was to be awarded \$10,000 -- the largest prize offered to an artist by any of the international art series operating at the time.²⁷ According to the administrators of the Guggenheim, the first prize of this series of exhibitions would provide "an important manifestation of international goodwill," and become as prestigious and coveted as the Nobel Prize.²⁸

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, the Museum advanced claims that the Internationals were non-partisan by organizing an elaborate "objectively functioning machinery" that would select the works for these exhibitions.²⁹ This selection "machine" was controlled by a system of national section quotas which ensured the representation of a wide array of nations by a comparable number of artists. National

Section Juries, whose role it was to submit five artworks from their particular countries to each Guggenheim International, were set up in over twenty countries. From these artworks an elected international jury of reputable critics selected the prize-winning work.³⁰

The establishment of this International Award in the United States was looked on with favor by the American government. As a New York-based series of avant-garde exhibitions which claimed to function in a politically neutral way, the liberal ideology of the Internationals paralleled the ideology which the Eisenhower Administration had come to embrace in its later years.³¹ The parallel between the cultural ideology of the Guggenheim Museum and that of the Eisenhower Administration's internationalism was highlighted when, in early 1956, the President instituted the presentation of the International Awards at the White House on an on-going basis (figs.1-2).³² With its huge award, the International series advanced the claims that the United States was a devoted patron of high culture, and in particular of avant-garde art. As such, this was a patronage which was intended to promulgate the idea that the United States was the home of liberal democracy and the only truly free social system.³³

With support from the United States government and from various international organizations such as the International Council of Museums, the International Association of Art Critics, and the International

Association of Plastic Arts, the Guggenheim International exhibitions received a great deal of exposure. By 1961, a mere five years after its commencement, the event was being promoted by the Museum as "a tradition in the art world."³⁴

Over the years the format of these exhibitions changed somewhat. The first prize was converted into a purchase prize and the international juries were abolished, for example. But through to the final International in 1971, what was purportedly being sought was still the best contemporary avant-garde art.³⁵

This concept of the best of avant-garde art echoed a way of talking about art which was popular in American art criticism following the Second World War. The officials of the Guggenheim were particularly influenced by the writings of the American critic Clement Greenberg, who articulated a way of looking at art which insisted that the same evaluative criteria could be applied to art regardless of where it was from.³⁶ The significant influence which this type of supra-contextual art criticism had on the Museum was made emphatic by Director Thomas Messer in the catalogue for the Fifth Guggenheim International in 1967:

An international style has become a firmly established notion in our time. This means the mere elimination of national characteristics and their displacement by a world-wide identity of creative aims.³⁷

In the above passage, Messer resonates the Greenbergian maxim that not only national characteristics, but also socio-economic context can be dispensed with when evaluating

a work of art. Such considerations, which are vital to any legitimately dialectical assessment of the work of art, are deemed superfluous and must, of aesthetic necessity, be "transcended."³⁸ This phenomena, deriving its validation from the belief that enjoyment is the sovereign evaluative criteria, is socially and nationally non-specific.³⁹ This purported non-specificity became the shibboleth for all would-be entrants in the Guggenheim Internationals.

By the time of the 1971 International participants were selected exclusively by the Museum Director and his two associate curators. Their collective judgement completely superseded that of the original "selection machine." This was not entirely new to the International either; both the Fourth (1964) and Fifth (1967) Internationals had also been handpicked by Guggenheim officials.

What was new to the 1971 International however was that for the first time the exhibition was not conceived of as a diverse, international survey. Whereas artists from twenty different countries were included in the International of 1967, only eight nations were represented in the 1971 International. Furthermore, of the eight nations represented by the twenty-one artists in this show, seven were represented through works by only one or two artists each, while the eighth, the United States, was represented by no less than thirteen artists. In fact, the large bias towards American artists at this exhibition was greater than this breakdown by nationality suggests. Some of the artists

purportedly representing foreign countries, such as the Japanese On Kawara, the British Richard Long, the Dutch Jan Dibbets and the German Hanne Darboven, either lived in New York at the time or were exclusively represented by New York dealers.⁴⁰ Almost obligatorily, the Museum did bring in a few artists from outside: Mario Merz (Italy), Jiro Takamatsu (Japan), Victor Burgin (England), and Daniel Buren (France).

The show's organizers sought to justify the domination of this International by American artists. They argued that New York avant-garde artists were the world leaders and that the ideas and the premises which underlined their work were instrumental in the production of works by avant-garde artists across the globe in the later 1960s.⁴¹ As Messer wrote in the catalogue to the 1971 International:

The preponderance of Americans in the selection obviously carries with it assumptions about the primacy of U.S.-made art throughout the late 1960s -- the period covered by this Sixth Guggenheim International.⁴²

It was a convenient argument but one that directly contradicted the Greenbergian non-contextual precepts on which the exhibition was fundamentally based. The officials of the Guggenheim supported their assertions about "the strength of the United States in the present art balance" by citing what they claimed was a "concentration of creativity in New York."⁴³ In particular, the Museum put forward the argument that the new developments in avant-garde art which had emerged in the late 1960s -- e.g. Land Art, Conceptual

Art, Process Art -- had their direct roots in Minimalism, ostensibly a New York based avant-garde movement.⁴⁴

Artists selected to participate in the 1971 International were requested to produce a site-specific work which used the unique space of the Guggenheim Museum, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, as a point of departure, a request with which most complied.⁴⁵ Even artists who were working with Land Art or Conceptual Art, trends which often claimed to find the idea of the museum antithetical to their aims, attempted to adapt their approach specifically to the site of the Museum.⁴⁶

The Guggenheim sent out press releases to newspapers around the globe to publicize the event. These made explicit the essential claim of the Sixth International: that the avant-garde trends in art of the previous few years forwarded many of the issues which the New York Minimalist artists had addressed:

The overwhelming artistic development of the last five years which the exhibition serves to establish is the displacement of the finite object in favor of the idea. The current trends toward earth and process art are rooted in the premises established in the middle 1960s by the minimalist sculptors Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Robert Morris and Sol LeWitt.⁴⁷

In all of the publicity promoting the International, the Guggenheim emphasized the extraordinary character of this exhibition -- the success of which, as we will see, became crucial to the Museum in 1971. Anticipating the positive critical reception which previous Internationals

had received, the Guggenheim invited art critics from across the United States to preview the show and meet the artists.⁴⁸ The list of guests expected at the opening of this gala affair included the usual V.I.P. list of Guggenheim Trustees, Associates, Members, American art critics, dealers and other art patrons.⁴⁹ The prestigious international aspect of this exhibition also warranted the invitation of a large array of foreign diplomats and United Nations delegates. Many United States government officials, a large cross-section of American Senators, Members of Congress, and of the Legislative Assembly, were invited to the opening as well.⁵⁰ The United States government was further represented by the United States Information Service (USIS), who were there to make a film about the exhibition for foreign distribution.⁵¹

The Guggenheim had made arrangements for the Sixth International exhibition to travel to modern art museums in the capitals of various Latin American countries. For this venture, they had enlisted the help of the USIS, probably in the hope that the federal agency would help offset travelling expenses. The show was slated to travel to Colombia, Uruguay, and Argentina, countries which, as Henry Kissinger noted retrospectively, were known to be "plagued" by radical movements in the early 1970s.⁵²

It would seem that the officials of the Guggenheim had performed their task admirably in organizing the 1971 International. All those involved had very specific reasons

for wanting this exhibition to woo all patriotic, culturally-sophisticated citizens of the United States -- especially those who had access to the corridors of political power. Yet the efforts of the organizers of the International were met with virtually unanimous condemnation. An article in the *New York Times* summarized the critical response to this show as "the biggest public thumbdown that staffers can remember."⁵³ The first sign that the show's organizers had miscued occurred the day before the show was scheduled to open. Museum officials removed the work of the French artist Daniel Buren from the International without the artist's prior consent. On the surface this appeared to be a crisis of an internal nature. However, this singular action on the part of the Museum's officials was symptomatic of much deeper problems. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, essential to understanding these problems is the fact that staging an exhibition consistent with the interests of the Nixon Administration was crucial to the Guggenheim officials. Ironically enough, it had become apparent that the well-being of the vested interests of the Museum proceeded directly from that Administration.

CHAPTER II

The Rationale of the Sixth Guggenheim International

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."

Edward Said 54

The 1971 Guggenheim International was organized precisely at the moment when the most severe budget crisis ever to hit the Museum coincided with a vastly increased amount of government funding being allocated to the arts. Like various other major New York museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Guggenheim Museum entered into the 1970s in what one senior arts administrator called "the most severe financial embarrassment that museums have ever suffered."⁵⁵ Increasing operating costs, coupled with the diminishing funds of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation endowment, were compromising the standards of the Museum's exhibitions. There was also fear that the reputation that the Guggenheim had established in the preceding thirty years as a venue for "exhibitions by major figures of the modern movement" was in jeopardy.⁵⁶

In response to the financial crisis, the administrators of the Guggenheim began a series of internal discussions to deal with the problem in detail and attempt to arrive at an

acceptable solution. It was clear that the funding provided by the endowment was insufficient to meet the needs of the Museum's original objectives. Equally apparent was that the institution required additional operating funds. But the officials of the Museum were unsure whether they should seek financial support from the private or public sector.⁵⁷ While it is likely that they decided to adopt a policy of pursuing funding from both sectors, an important part of their fiscal program was the aggressive seeking of government aid.⁵⁸

In the early 1970s, government funding of museums primarily took the form of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). During the 1960s various prominent politicians had vigourously lobbied first the Kennedy Administration and then the Johnson Administration to draft a federal arts program. Raising the spectre of the Cold War, they argued that a comprehensive national arts program was absolutely necessary to support the frontlines of the cultural Cold War against the Communists. For instance, New York Senator Jacob Javits stated in Congress in June of 1963 that

[A comprehensive national arts program] ...will enable us -- far better than we do today -- to meet the challenge of the Communist's cultural ideas in the world, on which they are spending great amounts of money for their propagation and which represent the key aspects of their activities, which are designed to "bury" the Free World.⁵⁹

This type of Cold War rhetoric was highly effective, and the NEA was signed into law by the Johnson Administration in

1964. In his State-of-the-Union message of that year, Johnson justified his Administration's decision to found the federal arts program by stressing the importance of promoting America as a world cultural power. According to Johnson, the NEA's mandate was "to assist actively in American cultural development."⁶⁰

Beginning in 1969, the Nixon Administration dramatically increased funding allotted to the NEA. In the Administration's first term, funding for this agency skyrocketed by over nine-hundred percent.⁶¹ Many American political analysts commented on the NEA increase, particularly since almost every other social program was suffering allocation cutbacks at this time.⁶² Following a speech by the President in which he requested that Congress double the money earmarked for arts funding, in early 1970 the *Wall Street Journal* published an editorial by John O'Connor, in which he commented on the ambiguous nature of Nixon's commitment. "Somewhat ironically," wrote O'Connor,

President Nixon, who initially reaped little popularity among most arts professionals, has sent to Congress one of the strongest statements on the role of the arts ever to come out of the White House.⁶³

Nixon, like the presidents during the twenty years preceding him, framed his arguments about cultural policy in terms of universality. In this sense, his public statements on art were often clothed in a rhetoric similar to that of previous Administrations.⁶⁴ Notions about the value of artistic "non-suppression" and "non-repression" formed a

backdrop for the justification of his Administration's sudden interest in the arts. Nixon's cultural policy reiterated American Cold War rhetoric in its promotion of freedom as both symbol and commodity.⁶⁵ In a text delivered to the Associated Councils of the Arts in 1971, Nixon stated:

We could be the richest nation in the world, the most powerful nation in the world, the freest nation in the world -- but only if the arts are alive and flourishing can we experience the true meaning of freedom.... So, in urging greater support for the arts, I do it not only because the arts need help. I do it because the nation needs what the arts -- and only the arts -- can give.⁶⁶

The benefits which the ideology of "freedom" in the arts could reap for the United States were spelled out by Nixon in a special message to Congress (December, 1969). Stating that "few investments we could make would give us so great a return," Nixon encapsulated the reasons his Administration felt it important to fund the arts in a way that was reminiscent of the cultural policies of the previous several decades:

America has moved to the forefront as a place of creative expression. The excellence of the American product in the arts has won world-wide recognition. The arts have the rare capacity to help heal divisions among our people and to vault some of the barriers that divide the world.⁶⁷

Clearly, the Nixon Administration propagated the belief that art and creative expression held a strong place within national concerns.

The growing acceptance of liberalism at a federal level meant that the Guggenheim, an institution devoted to modern art from its inception, played an ever-increasing role in the promotion of American cultural supremacy and the centrality of the New York avant-garde. The most visible way in which the Museum performed this role was through the Guggenheim Internationals. As the Museum's most prestigious series, the importance of these exhibition in garnering federal attention could hardly be overstated.⁶⁸

Contrary to official claims made by the Museum, the workings of these International exhibitions were anything but above ideology. From the time that this series was launched, the International Broadcasting Division of the United States Information Agency (USIA) was recording interviews with artists and writing feature stories in many different languages for foreign radio broadcasts, thus ensuring that the United States' interest in modern culture was heard of abroad.⁶⁹

Following the Third Guggenheim International in 1961, the particulars of the "objective selection machinery" meant to legitimize this event as non-partisan began to be readjusted.⁷⁰ Thomas Messer, who had since become the Museum Director, was held responsible for the final selection of these exhibitions. From the moment Messer took control of the Internationals, the message of the exhibitions became more aggressive. The diminished importance which the Guggenheim placed on concealing the ideological make-up of

the International exhibitions had its parallels in the increased confidence of the cultural policies of the Kennedy Administration.⁷¹

Concurrent with governmental utilization of high culture as a tool for international propaganda was the role of the International series in the Cold War arsenal. In reviewing the Fourth Guggenheim International in January 1964, *New York Times* art correspondent Grace Glueck noted the tactfulness of the Museum in awarding one of its large prizes to the Cuban painter Wifredo Lam for his "Tropic of Capricorn."⁷²

The aggressiveness of the Guggenheim's internationalism was particularly evident in the ideological construction of the Fifth Guggenheim International in 1967. This show, which focused exclusively on sculpture, was billed as presenting the best works by artists of three generations. One section of the show was comprised of artists born before 1910, and included sculptures by Pablo Picasso, Henry Moore, David Smith, Jacques Lipchitz, and others. A second section was made up of artists born between 1910 and 1925, such as Cesar, Pol Bury, Anthony Caro, and Eduardo Paolozzi. The third section included artists like Jacques Tinguely, George Segal, Claes Oldenburg and Robert Morris, who were born in the period after 1925. By awarding the top award to Morris, who was then associated with the Minimalist group of artists, the 1967 International served to validate this New York-based avant-garde. In fact, not only did it legitimize

Minimalism, but by placing it in a historical context at the long end of modernist sculpture, and singling it out as "the best" art being produced at the time, it crowned the New York-based avant-garde as the epitome of high culture.⁷³

The Sixth International's lack of subtlety in promoting an American avant-garde owed much to the Guggenheim's own budget crisis. Underwriting the exhibition was a desperate attempt to curry the favour of the Nixon Administration and its arts funding agency. Supportive of this is the fact that the Guggenheim submitted its first funding request at the opening of the Sixth International in February 1971.⁷⁴

The Guggenheim's conspicuous focus on Minimalism was consistent with what were the presumed cultural aspirations of the Nixon Administration. As Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn note in their article "Don Judd" (1975), the image of itself that the United States projected on the world stage in the 1960s was

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.⁷⁵

The clean-cut industrial design and scale of the Minimalist aesthetic, as well as the type of sculptural materials which the Minimalists used to connote an aesthetic of neutrality, boldly asserted American cultural narcissism abroad. And the Minimalist artists became, in Beveridge and Burn's words, "the 'cultural engineers' of 'international art.'" With the

image of neutrality -- selling art, not ideology."⁷⁶ The parallels between the Minimalist aesthetic and America's international image meant that Minimal art did not need the kind of packaging that 1950's American art required to promote the ideology of freedom, since that message was part of its formal requisites:

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.⁷⁷

The Museum tried to connect the participating artists in this International with the American Minimalist avant-garde in two ways. First, by requesting that the artists invited to participate produce a site-specific work which used the context of display as a point of departure, the Museum linked the artworks in the International with a concept that was closely identified with Minimalism. As Beveridge and Burn point out, the Minimalists' use of site-specificity replicated in various ways "the American way of doing things" by casting the artist as a "cultural engineer," the creative persona as American pragmatist:

This has even been institutionalized by galleries and museums, bringing artists to make work "on the spot." The impact of this is immeasurable, as a way of showing other artists the American way of doing things, of making art. This is the extent to which production itself during the sixties came to embrace and internalize the "internationalist" ideology.⁷⁸

Getting artists to produce site specific works effectively linked the participating artists with Minimalism. In addition, site-specificity provided a means by which the Museum could institutionalize some of the new avant-garde trends which Messer ironically called "creative evidence no longer presentable in a museum."⁷⁹ By asking Land artists and Conceptual artists to produce an artwork that was site-specific, the organizers of the International could effectively circumscribe these new art forms within the same object-oriented lexicon of the New York avant-garde.⁸⁰

The second way in which the 1971 International affiliated the new works with Minimalism was by identifying them with the same formal concerns as Minimalism. In the catalogue for the International, Diane Waldman argued that the "so-called Minimalists: Andre, Judd, Flavin, Morris and LeWitt," had "provided the major impetus for subsequent developments in Europe and the United States"⁸¹:

In de-emphasizing the importance of the end-state, the Minimalists predicted several subsequent developments: with Robert Morris, the focus on process/materials has been carried on by a group of younger artists who, however surreptitiously, have chosen to retain the object or some semblance of it; with Sol LeWitt, whose early involvement with ideation has been extended by a younger group of Conceptual artists; and with Carl Andre, whose emphasis on sculpture as place has provided some of the impetus to earthworks.⁸²

For the Guggenheim Museum, then, the aesthetic of Minimalism provided a convenient pulpit from which to preach American culture. By articulating the new avant-garde trends as having been aesthetically derived from American images,

the Sixth International reproduced the logic of these new trends as being fundamentally American.

Especially important for the Guggenheim would have been the avant-garde working in France. Prior to the New York artworld's ascendancy in the post-war era, Paris had commonly been known as the cultural capital of the world. In the late 1960s, the French artist Daniel Buren was producing site-specific work which on the surface looked like what the Minimalists were doing. Consequently, Guggenheim officials likely regarded inclusion of his work in the show as most desirable since it allowed a basis from which to argue that the most current French work was in line with American avant-garde aesthetics. This would thereby provide proof for claims such as those made by Nixon that "America has moved to the forefront as the place of creative expression," and thus reaffirm the cultural supremacy of the United States over France in the postwar period.⁸³

The exhibition provided a showcase whereby a few select countries could assert their cultural superiority by demonstrating the facility of their artists to conform to American-based standards of aesthetic excellence. The economic and ideological tendencies of those nations chosen suggests that aesthetic excellence may not have been the only criterion used. Those nations chosen would be encouraged to maintain and advance the cause of American cultural supremacy and their attendant political and economic interests.⁸⁴

The centrality of New York avant-gardism prominent throughout the late 1950s and 1960s was beginning to crumble by the early 1970s. Even in New York itself, people were beginning to acknowledge that the city's cultural hegemony showed signs of decline.⁸⁵ The focus of the art scene was increasingly turning to more international trends such as Conceptual Art, Land Art, Process Art, and others. The international character of these new trends, many of which seemed to de-aestheticize the art object, was conveyed in various surveys of the new art assembled in Europe during the late 1960s. Although these international avant-garde shows included American artists, for the first time in over a decade they were neither the majority nor the most dominant, but equal with other groups who shared a similar agenda.⁸⁶ New York's cultural institutions were late to acknowledge this phenomenon.

By 1970 however large avant-garde exhibitions in which American artists did not figure prominently began to be held in New York. These included the Museum of Modern Art's "Information" show, the New York Cultural Center's "Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects" show, and the Jewish Museum's "Software" show.⁸⁷ In the catalogue for the "Information" show, curator Kynaston McShine explained that the new art had transcended New York. "For both artists and their public," wrote McShine, "it is a stimulating and open situation, and certainly less parochial than even five years ago."⁸⁸ McShine and various other players in the New York

artworld were not averse to the decentralization of avant-garde art production. The aesthetic agenda of these critics and curators was characterized by a thirst for the new, regardless of where it was from. In a manner that recalls Harold Rosenberg's analysis of the avant-garde as a "tradition of the new," these critics understood the avant-garde simply as "what comes later." According to this constituency of the New York intelligentsia, the rejection of the most recent avant-garde art, which itself would be rapidly consigned to the detritus of the old, was a reflex of the modern tradition.⁸⁹ The avant-garde was not theorized as a threat to the interests of the ruling class. Quite the opposite, the insatiable search for the new was seen as part of this social formation's perpetual effort to seek the attention and patronage of the bourgeoisie.⁹⁰

McShine's comments sharply contrast those issued by the Guggenheim Museum in the promotion and construction of the Sixth International. To reiterate, the Guggenheim's tactic was to dispense with the claims to internationalism which McShine was only just arriving at, and take up an overtly New York-oriented exhibition policy.

Apart from the positions of people like McShine and the officials of the Guggenheim, in 1971 there was another type of response to the new avant-garde trends by New York cultural critics. This reaction was characterized by conservative traditionalists who argued that the perpetual aesthetic innovation of the previous decade had allowed the

"anti-bourgeois" values of the historical avant-garde movements of the early-twentieth century to permeate into American culture. Some of the most virulent of these attacks in the early 1970s came from the veteran New York critic Hilton Kramer who warned that "politics...has finally penetrated the New York art world."⁹¹ In a series of articles that he wrote for the *New York Times* in the early 1970s, Kramer blamed the new situation on the liberals in New York cultural institutions who patronized art trends simply because they were new. In particular, Kramer's reactionary criticism was concerned to rally support against the new, "subversive" avant-garde trends which supposedly dealt "crushing blows to bourgeois tastes and values."⁹² This was the nature of Kramer's argument in January of 1970 when he pleaded to all of those New Yorkers

who believe in the very idea of art museums -- in museums free of political pressures -- to make our commitments known, to say loud and clear that we will not stand for the politicization of art that is now looming as a real possibility.⁹³

The correlation between the avant-garde and the breakdown of tradition suggested in the above passage by Kramer was an increasingly common theme not only in art criticism in the early 1970s, it also coloured a substantial amount of the social criticism being written at the time. In particular, this theme was taken up by a group of disaffected former liberals who in the early 1970s came to be known as "the neoconservatives."⁹⁴ One of the most

influential members of this group was Daniel Bell. In a series of articles that began to appear in New York based journals *Commentary* and *The Public Interest* in the Fall of 1970, Bell blamed the integration of avant-garde culture into the American psyche for the erosion of traditional values. Much like Kramer's particular conflation of aesthetics and politics, Bell elaborated a polemic that blamed the avant-garde for the contemporary social problems of America. His central thesis postulated that the "open field of view" of the liberal ideology had provided no resistance to the avant-garde, which he saw as "an adversarial culture" antithetical to the maintenance of a stable social system.⁹⁵ According to Bell, this adversarial culture sought to undermine the legitimacy of bourgeois norms and the resources of bourgeois tradition by integrating radical ideas into "the fields of manners, morals, and ultimately politics."⁹⁶ Bell went on to argue that the increased social unrest and disavowal of traditional values that characterized the United States in the 1960s was proof that "the avant-garde [had] won its victory."⁹⁷ Thus, like Kramer and many of his neoconservative colleagues, Bell blamed liberalism for having given the avant-garde (counter) culture "a blank check," and sounded the sirens of reaction in an effort to shipwreck the ideologies of both liberalism and avant-gardism.⁹⁸

Altogether, it was a highly volatile time amid the New York cultural scene when the Guggenheim Museum began preparations for its Sixth International. On one side were curators of major museums, like Kynaston McShine, who were accepting outright the new, more international avant-garde trends with a lack of any kind of judgement. The only criteria employed was that whatever was being integrated by the culture be new and up-to-date. Contrary to McShine's view, there were people like Kramer and Bell who were concerned with resuscitating a controversy between avant-gardism and traditionalism similar to that which was commonplace in the United States during the late 1940s and into the 1950s. This view conflated the relation between radical politics and avant-garde aesthetics, and argued that the new art trends and their supporters sought to subvert the American way of life.

In the midst of this maelstrom were the officials of the Guggenheim Museum, promoting their International in a way that would occupy a middle-ground between these positions. In search of NEA funding, the Museum read the Nixon Administration's cultural policy in such a way that did not allow them to accept the new art trends without discrimination. But as an institution of modern art, the administrators of the Guggenheim were also concerned not to dismiss the new avant-garde in the way critics like Kramer were calling for. In short, the Guggenheim officials did not accept or reject outright the new avant-garde trends.

Instead they attempted to engage these new trends by restructuring them to make them consistent with their own interests. As part of this effort, the Museum officials argued that the challenges of avant-garde art were confined to the aesthetic realm. This message was made explicit in the International's catalogue where Diane Waldman argued that whatever radical qualities the new avant-garde art might have were exclusively confined to the aesthetic realm and directed only towards attacking preceding art trends:

The challenge to the system, however, is only symptomatic: the real assault is based upon the need to question previous art styles, particularly those that directly preceded them, and to propose a radical break with tradition.⁹⁹

Waldman's view was essentially the same as Messer's whenever he had occasion to discuss the avant-garde. In a 1969 article titled "Impossible Art -- Why It Is?" Messer defended the avant-garde as follows:

Subversiveness in the creative sense, however, has little to do with revolutionary *intentions* and a great deal with the formulation and materialization of ideas powerful enough to challenge -- *through their mere existence* -- prevailing assumptions.¹⁰⁰

Messer's way of thinking about the progression of avant-garde art as a procession of modes succeeding or critiquing what came before was similar to that promoted by the community of cultural institutions in New York during the 1950s and early 1960s.¹⁰¹ But the particular type of language that Messer uses to describe the project of the

avant-garde has the same romantic tone that appears in the writings of liberal formalists like Clement Greenberg. According to Greenberg, at the time still regarded by Guggenheim officials as a sovereign authority in matters of aesthetic judgement, the avant-garde had "consisted from the first in devotion to standards, to the highest level of achievement, regardless of non-artistic consequences."¹⁰² It is the word "achievement" by which Greenberg's argument for the avant-garde, and by extension that of the Guggenheim officials, can best be differentiated from that of critics like McShine. If McShine's notion of the avant-garde encumbered him with the anguish of having to unceasingly find something new and novel, then Greenberg's idea of the avant-garde burdened him with the task of having to perpetually find what was best. In short, rather than "what comes later," this latter notion of the avant-garde sought "what is better." For Greenberg then the avant-garde, "regardless of non-artistic consequences," functioned as the standard bearer of culture.¹⁰³

However, the efforts of the organizers of the International to chart a fine line between the significantly different positions of people like McShine and Kramer were thrown off balance as a result of a series of events which took place the day before the exhibition was to open. Suddenly the officials of the Guggenheim found themselves in the rather awkward position of trying to negotiate with the French artist Daniel Buren for permission to modify his

installation for the show. These negotiations concluded with Buren's refusal to grant permission for his piece to be altered in any way, and the administrators of the Guggenheim's decision to censor his work. The censorship was particularly curious considering that the organizers of the exhibition had previously fully approved of Buren's installation which he had described to them in detail.¹⁰⁴ The paradoxical nature of the Guggenheim's decision was further emphasized by the official explanation provided by the Museum for its sudden decision to remove Buren's work. According to the officials of the Guggenheim, Buren's installation was "in direct conflict with the work of other artists in the exhibition."¹⁰⁵ Thus, for example, following the removal of Buren's work Messer answered the question of why the censorship took place by citing the interests of the other artists:

I think that in his effort to upstage, which may or may not have been deliberate, he created a crisis that could only be resolved in co-operation among artists and curatorial staff, or by the elimination of the trespassing piece.¹⁰⁶

The irony of Messer's explanation is revealed when we consider that the vast majority of the other artists in the exhibition disagreed with the Museum's actions. A petition protesting the censorship was immediately circulated and signed by all but five of the twenty-one artists in the International.¹⁰⁷

What was the nature of the conflict that caused the administrators of the Museum to suddenly find Buren so offensive? As we shall see in the following chapter, the abrupt censorship of Buren had more to do with the Guggenheim Museum's efforts to protect their International avant-garde show from drifting into the midst of the avant-gardist-traditionalist controversy that was beginning to flare up again in New York, than with the complaints of other artists.¹⁰⁸ However to properly understand what brought this deeper cultural conflict to the surface we need to examine the ways in which Buren's work and that of the artists who took issue with it are superficially similar, yet crucially at odds.

CHAPTER III

Conflict, Censorship and Critical Censure

[In the case of Buren's installation] the limits of what was acceptable were exceeded. At that point...the tacitly existing rules had to be re-invoked.... It was a commonsense assumption that certain restraints have to be operative in order to assure the freedom of action of all those concerned.

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Buren's installation at the Guggenheim International was yet another manifestation of the same motif that he had used to analyze the nature of painting and of the politics of cultural institutions for the preceding five years. This installation consisted of an ensemble of two nearly identical pieces of cotton canvas woven in alternate vertical stripes of blue and white. Each stripe was 8.7 centimeters wide, and the two white stripes on the edges of both sides of each canvas were coated with white paint. The first canvas was 1.5 meters high by 10 meters wide and hung across 88th Street. The canvas stretched between the Museum on Madison Avenue and 5th Avenue to the opposite side of 88th Street. The second was 20 meters high and 10 meters wide, suspended in the axis of the Museum's central shaft (figs.6-7). This huge canvas spanned from just below the Museum's skylight, down the depth of the central well of the spiraling galleries, to a point several yards above the floor.¹¹⁰

Suspended as banners, both the verso and the recto of each canvas were integral parts of the whole. Since the stripes of white paint which Buren applied to each side of the two canvases did not conceal the underlying blue and white motif woven into the fabric by the manufacturer, the paintings themselves revealed their own processes. Thus, the work emphasized the canvas and the painting, both linked yet different, and addressed the simultaneous process of the death of the canvas and the birth of a painting which occurs when paint is applied.

The two paintings did not employ the traditional wooden support which stretches the canvas, and instead used their particular context as a support/stretcher: two city buildings outside, the museum skylight inside. In this way, the support/stretcher was not, as is usually the case, concealed. Rather, it was plainly exposed. Suspended as they were from their surroundings, with the absence of the frame which traditionally encloses the margins of the canvas, both paintings addressed their context in an open and unambiguous way.

Buren was acutely aware of the problems inherent to exhibiting a piece in the Guggenheim Museum. His awareness was inclusive of the contextual difficulties, particularly those of the organizational function of the architecture itself. The architectural forces in the interior of Wright's building are so powerful that they tend to reduce whatever is installed in the gallery space to mere decorative

embellishments, which in turn corresponds to the building's ultimate goal.¹¹¹ For it is evident that the Museum was designed less to display particular aesthetic objects than, through its very size and architectural dynamics, to prevent anything installed within it from detracting from the uniqueness of the architect's own project.¹¹²

The means by which the architecture of the Guggenheim Museum overpowers whatever is installed within it is threefold. First, the Museum is constructed along an extended spiral ramp which does not facilitate separate viewing spaces for individual artworks the way most museums do. The works installed in this building are not spatially distinguished from each other; instead they are forced into comparison with other works which are often not comparable. As a result, the confusing jumble of signs produced by a group show in this Museum renders the spectacular building itself the most significant artwork. In this sense, Wright may have been functioning as a *bricoleur* when he designed this building, appropriating every exhibition that took place within it, as well as erasing or subverting the original meanings of the works placed on its premises.¹¹³

Second, the architectural form is essentially dictatorial in nature. The singular 7-story-high spiral ramp allows the viewer no real choice as to how he or she will view the works. Therefore Museum organizers are significantly empowered to orchestrate or otherwise construct narrative from the works on exhibition. Just as a

motion picture forces a particular sequential perception, the sloping ramp of the Guggenheim Museum determines the viewer's path and establishes the exhibition as an absolute narrative.¹¹⁴

Third, the Museum is itself a spectacle. Those works on exhibit are in constant competition with the grandeur of the omni-present gaping vortex. This effect is amplified by the spiralling ramps, which, like the curvilinear motion of a whirlpool that is directed toward the center of the axis of rotation, attract the viewer's eye inward toward the void where the building celebrates itself. The building's centripetal forces draw the viewer's attention away from what is installed in its gallery spaces, and render those installations, whether they be paintings, sculptures, or other objects, ambient and confined to the fringes of the imperiously grand experience offered by the interior of the building.¹¹⁵

By installing one of his huge paintings in the center well of the Museum, Buren tapped into the structural flow of the Museum's architecture and prevented his work from being overpowered by the architectural plan of the building. Placed in the center of the Museum, the large painting emphasized the pomposity of the space. As such, Buren effectively detoured Wright's attempt to prevent his masterpiece from being surpassed by anything installed within it.¹¹⁶ From the bottom floor of the Museum and all seven levels of the ramp, Buren's work was persistently in

the spectator's field of view. Consequently, the tendency of the Museum's architecture to dominate whatever was within it was simultaneously accentuated and exposed. The magnetic quality of the painting in the central space also exposed the futility of those works that neglected to take the dynamics of the architecture into account.

Confronted with a critique which powerfully exploited the dynamics of the Guggenheim's structure and revealed the inadequacy of other works that had not fully considered the Museum's unique plan, some of the artists involved in the International reacted adversely to Buren's painting. Instead of conceding the shortcomings of their own works which had uncritically submitted themselves to the spectacular architecture of Wright's building, several artists in the International complained to the Museum's officials that Buren's huge blue and white striped fabric visually compromised their own installations.

But the accusation that Buren's work visually obstructed their own was, in the main, false. Michael Heizer's complaint provides a good case in point. His installation, titled *Actual Size* (fig.8), consisted of a projected photographic slide of an aesthetic alteration of the natural landscape: a rock, measuring twenty-three by seventeen by thirty-five feet, with a human figure standing in front of it. In order for the projection to function properly, Heizer's display necessitated a darkened site. It was thus set up in the Museum's High Gallery, an enclosed

viewing space on the top floor of the Guggenheim. Since Heizer's installation was isolated in a room separate from the space in which Buren's painting was displayed, his complaint regarding Buren's work was clearly not based on visual compromise, but rather on the fact that Buren's work was overshadowing his, both intellectually and symbolically.¹¹⁷

In fact, Dan Flavin was the only artist to protest Buren's work with a somewhat logical complaint. His untitled installation consisted of a system of 32 fluorescent light fixtures (fig.10).¹¹⁸ Sixteen of these were fitted with white bulbs each 24 inches in length; the other 16 were fitted with coloured bulbs (4 each of pink, green, yellow and blue) each 96 inches in length. Flavin chose 9 niches, or galleries, the entire sixth ramp of the Museum, for his installation. Through a strategic arrangement of the fluorescent light fixtures, he constructed a kind of light sculpture which explicitly adapted to the Guggenheim Museum's architectural detailing by focusing light from the leading edges of the upright walls separating the niches and throwing it inward. The cool blue and green lights installed alternately inside the niches mixed with the warm yellow, pink and white lights placed on the protruding walls which partitioned the galleries. The synthesis of radiating light thereby joined each niche with those adjacent to it and combined to produce a large multicoloured arrangement, which transformed the white walls of Wright's architecture. Due to

the sheer expanse of Flavin's installation, then, Buren's banner suspended in the central well of the building would have obscured some of its vantage points. Of course, Flavin's installation itself flooded a vast expanse of space with emanating coloured light and compromised its surroundings, including Buren's painting suspended from the building's dome. Therefore the same objections which Flavin expressed about Buren's installation could have been levelled against his own work.

Clearly there was something other than a case of visual obstruction that was at the root of the objections to Buren's work. That Museum officials should have sided so swiftly against Buren only compounds the enigmatic character of the controversy. For a full and cogent analysis of the situation, we will now turn our attention to the artistic biographies of Buren and his chief antagonist Flavin and the intellectual and aesthetic histories that gave rise to their work. All the while, however, we should not lose sight of the Guggenheim's political role as mediator of this curious debacle.¹¹⁹

The type of critique that Flavin performs with his art work has its foundations in the post-Greenbergian theories which proceeded from the fragmentation of American formalism as it derives from the Modernist paradigm.¹²⁰ By the early 1960s the hegemony which Greenberg's position had attained in New York art circles in the postwar period was in decline. This was due in part to what I will refer to as a

new articulation of art-for-art's-sake. Greenberg's idealist type of argument for the avant-garde was being challenged by a much more positivist, tautological theorization of art-for-art's-sake in American art criticism. As noted above, Greenberg had idealized the avant-garde artist as a heroic figure whose role was to protect high art from mass culture by continually challenging the achievements of its high art predecessors. The new conception of the artist emerging in the late 1950s involved a dismissal of the more historically prominent myth of the artist and its centrality to avant-garde thought. Instead, this new conception was a positing of the artist as a cool, rational expert (e.g., Frank Stella) who did not seek to protect high art as much as solve aesthetic problems. This new concept was propagated by, among others, Donald Judd who was trained in philosophy at Columbia University in the early 1950s when American pragmatism was dominant.¹²¹

One of the outcomes of this new type of formalist art criticism was that by 1959 Judd had emerged as a powerful and well-respected voice in art writing circles, with a regular column, first in *Art News* and then in *Arts Magazine*. Judd's writings and art production, which in large part provided the foundation for what came to be called Minimal art, were crucial in promulgating the idea that Greenberg's aesthetics had run their course. Greenberg's idealism forwarded the belief that the Modernist artwork was a locus for the unity of material object and aesthetical subject. By

this he meant that the object itself, standing apart on a pedestal or as pure art, was the subject. Judd moved away from this argument to propound an aesthetic wherein the object's internal relations had been eliminated altogether. If up to this point Modernist analysis had entailed emphasizing the art object's formal essence or categorical being, then Judd's work fragmented the centered Modernist art object and focused instead on the conventional limits of art. This type of fragmentation was accomplished through the employment of prefabricated industrial materials and the elimination of artificially-valued skills that their application implied, as well as by the frequent use of a simple structural repetition or serial principle which repeated a pattern that did not build.

During the early 1960s Judd's art criticism and his work was a major influence on many of the newly emerging New York artists, including Flavin. The continuation of the type of formalism that Judd typifies is manifested in Flavin's work in various ways. For instance, Flavin's use of historically specific products of mass fabrication had its foundation in Judd's argument that prefabricated materials were absolutely neutral and that any artworks produced using these materials would have elements of consistency and stability in a way that all previous plastic arts had presumably lacked. Furthermore, like Judd, Flavin also dismissed the idea of an avant-garde. Flavin made this explicitly clear in a 1966 article titled "some

remarks...excerpts from a spleenish journal," where he wrote that

The term 'avant-garde' ought to be restored to the French Army where its manic sense of futility propitiously belongs. It does not apply to any American art that I know about.¹²²

Flavin's rejection of the term avant-garde is not surprising since it is consistent with Judd's rejection of the vestigial romanticism in the Greenbergian view of the avant-garde that had come to dominate in post-war America, and the subsequent development of a purportedly neutral view of the art object outlined above.

Flavin took the theoretical background that he acquired from critics like Judd and developed it toward a type of proto-conceptualist critique whereby the artwork began to take precedence over the art object. For Judd there had always been an element of creative expression in picking up a telephone and ordering objects to be built to his particular specifications. Flavin went even further in eliminating significant decision-making from the process of production by consistently using the same medium in his work. As such, his formal evolution completely stopped in 1962 when he began to use ready-made fluorescent light fixtures. The fluorescent light fixtures which he used in his work were not altered in any way, and instead remained identical with millions of other articles produced by the same factory.

With Flavin's work, however, the type of formalism developed by Judd began to take a peculiar turn in that the architectural context was integrated into the artwork's constitutive elements and the artwork was thereby redefined in terms of place and time. Indeed, it was with this practice of site specificity that the centered (Modernist) art object became completely fragmented. The object thus ceased to be the locus of meaning and lost its exclusive claim to being the subject. Since the work only existed in the location in which Flavin set it up and only for as long as the organized exhibition lasted, meaning came to be holistically constituted by the triad of object, site and spectator.¹²³ In addition, the lack of a coherent object in his work was further emphasized by the fact that the fixtures which he employed for his installations were usually rented and would be dispersed after their use in a show.

All of these elements were present in Flavin's work at the International. The integration of architectural references into the work made a point about the contingency of the art object's relation to space. The same medium of fluorescent light fixtures was used and the fixtures were carefully arranged on the wall as the surrounding architecture was at least partially taken into consideration. The fluorescent lights set up in the niches and on the protruding walls of the niches effectively imposed another order on the site as they replaced the

literal space with a perceptual or an aesthetic space. This effect was lucidly noted by a critic reviewing the International:

An elaborate light piece by Dan Flavin flooded Frank Lloyd Wright's exhibition spaces with washes of pure colour in such a way that just for this once the space became the picture and no picture had to be added.¹²⁴

Hence, the analysis posited in Flavin's work suggests that art can be seen as a formalist investigation superceding the material requirements of the art object. In this sense, Flavin's work posits conceptualism as an investigation in hyperformalism, an investigation of what constitutes the idea of the art object. Moreover, since it was not so much the specific site as the artist's placement of the work in the site that concerned Flavin, when the need arose he could easily formulate his critique in virtually any interior, or almost anywhere in that interior. This aspect of Flavin's work was made particularly clear three days before the International was scheduled to open. When the Museum asked him to change his plan to exhibit in the High Gallery so that Michael Heizer could set up his slide display there, Flavin had no objections. All that was essential to its site specificity was that it not be affixed to the ceiling where it would assume the standard function and more mundane aesthetic. Therefore Flavin's work celebrated neither the space in which it was installed, nor the objects out of which it was made, but rather the

artist's own inventiveness: the artist's own "creative genius."

Buren's critique was in marked contrast to Flavin's artwork. The extreme contextualism of Buren's work was highlighted just prior to its censorship. When the organizers of the International requested that he "execute another work for the exhibition," or that he "hang just the outdoor part of the two-part plan," Buren refused on the grounds that any modification would mutilate his work.¹²⁵ Clearly, then, Buren's installation was much more contextually specific than that of his American counterpart. So specific, in fact, that the banner inside the Museum would neither function nor fit in any other museum or exhibition.

Like Flavin's, Buren's installation also used prefabricated materials, and its site specificity also prevented it from later being sold in its original form. Therefore at a superficial level there was an overlap between their works. But while both installations were made to be site specific, for Flavin the idea that the site was in any way specific other than in a formal sense was excluded. This exclusion marked his work as a formalist endpoint. For Buren, on the other hand, the extreme specificity of the work which he employed at the International served several functions which took his paintings beyond formal problems.

Similar to Flavin who consistently used the same pattern of strips of fluorescent light, Buren repeated the same motif of prefabricated banners with alternating blue and white vertical stripes whenever and wherever he was asked to exhibit. However, the rationale behind Buren's disavowal of formal evolution was significantly different from Flavin's. In the late 1960s, Buren explained the purpose of his use of systematic repetition as serving not only to eliminate "the concept of progress or perfectibility" from his work, but also to attain the "total depersonalization of the thing on display" by negating all "originality."¹²⁶ "The object's quality of being a unique work," would thus be effectively and permanently removed.¹²⁷ According to Buren, these functions were necessary complements of his interrogation of form -- an interrogation aimed at achieving a "neutral form."¹²⁸

Unlike the roots of American pragmatism evident in Flavin's work, the intellectual history of Buren's critique, which engages in a very particular way with the very structure of the cultural apparatus itself, is located in a historical materialist critique of culture as a reifying and legitimizing device. This was part of an idea which had been developing in European cultural criticism since the early 1950s, and which by the 1960s had crystallized into a critique of Western culture as a whole. A vital part of this critique was derived from the discussions of the ideological content of language in French intellectual circles which

followed the publication of Roland Barthes' *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) and *Mythologies* (1957).¹²⁹

The broad parallels between Buren's investigations of form and the early writings of Barthes reveal the large impact which the French cultural critic had on the theoretical development of Buren's work.¹³⁰ This influence is underscored in Buren's theoretical text "Beware" (1969) where he maintains that his effort to achieve a neutral form was neither formalist nor an end in itself, but rather a means by which to reach a zero degree of form at which point formal concerns become a secondary issue.¹³¹ In a 1968 interview with the French art critic Andre Parinaud, Buren answered the question of why he pursued the zero degree of form by expressing a desire to open something for investigation that could be pushed further than the zero degree:

I'll push it further. I believe we are the only ones to be able to claim the right of being "looked at," in the sense that we are the only ones to present a thing which has no didactic intention, which does not provide "dreams," which is not a "stimulant." Each individual can dream himself, and without doubt much better than by the trickery of an artist, however great he may be.... Perhaps the only thing that one can do after having seen a canvas like ours is total revolution.¹³²

With the evacuation of all subject matter, formal changes, modes of expression and pictorial language from the interior space of his paintings, the only subject that they could have was the problematics of their own display. This would therefore turn the discussion towards the underlying milieu,

towards the context in which the painting was witnessed. At that point, all the work could do was reflect upon its own inadequacy as art, while emphasizing the enormous discrepancy between its interior and its institutional context. As such, the work functioned as an interrogation of the means by which the art system imbued the interior of artworks with value. Simultaneous with this interrogation was an investigation of the historical, political, social and ideological dynamics of this process.

In addition, by utilizing the Museum exterior itself, in this case by suspending a banner across 88th Street, Buren sought to manifest the contradiction between works that were virtually identical yet different on account of their specific site. The validating role of the museum was thus revealed as necessary for the very existence of art. Also exposed was the museum's political function as a frame which, as Buren notes in "Function of the Museum" (1970), "selects, collects, [and] protects" only what the administrators find appropriate.¹³³

Buren's ensemble turned the discussion away from the anti-dialectical idealism implicit in the traditional work of art in the direction of an exaggerated self-consciousness of the role that the institutional container of art plays in endowing with an aura what is placed within its domain.¹³⁴ As such, the critique had several aspects. By exposing the condition of art as a highly dependent phenomenon, it was clearly an attempt to criticize the art practice of people

like Flavin who maintained the idea of their work's uniqueness and of their own originality. But by revealing the underlying reality of the museum as a historical institution serving political, economic, and ideological functions, the myth which posits the museum as "natural" was challenged.¹³⁵

Apart from the alignment with Barthes, Buren's critique aligned itself with the growing awareness in 1960s French cultural thought concerning the effect which the legitimation of art by the dominant cultural apparatus had not only on the reception of artworks but also on their actual production.¹³⁶ The recognition that there existed a connection between an enormous domination on the material plane, and a domination on the intellectual plane, was part of the idea of the increasingly "spectacular" nature of late capitalist society put forward by the counter-cultural group of predominantly neo-Marxist theorists known as the Situationists.¹³⁷

The Situationists, who from 1962 were exclusively centered in Paris, devoted many of their studies to the elaboration of a critical theory which sought to explain the manner in which capitalist society functions to eradicate "all the old values...all the frames of reference of past communication," so as to replace them with a new reality in which consumption of commodities becomes the chief basis of the social order.¹³⁸ The new "consumer society," according to the Situationists' theory of the spectacle, functioned to

marginalize its members on the one hand, and confine them to merely reproducing the existing order on the other. In other words, the alienation of commodity society reduced individuals to seeking fulfilment in consumption and thus perpetually replicating their own false consciousness.¹³⁹

For the Situationists, the role of culture in the new spectacular society was to collapse the social contradictions of capitalism by transforming all genuine experience into commodities. Their project contributed in large part to the increasingly skeptical view of art that was developing in the European cultural milieu during the 1960s. Since art which dominated the market was theorized as inevitably having a powerful influence on the critical intellect of the art producer, it therefore seemed likely that artists could only produce works appropriate to the culture industry.¹⁴⁰

As a response to the increased comprehension of the function of culture in late capitalist society, the Situationists pronounced the death of art and argued that the only justifiable action left to people working in the cultural realm was to expose the ideological workings of the cultural apparatus. These interests, this intellectual history, appears in Buren's work and is also made explicit in his writings. For example, in "Critical Limits" (1970), Buren states

To pretend to escape from [the precise and definite limits to which art is contained in bourgeois society] is to reinforce the prevailing ideology which expects

diversion from the artist. Art is not free, the artist does not express himself freely (he cannot). Art is not the prophesy of a free society. Freedom in art is the luxury/privilege of a repressive society.

Art whatever it may be is exclusively political. What is called for is the *analysis of formal and cultural limits* (and not one or the other) within which art exists and struggles.

These limits are many and of different intensities. Although the prevailing ideology and the associated artists try in every way to camouflage them, and although it is too early -- the conditions are not met -- to blow them up, the time has come to unveil them.¹⁴¹

With Buren, then, we have a critique of art with a neo-Marxist foundation, and this locates him in a political tradition very different from artists like Flavin and Judd.¹⁴²

The difference between the two critiques becomes especially clear if we compare Buren and Flavin in their views of political analysis, political economy and art production. Unlike Buren, Flavin had no interest in making any political critique with his work. Instead, what Flavin was interested in was the promotion of the complete separation of art and life. As he wrote in "Several More Remarks..." (1969):

As artists, to assert personal opinions in political concerns seems ordinarily appropriate; to use art similarly seems to be impractical, irrelevant abuse -- of another art and life confusion (as Don Judd might plainly explain).¹⁴³

Hence Flavin disavows political interests and all other interests that he deems extraneous to his art production. He proposes aesthetics as a disinterested, evaluative process,

as opposed to the kind of materialist considerations which are in evidence in Buren's critique. As such, he reiterates a particular type of mystification of art production which views art as basically a sphere of activity outside of historical and all other non-aesthetic particulars. So in the case of Flavin and many of his Minimalist compatriots, what first appeared as a form of radical iconoclasm was in fact radical conformism. In freeing the art making process from the "tyranny" of the art object, the primary tenets of Greenbergian transcendentalism realized their ultimate fruition. For what are material conditions if not one more contextual consideration? The Minimalists, it seems, became more Greenbergian than Greenberg.

It is hardly surprising, then, that there was a clash at the Sixth International when works such as Flavin's were placed in the same space as Buren's. What also becomes apparent following this comparison between Buren's and Flavin's work is that the organizers of the International were only looking at surfaces -- and none too closely at that -- when they invited Buren to New York. Consequently, they allowed themselves to be deceived by a largely pseudomorphistic overlap between the work of Buren and of his American counterparts and postulated a genealogical connection between the two.

Yet the fact that the Museum had erred in interpreting Buren's work became all too clear when Buren made unequivocal the critique developed by his installation by

providing a political language outside of his work. Speaking to *New York Times* reporter Grace Glueck who had come to preview the International, Buren insisted that he not be referred to as an artist and proclaimed that "both artists and museums in the traditional sense are obsolete."¹⁴⁴ Inasmuch as neither this nor any discourse could be perceived inside his work, Buren's own critical discourse outside the frame of the paintings created a condition whereby the work itself functioned as a cypher pointing to that radical critique.¹⁴⁵

Buren's provision of such a metalanguage functioned to render unavoidable the direct logical implications of his installation which questioned the function not only of the role of the other works in the show, but also of the Museum itself. Indeed, it is likely that more than anything else it was this statement, which appeared in the largest daily newspaper in New York the day before the show opened, that led Guggenheim officials to decide that it was in their best interests to censor Buren's work. As mentioned above, in the early 1970s the old avant-gardist-traditionalist polemic was once again flaring up in New York with traditionalists like Hilton Kramer and others simultaneously blaming the new avant-garde trends for the cultural crises of the late 1960s while finding repellant the ready acceptance of this nearly diabolical art by New York's cultural institutions. Like the organizers of the International, these critics also failed to distinguish between critiques such as those performed by

artists like Flavin and Judd, and those by people like Buren.

Although the Museum as a liberal institution would not have been averse to some controversy, in this increasingly volatile cultural milieu characterized by an explosive conflation between avant-garde art and radical politics, it is not surprising that following Buren's radical comment to the press the officials of the Guggenheim removed his work. This rather dramatic act of censorship was symptomatic of the increasingly reactionary times; it was clearly a method of damage control in an effort to save the other works in the show and the exhibition as a whole. Buren's comments would have provided an increasingly conservative press with ammunition to attack the International. Too much hinged on the success of this exhibition for the officials of the Museum to risk an overtly negative response by the New York art press.

But it was too late. Buren's radical comments to Glueck reverberated throughout her preview of the show. Glueck warned her readers to be careful about using "the dirty word 'artist '" if they went into the Guggenheim Museum to see the International.¹⁴⁶ Almost all of the New York critics who reviewed the exhibition failed to mention the conflict between the artists, or the absence of Buren's installation.¹⁴⁷ Still, the critical response to this show reveals that the New York artworld was once again fully caught up in the dynamics of the avant-gardist-

traditionalist controversy and the Sixth International floated right into the battle zone. Like Flavin, and, albeit for different reasons, like Buren, as we shall see, by 1971 the vast majority of New York critics were no longer willing to accept the old avant-garde/liberal idea so strongly held by the officials of the Guggenheim through the Sixth International. Instead, most of the critics of the International saw the extreme formal reductivism and the pervasive use of site specificity of the new avant-garde trends as the thin edge of the wedge of cultural subversion.¹⁴⁸

What most alarmed these critics about the International, however, was that this exhibit was a sign that radical avant-garde ideas had infiltrated the fabric of the New York artworld and were being supported by naive liberals who were inadvertently allowing American culture to be subverted. Denise Green, for instance, in her review of the show for *Art News*, rebuked the patrons of this art for aiding in the radical subversion of existing culture:

Politically, these works are a direct threat to the gallery and museum system. The collector of this type of art subsidizes the artist's life-style rather than a "piece of goods," and makes possible the dissemination of culturally radical ideas.¹⁴⁹

The relationship that Green posits between the exhibition and "radical ideas," along with her attempt to single out the culprits responsible for allowing the existence and development of this avant-garde work in New York, was

symptomatic of much of the critical reception to the International.

In various cases, the critics' effort to find people to blame for the presence of this type of art in New York bordered on calling for mob rule. For example, Emily Genauer of the *New York Post* wrote that "the non-collectible non-art signs" on view at the International, which were evidence of these artists' complete "disavowal of traditional notions" of art and culture, were the result of an overly liberal media, government and academia:

Instead of making a picture or a sculpture or a construction that somebody can buy, hang, touch, walk around, most of them dream up projects like these...Many of them [the artists in the International], it should be pointed out, are able to produce their nose-thumbing, unsalable works because they no longer have need to sell, their widely publicized ideas having won them government grants and university teaching positions.¹⁵⁰

However, it was the organizers of the International on which most reviewers cast the blame for helping to promote the new avant-garde art. In his review of the show for the *New York Times*, Hilton Kramer informed his readers that what was on exhibit at the Guggenheim represented "an index to the demoralization and bad faith that has overtaken so large a part of the current art scene," and scorned the Museum's officials for according these works exhibition status:

If there is a trend toward dismantling the artistic enterprise and casting contempt on the integrity of the museum, no with-it museum director wants to be left out of the game. As Lenin observed in another (but not unrelated) context, when it comes time to hang the

bourgeoisie, they will bid against each other to sell you the rope.¹⁵¹

Thus Kramer portrays the officials of the Guggenheim as being so naive that they are incapable of seeing the seriousness of the events going on in the arts as anything other than a frivolous and trivial game.

Immanent to much of the critical response to the International was the idea that, as Kramer put it, "the artistic enterprise and the integrity of the museum" were two things that were essential to maintain. For these critics, of which Kramer provides a good example, art production was considered to be "a disinterested creative enterprise" which only earned its museological status "by virtue either of its quality or of its special, identifiable artistic characteristics."¹⁵² It was also disinterestedness which allowed museums to maintain their integrity. This view was summed up by Kramer in late 1970 when he described the museum as "one of the few sectors of our culture to have remained more or less free of political interference."¹⁵³

A striking overlap exists between Kramer's view of art and museums and those views of art and museums held by Guggenheim officials. The commonality between these views is established in the mutual assumption that art transcends social and political concerns. However, an important difference does exist between Kramer's views and those held by Guggenheim officials, a difference that becomes most

readily discernible through an analysis of their assessments of recent events in the New York art scene.

For critics like Kramer, as I noted above, the New York art scene in the later 1960s had seen various "incursions and conversions" which sought to "politicize" art and museums.¹⁵⁴ What Kramer and many New York critics found most alarming about the changing nature of the local art scene in the previous couple of years was the fact that there had been a shift in which

Artists, critics, and museum personnel who, just the other day, were pleased to pretend that even the barest awareness of the social implications of their professional pursuits constituted an intolerable violation of the purity of their tasks, have suddenly come forward as...[a part of] the noisy chorus of radical affirmation which is now being heard in all of the most fashionable purlieus of the art establishment.¹⁵⁵

For the organizers of the International the new art trends represented "ideas powerful enough to challenge prevailing [aesthetic] assumptions"; yet they clearly did not seem politically subversive. Instead, as the tone of the rhetoric used to describe the recent trends indicates, the Guggenheim officials saw these critiques in a much more romantic light as part of Greenberg's notion of the heroic struggle of the avant-garde.

CONCLUSION

I have often thought that if a rational Fascist dictatorship were to exist, then it would choose the American system. State censorship is not necessary, or even efficient, in comparison to the ideological controls exercised by systems that are more complex and decentralized.

Noam Chomsky 156

Did the Guggenheim Museum achieve its aims with the Sixth International? As we have seen, one of the primary aims of the Museum seems to have been to orchestrate this exhibition of the latest avant-garde art in a way that paralleled the official cultural policy of the Nixon Administration. Yet of the request for public patronage made by the Guggenheim in February of 1971, the first of its kind in the thirty-four year history of the Museum, only a modest fraction was granted.¹⁵⁷ Although NEA funding was increasing rapidly, the Guggenheim was still left floundering. Even the plans for the Sixth International to travel to Latin America which had been prepared in detail by the Museum were scrapped, most likely as a result of the USIS withdrawing its support following the New York run of the show.¹⁵⁸ Clearly, something had backfired in the Museum's strategy since it did not achieve any of its aims with the 1971 International.

Surveying the Nixon Administration's cultural policy in retrospect it becomes apparent that the role which the Nixon Administration envisaged for the arts was not concerned with

avant-garde art or artists -- artists who President Kennedy described as seeking to "question power" by sailing "against the currents" of the time.¹⁵⁹ Rather, Nixon's statements reveal an antipathy to any kind of elitist culture available only to a "few citizens centered in a few cities," in favor of a more regional emphasis which sought to "broaden the base" and develop the "diverse culture of every region." This was explicit in the speech which he gave to Congress in December of 1969, when he requested a one-hundred percent increase in arts funding. According to Nixon, art was a basic right to which all Americans should have access:

The attention and support we give the arts...represent a vital part of our commitment to enhancing the quality of life for all Americans. The full richness of this nation's cultural life need not be the province of relatively few citizens centered in a few cities; on the contrary, the trend toward a wider appreciation of the arts...strongly encouraged, and the diverse culture of every region and community should be explored... Need and opportunity combine, therefore, to present the Federal government with an obligation to help broaden the base of our cultural legacy -- not to make it fit some common denominator of official sanction, but rather to make its diversity and insight more readily accessible to millions of people everywhere.¹⁶⁰

Thus Nixon's concept of the role that the arts would play was in fact significantly different than that held by his predecessors. While previous Administrations had largely been interested in the arts for how they could be used to communicate with foreign populations, Nixon emphasized a concern with culture within the United States itself. With the Nixon Administration, then, a federal mandate was being attributed to the arts which differed in important ways from

any since the days of the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s. And even in the 1930s, the arts were not viewed in terms of their "richness," but rather as an instrumental arm of the state.¹⁶¹

Despite whatever differences in content it may have had from the policies of previous Administrations, the cultural policy of the Nixon Administration in the early 1970s retained much of the Cold War liberal rhetoric. As the authors of *The Arts at a New Frontier* (1984) found in their study of the NEA, Nixon's cultural policy had a very confusing effect. Even the Chairwoman of the NEA in the early period of the Nixon Administration was unsure of her mandate in this era when the allocation of federal funds to her agency was rising astronomically.¹⁶²

The officials of the Guggenheim Museum also fell victim to this confusion. Consequently they failed to see that the huge increase in arts funding by the Nixon Administration was not a part of an effort to continue the cultural strategies of Cold War liberals. Funding in the arts is a very conspicuous way for a government to spend money, especially if that funding is spread across the country instead of directed at the elite avant-garde circles of a few cities. This method of funding provided an effective smokescreen for the Nixon Administration to lessen the outcry over the dismantling of the social welfare system that had been constructed by the liberal modernization of the economy in the postwar period.¹⁶³ However, it was the

contradictory message produced by the Nixon Administration's massive increase in funding to the arts, coming concurrently with a marked decrease in funding to most other social programs, that led to the confusion with respect to the Administration's cultural policy which John O'Connor of the *Wall Street Journal* refers to in the passage quoted above. Furthermore it was this confusion that led the officials of the Guggenheim astray in their attempt to formulate an exhibition program consistent with the Nixon Administration's view of the role of culture.

That so many people in the United States during the early 1970s expressed their disapproval of the avant-garde is not surprising when we recognize that liberalism for many Americans had become synonymous with all the social problems that America was facing. In fact, this was the argument of the new conservatism which swept the United States in the early 1970s, cutting across political, social and cultural spheres.

For those who responded to the rhetoric of "public intellectuals" such as Hilton Kramer and Daniel Bell, the attacks on the avant-garde became a demand for both cultural conservatism and political conservatism. Indeed, the sweep of conservatism was so rapid and so pronounced that by 1972 the journal *Partisan Review* organized a symposium to discuss this phenomenon. Titled "On the New Cultural Conservatism," the editors began the proceedings by stating that

There is, we think, a growing conservatism in discussions of what's happening in the arts, and particularly in writing and thinking. A querulous tone is becoming increasingly apparent in the assessments of the tendencies and experiments of the past decade.... There is a marked suspicion of any deviation from the accepted notions of seriousness, as there is of any departure from the orthodox version of the mainstream.... [The] new cultural conservatism... celebrates old values, old works, old institutions as though they can never be changed, or added to, or replaced.... There are contradictions [between cultural and political conservatism], but usually the people and the publications that feel threatened by radical politics also feel at home with more familiar art, and with the culture of the past, particularly with that part of it that serves to bolster received values and ideals and to favour certain types of traditional themes and conventional structures.164

In this increasingly reactionary environment the idea of avant-garde art once again became emblematic of the forces threatening the safety of America. As we have seen, in the process of reaffirming traditional culture in the United States the new conservatism targeted its attack not only on avant-garde art and artists, but also, as conservatives had done in the decade following World War II, on the sophisticated liberals who were promoting the idea of avant-garde culture. In the gallery of subversives, then, it is hardly surprising that sympathizers for the avant-garde such as the officials of the Guggenheim Museum, and artists such as Dan Flavin who were challenging aesthetic tradition although they posited their work as completely autonomous from politics, became as suspect as people like Daniel Buren who sought to develop a radical critique of capitalist

culture. Nor is it surprising that the 1971 Guggenheim International, the last of its kind in a series which began in 1956 with the aim of exhibiting the best new avant-garde art, was such a disaster in so many important ways.

POSTSCRIPT

Following the disaster of the Sixth Guggenheim International, the administrators of the Museum reevaluated their exhibition policy and made some major revisions. Thomas Messer immediately wrote a letter to Hilton Kramer asking to meet him for a discussion on what the Museum was doing wrong.¹⁶⁵ Their meeting seems to have been fruitful, as the policy of the Museum immediately fell into step (one might say lock step) with the new conservatism of the New York artworld. The exhibition slated to follow the International, a one-man show by Hans Haacke who was then one of the leading figures of the Art Workers Coalition in New York and producing art which was radical by conservative standards, was abruptly cancelled. Messer also immediately fired the Associate Curator of the Guggenheim, Edward Fry, an organizer of both the International and the ill-fated Hans Haacke exhibition. In the following years, the Guggenheim Museum stopped emphasizing the "latest" avant-garde trends, focusing instead on avant-garde art which had by then been effectively recuperated, such as the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky or of the Abstract Expressionists.

Although the 1971 International never travelled to Latin America, in 1973 the President of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and several of the Museum's Trustees were called before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations who were investigating U.S.-directed efforts to destabilize Latin American countries such as Chile.¹⁶⁶

The International series was terminated in 1971, but in 1985 an exhibition called "Transformations in Sculpture" was subtitled the Seventh Guggenheim International. However, everyone involved agreed that this exhibition had nothing to do with the original series -- everyone, that is, except for Messer whose idea it was to tag on the International title, and whose request was heeded since by that time he was the grand old man of the Guggenheim administration.

Hilton Kramer himself went on to become chief editor of *The New Criterion*, a vigilante journal which has taken upon itself the role of being the watchdog of the American art world. Obviously pleased by the right wing turn which he saw taking place across American society, as well as by the cultural policy manifested by the NEA, irony of ironies, in 1976 he wrote that "Everyone now agrees that the Government has an obligation to subsidize the arts in this country."¹⁶⁷

Daniel Buren, like many intellectuals on the left in the 1960s and early 1970s, has gone on to exploit his radical past to advance his career. Patronized by the liberal regime in France and collected by, among others, the King and Queen of Belgium, Buren is now the token French radical of the international artworld.

Dan Flavin and Donald Judd still live in New York and do what they can to preserve the name that they made for themselves in the 1960s.

The shift on the level of aesthetic theory and critical taste articulated by the flourishing new right has insisted

on the obsolescence of the avant-garde by declaring the beginning of a postmodern period. The ubiquity of this discourse is apparent in the lapse of talk of an avant-garde in contemporary art, except of course in pathetic or prefixed forms.

Liberalism in the United States has also suffered a terminal malaise. As evidenced by the recent Presidential campaign of Democrat Michael Dukakis, liberalism now finds itself staggering around with a queer grin on its face, every so often falling into a fighting posture and going a few rounds of shadow boxing. The present weakness of liberalism is manifested by the lengths its sympathizers go to avoid being referred to as "soft headed," "bleeding hearts," or, and here is the death blow, "liberal."

Daniel Bell and the neoconservatives went on to become what Peter Steinfels, the self-appointed historian of the movement, in 1979 called "the men who are changing America's politics."¹⁶⁸ Today the change seems complete.

NOTES

1. Thomas M. Messer, letter to artists invited to participate in the 1971 International, copies in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, dated October 20, 1970.

2. The artists who accepted the invitation to participate in the Sixth Guggenheim International exhibition were the Brazilian Antonio Dias (resident of Milan, Italy), the German Hanna Darboven, the Italian Mario Merz, the British Richard Long (resident of New York) and Victor Burgin, the Japanese On Kawara (resident of New York) and Jiro Takamatsu, the Dutch Jan Dibbets, the French Daniel Buren, and the Americans Carl Andre, Walter de Maria, Dan Flavin, Michael Heizer, Donald Judd, Joseph Kosuth, Sol Lewitt, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Robert Ryman, Richard Serra and Lawrence Weiner.

3. By "avant-gardism," we are referring to that compendium of aesthetic tendencies inextricably bound up with that myriad of political, social and otherwise historical tensions that constitute modernity. The focus here will be on that facet of the avant-garde which was imported from Europe to America during the years surrounding and immediately following World War II. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that this importation also constituted a radical transformation of the avant-garde from its original manifestations. Central to a general characterization of this transformation would be the factors of an overt depoliticization, an overall simplification of aesthetic and philosophical aims, along with a particular focus on newness as the overriding criteria. If the historical avant-garde of the early twentieth century claimed that aesthetic innovation could be intimately linked to social transformations -- by harnessing mass culture in the service of a politically progressive post-bourgeois public (Benjamin), by preserving the utopian ideals of a society freed from the principle of ownership (Adorno), by revolutionizing society through an attack on the bourgeois institution of art (Burger) -- then the aesthetic avant-garde which developed in postwar America as high modernism advanced the idea of autonomous aesthetic form as the meat and potatoes of established taste.

Between avant-gardism and modernism, these are not always clearly distinguishable entities, i.e., works may frequently qualify as being at once both modernist and avant-gardist. Consistent with the general simplification of abstract ideas in post-war America, there was a resulting compression of discrete historical identities. In this environment, the avant-garde became commonly understood as the practitioners of modernism.

For more on the terminological distinctions between the avant-garde and modernism, see Matei Calinescu, *Faces of*

Modernity (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1977); and Peter Burger, "The Decline of the Modern Age," *Telos*, 62 (Winter 1984-85), pp.117-31.

4. I am referring here to the bitter attacks on art and artists during the anti-Communist fervor of the McCarthy era. Nowhere is this polemic more frantic than in the diatribes of Senator George Dondero, a Michigan Republican who mounted a campaign to purge American art of what seemed to him to be communist elements. In a speech to Congress on August 16, 1949, Dondero explained to his colleagues that the United States had been "invaded by a horde of foreign art manglers, who were...selling to our young men and women a subversive doctrine of 'isms,' Communist inspired and Communist connected." (*Congressional Record*, 81st Congress, 1st Session (1949), 11584). Dondero later summed up his mistrust of modern art in an interview with Emily Genauer, "Still Life With Herring," *Harper's Magazine*, 199 (1949), p.89:

Modern art is Communistic because it is distorted and ugly, because it does not glorify our beautiful country, our cheerful and smiling people, and our material progress. Art which does not glorify our beautiful country in plain, simple terms that everyone can understand breeds dissatisfaction. It is therefore opposed to our government, and those who create and promote it are our enemies.

For more on this issue see William Hauptman, "The Suppression of Art in the McCarthy Decade," *Artforum*, 12 (October 1973), pp.48-52; Jane de Hart Mathews, "Art and Politics in Cold War America," *American Historical Review*, 81 (October 1976), pp.762-787; and Annete Cox, "Abstract Expressionism and Depression Radicalism," in her *Art-as-Politics: The Abstract Expressionist Avant-Garde and Society* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1982, pp.17-38.

5. As Jane de Hart Mathews found in her study "Art and Politics in Cold War America," *American Historical Review*, 81 (October 1976), p.784, throughout the 1940s and 1950s avant-garde art "was anathema to frustrated viewers whose very bafflement reminded them that esthetically they had not yet arrived after all -- and, indeed, might never make it."

6. Broadly speaking, the late 1950s and 1960s were characterized by what Godfrey Hodgson, in *America In Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), has described as the "liberal consensus" -- characterized by a fear of communism abroad, the assumption that counting the costs of improving life was made unnecessary by progress, and the belief that the American political system was above ideology because it functioned in terms of concrete interests formulated in a

business like way. Hodgson defines the characteristics of the "consensus" as follows:

Confident to the verge of complacency about the perfectibility of American society, anxious to the point of paranoia about the threat of communism -- those were the two faces of the consensus mood. Each grew from one aspect of the experience of the 1940s: confidence from economic success, anxiety from the fear of Stalin and the frustrations of power. (p.75)

7. Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1960), p.297; as cited in Godfrey Hodgson, "The Ideology of Liberal Consensus," *America In Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p.75.

8. The historical texts dealing with liberalism in postwar America which I found most useful were William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); James Gilbert, *Another Chance: Postwar America, 1945-1968* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); and Godfrey Hodgson, *America In Our Time*.

For a good analysis of the emergence of liberalism in the United States during the interwar period, see R. Allan Lawson's *The Failure of Independent Liberalism, 1930-1941* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Son's, 1971). For a critique of American liberalism which is less sympathetic than the sources cited above, see Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1979). For a discussion of the relationship between early nineteenth century utilitarian liberalism characterized by its laissez-faire form (as articulated by Jeremy Bentham, and later by John Stuart Mill, following John Locke), and the American liberalism to which I refer in this paper (which had its origins in Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, through to Truman's Fair Deal, Kennedy's New Frontier and Johnson's Great Society), see Robert Paul Wolff, *The Poverty of Liberalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968).

9. Jane de Hart Mathews, "Art and Politics in Cold War America," *American Historical Review*, p.780.

10. One need not elaborate on the specifics of those politics being espoused by those active in and around European avant-gardist circles. It is sufficient for our purposes here to recognize that a general utopian hence revolutionary political teleology permeates European ideologies of avant-gardism. These utopian ideologies must be dispensed with when an ideology of avant-gardism is formulated in America because they are anathema to existing American ideology: America already esteems itself as a

utopia. See Harold Rosenberg, "Twilight of the Intellectuals," *Dissent*, 5 (Summer 1958), pp.221-228.

11. Parts of this discussion of the acceptance of avant-gardism as the official cultural ideology by Western nations in the postwar period are indebted to Nicos Hadjinicolaou, "On the Ideology of Avant-Gardism" (1978) in *Praxis*, 6 (1982), pp.39-70; and Thomas Crow, "Modernism and Mass Culture in the Visual Arts," in *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers*, ed. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Serge Guilbaut and David Solkin (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), pp.215-64.

In his article, Crow explains how the innovation of the artistic avant-garde parasitically depends on the recuperation of materials from resistant subcultures which exist on the fringes of mass culture:

In its selective appropriation from fringe mass culture, the avant-garde searches out areas of social practice which retain some vivid life in an increasingly administered and rationalized society. These it refines and packages, directing them to an elite, self-conscious audience.... Functionally then, the avant-garde serves 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 discreet and visible.... This brokerage between high and low, between legitimate and illegitimate, thus makes the avant-garde an important mechanism in a manipulative cultural economy. (pp.253-4)

Crow's argument here, similar to Hadjinicolaou's contention in "On the Ideology of Avant-Gardism" that the avant-garde is a vital part of the capitalist market, finds support in comments made by John Murphy, President of Phillip Morris Europe, in the catalogue for the "Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form" exhibition which took place at the Kunsthalle, Bern, 22 March- 27 April 1969. Introducing the exhibition which his company sponsored, Murphy asserts that the innovative qualities of the artistic avant-garde parallel the enterprise of business

The works assembled for this have been grouped by many of the observers of the art scene under the heading "new art." We at Phillip Morris feel that it is appropriate that we participate in bringing these works to the attention of the public, for there is a key element in this "new" art which has its counterpart in the business world. That element is innovation -- without which it would be impossible for progress to be made in any segment of society.

Just as the artist endeavors to improve his interpretations and conceptions through innovation, the commercial entity strives to improve its end product of service through experimentation with new methods and materials. Our constant search for a new and better way in which to perform and produce is akin to the questionings of the artists whose works are represented here.

What Crow and Hadjinicolaou in the articles cited above are most overtly concerned to do, is to describe the mechanisms of the avant-garde. In his writings of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard adds another level of analysis onto this model of culture. The extra dimension that Baudrillard adds is a discussion of the actual social-psychology of consumption as it pertains to the mechanisms of distinction that the avant-garde sets in motion. In short, according to Baudrillard avant-garde objects function socially as distinctive signs, i.e., as objects that distinguish those who distinguish them. Hence, the ritualized appreciation of "avant-garde art" serves as an ostensive gesture to communicate a specific type of social status. See Jean Baudrillard, "Sign Function and Class Logic" (1969), in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1981), p.48.

12. For Nixon's 1968 election campaign claims to be a "pragmatic centrist" who could "bring Americans together again," see Wittner, *Cold War America*, pp.334, 343.

For Nixon's 1968 campaign pledge to immediately end the war in Vietnam, and foster a "generation of peace," see Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, p.381.

Nixon's 1968 campaign speech where he outlined that his Administration's policy would be to "seek to encourage and develop...new concepts in art" is reprinted in "Richard Nixon," *Arts*, 43 (November 1968), pp.5-6.

13. Herbert Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), p.24.

14. On the increasing power of the Right in America during the 1960s, see Joshua B. Freeman, "Putting Conservatism Back Into the 1960s," *Radical History Review*, 44 (Spring 1989), pp. 94-99.

15. Tough new crime legislation was rushed through the courts as police forces all over the country were beefed up with large new expenditures. See Gilbert, *Another Chance*, p.283.

On the Nixon Administration's theme of "law and order," see Wittner, *Cold War America*, pp.348, 590; and Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, p.381.

16. See Schell, *The Time of Illusion*, pp.39-44; and Wittner, *Cold War America*, p.335. Wittner writes that Nixon's attack on civil rights was part of his effort to appease several southern Republican leaders whose continued support the Administration wanted to garnish.

17. As was subsequently revealed during the 1973 Watergate investigation, the President himself authorized a campaign of political espionage, including break-ins, wire-tappings, eavesdropping, and opening the mail of those Americans the Administration deemed as possible threats to "internal security." A war was also declared on the Black Panther Party which saw the political assassination of many Panthers by the FBI and local police, as well as the entrapment and imprisonment of many others. See Wittner, *Cold War America*, pp.338-9; and Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 1987), pp.413-14.

The peace movement was also targeted by the Administration. Nixon established a "special investigative unit," led by his Presidential assistant John Ehrlichman, to perform covert activities for the White House. Among the various illegal activities performed by this unit was the organizing of gangs to attack antiwar demonstrators. See Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, pp.412-13; Wittner, *Cold War America*, p.339.

18. Gitlin, *The Sixties*, p.410: "All in all, it was by far the largest number of students ever to demonstrate in a single spasm."

19. Gitlin, p.410, writes that National Guard units were mobilized on twenty-three campuses in sixteen states.

20. Ronald Reagan, in "'Bloodbath' Remark by Gov. Reagan," *The San Francisco Chronicle*, April 8, 1970, p.1; as cited in Gitlin, *The Sixties*, p.414-5.

21. John Mitchell, as cited by Schell, *The Time of Illusion*, p.124.

22. As cited in Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America*, p.353.

Just before the congressional election of 1970, Nixon himself went on the campaign trail to assail American liberalism for having allowed a "creeping permissiveness -- in our legislatures, in our courts, in our family life, in our universities." [See Schell, *The Time of Illusion*, p.131.] In his campaign speeches, Nixon explicitly blamed the leniency of the liberal Democrats for having allowed "the terrorists of the far left" to "erode...the strength of freedom in our society," and disrupt the smooth running of the state and its institutions. [*Ibid.*]

23. William Shirer, *Los Angeles Times*, March 13, 1970; as cited in Marcuse, *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, p.25.

24. Richard Scammon and Benjamin Wattenberg, *The Real Majority* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).

Scammon and Wattenberg concluded that whereas the American electorate had previously been concerned with economic and military issues when going to the polls, there had recently been a major shift in the electorate toward what the authors called the "Social Issue." This broad "issue" was comprised of increased concern with social problems -- such as protest, crime, drugs, pornography, promiscuity -- which were perceived to be uprooting the underpinnings of traditional values. As Scammon and Wattenberg stated

While the economic issues of the past will continue to shape much of our politics in whatever form they may appear, the Social Issue is a new factor in the political equation -- or at least it is new in terms of its present massive impact. While we know less about it than we do of its economic counterpart, it seems clear that it will have great political effect in the years to come. When voters are afraid, they will vote their fears. (p.44)

25. Thomas M. Messer, "Preface," *Guggenheim International Exhibition 1967: Sculpture From Twenty Nations*, 20 October 1967- 4 February 1968 (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1967), p.10.

26. Harry F. Guggenheim, letter to H.H. Arnason and Thomas M. Messer, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, dated February 7, 1964. Guggenheim continues

And again I had the hope that somewhere in the whole world one painting or sculpture of greatness, regardless of art form, would be found every two or three years that could be accepted and acclaimed by knowledgeable critics throughout the art world.

27. Following the 1964 International, the administrators of the Guggenheim Museum decided to convert the award concept from that of an outright grant to a purchase prize. In this way what were selected as the best works from the exhibition would be added to the Museum's permanent collection.

28. Harry F. Guggenheim, as quoted in the press release, "The Guggenheim International Awards," March 9, 1956. The full quote reads: "We at the Foundation hope that the award will not only be significant in the field of art but will also be an important manifestation of international goodwill."

"International goodwill" was a recurring theme throughout the International series. For example, in the press release "Guggenheim International Exhibition 1967: Sculpture From Twenty Nations," September 10, 1967, Museum President Harry Guggenheim states:

The hopes for the Exhibitions have been from the outset that they would be significant in the field of art and also would be an important manifestation of international goodwill. The methods and rules for the Guggenheim Internationals have been modified over the years as we have sought constantly to find a formula that would achieve these objectives as nearly as possible.

Harry Guggenheim had hoped from the outset that the International series would become the cultural equivalent to the Nobel Prize. See Harry F. Guggenheim, Letter to H.H. Arnason and Thomas M. Messer, dated February 7, 1964, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

29. Press Release, "Memorandum: The Guggenheim International Awards," released for publication in newspapers of March 16, 1956, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

In the catalogue for the Sixth International, Messer stated retrospectively that one of the primary suppositions which brought this series into being was the "then current and, in retrospect, perhaps naive assumption that an objectively functioning machinery could be set up to comb the world for the purpose of locating and rewarding the highest level of contemporary artistic achievement." (p.9)

30. The National Section Award Juries, of which there were twenty-four in 1956, each consisted of three jurors. The jurors were appointed by the local branch of the three international organizations involved in the "objectively functioning machinery." Each organization had the power to appoint one of the National Section jurors. It was stipulated that the jurors were to be citizens of the nation they represented. Their role was to award \$1,000 to what they concluded was the best work produced in their country in the past few years. The prize winning work, along with four additional works selected by each the the National Section Juries, were then submitted to the International Award Jury. The members of the International Award Jury were to be duly elected by the representatives of the National Section Juries. It was the International Award Jury's responsibility to select the winner of the Guggenheim International Award prize of \$10,000, and four subsidiary prizes of \$2,500. In total, there was an extraordinary amount of money being doled out. In 1956, for example, the First Guggenheim International distributed approximately \$50,000 in award money.

For a more detailed breakdown of the role of the various organizations which together combined to make up "objectively functioning machinery" of the International Awards, see Press Release, "Memorandum: The Guggenheim International Awards," dated March 16, 1956, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

31. On Eisenhower's acceptance of liberalism in the late 1950s, see James Gilbert, *Another Chance: Postwar America, 1945-1968*, p.235; and Godfrey Hodgson, *America In Our Time*, p.72.

32. Harry F. Guggenheim, Press Release, dated March 9, 1956, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives:

The President's interest in art, manifested in his report to Congress, which has been a great inspiration for art in the United States, led me to hope that he would look with favor on establishment of this International Award, which he has done.

The first two recipients of the International Award, the Englishman Ben Nicholson in 1956 for his *August, 1956 (Val D'Orcia)*, and the Spaniard Joan Miro in 1958 for his *Night and Day*, were presented their awards by President Eisenhower at the White House, Washington, D.C.. (figs.1-2)

33. Given that such an incredibly paranoid attitude towards culture as was manifest under McCarthyism could coincide with the Eisenhower Administration, it stands to reason that such an Administration would be at the very least trepidacious regarding those cultural expressions that it chose to sanction. Should one doubt the veracity of claims citing a contiguity between the politics of the Eisenhower Administration and the politics of the American avant-garde, it is well worth asking what is the likelihood of the Eisenhower Administration sponsoring a culture that was in any way antithetical to its own political ambitions?

34. Harry F. Guggenheim, letter to Sir Philip Hendy, President of the International Council of Museums, Oct, 1961, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

35. Like the promotion of "international goodwill," emphasis on "the best" was also a recurring theme in this International series. See for example Thomas M. Messer in the "Preface" to the exhibition catalogue for the *Guggenheim International Exhibition 1967: Sculpture From Twenty Nations*, p.10.

36. The influence of Clement Greenberg on the officials of the Guggenheim was conveyed to me by Edward Fry in a telephone interview, February 22, 1989.

Greenberg's central thesis is that art can be objectively evaluated regardless of where it is from. This argument is fundamental in all of his writings. See in particular "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review*, 6 (Fall 1939), pp.34-49, and his comments in the "Discussion After T.J. Clark," *Modernism and Modernity: The Vancouver Conference Papers*, ed. Benjamin Buchloh, et al., pp.188-193.

37. Thomas M. Messer, exhibition catalogue for the *Guggenheim International Exhibition 1967: Sculpture From Twenty Nations*, 20 October 1967- February 4 1968 (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1971), p.11.

38. Perhaps no other single incident in the history of modern art has obviated the deficiencies of this evaluative means than the acceptance of Daniel Buren's work for the Sixth Guggenheim International. As we will see, Buren's work easily satisfies all of the essential criteria of this evaluative means. However, while it meets these criteria quite adequately, it also stands in stark dialectical opposition to them.

39. As Greenberg wrote in 1948 in a "Letter to the Editor of *The Nation* on January 31, 1948, "As far as I know, I do not prescribe to art, and I am willing to like anything, provided I enjoy it enough. That is my only criterion, ultimately." As cited by John O'Brian in his "Introduction" to *Clement Greenberg Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 2: *Arrogant Purpose 1945-1949* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.xxiii.

40. According to Lawrence Alloway, "'Reality': Ideology at D5," *Artforum*, 10 (October 1972), p.30, the organizers of the 1971 International turned to a small but powerful coalition of dealers of avant-garde art for assistance in facilitating cooperation with artists. This coalition was comprised of Leo Castelli and Virginia Dwan in New York, Heiner Friedrich and Konrad Fischer in West Germany, and Gian Enzo Sperone who had a gallery in New York and many connections in the Italian art world. Alloway explains that by the early 1970s it was a common practice for museums to collaborate with art dealers in shows of contemporary art, and was "well within the tolerances of mid-century role-taking in the art world."

The fact that nine of the twenty-one artists who participated in the 1971 Guggenheim International Exhibition were represented by Castelli, indicates the immense influence which this particular New York art dealer had over the selection of the International. [These were the Americans Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Joseph Kosuth, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra and Lawrence Weiner, the German Hanna Darboven, and the Dutch Jan Dibbets. See Laura de Coppet & Alan Jones, *The Art Dealers: The Powers Behind*

the Scene Talk About the Business of Art (New York: Potter, 1984), pp.100-106.

41. Thomas M. Messer, "Preface" to the exhibition catalogue for the *Guggenheim International Exhibition: 1971*, 11 February- 11 April, 1971 (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1971), p.11.

42. *Ibid.*, p.10.

43. *Ibid.*, p.11.

44. In "New Dimensions/ Time-Space: Western Europe and the United States," a catalogue essay included in *Guggenheim International Exhibition: 1971*, pp.15-24, Diane Waldman refers to the Minimalists when she writes that,

The Sixth Guggenheim International thus takes its point of departure from the premises established by these sculptors during the middle sixties. (p.15)

The official press release for the 1971 International also identifies the important role which Minimal art played on the "current trends" in art represented in this exhibit. See "Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition Opens February 12," January 29, 1971, p.2, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

45. Thomas M. Messer, "'Which is in fact what happened': Thomas M. Messer in an interview with Barbara Reise 25 April, 1971," *Studio International*, 182 (July/August 1971), p.37: "for all the artists who showed in the Guggenheim International, the building served as a point of departure."

Diane Waldman, "Statement by Diane Waldman," *Studio International*, 181 (May/June 1971), p.247: "The framework of the exhibition was therefore a vital factor from the onset, as was the museum space itself...the artists created work specifically for the situation."

46. For instance, with his piece titled *Brooklyn Clay* (fig.3), Richard Long celebrated Wright's architecture by imprinting eight tracks of mud on the floor plan of the Guggenheim. The mud tracks radiated from the very top ramp of the Museum and widened apart as one followed them down, echoing the spiral architecture of the Museum while conforming to the curve of the viewing ramp. Each path of the pinkish brown surface ended at a point in the deep right hand corner of each of the eight exhibition niches which Long was allotted.

Indeed, most of the works produced for the International were quite novel. For his situation-specific piece, the Dutch Conceptual artist Jan Dibbets had the museum staff photograph the whole of the ground-floor window

of the Guggenheim at one hour intervals from sunrise to sunset on December 21, 1970 -- the shortest day of the year. Appropriately titled *The Shortest Day of 1970 Photographed from Sunrise to Sunset*, The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York, the prints which constituted the work were then exhibited during the International.

The American Process artist Bruce Nauman's solution in terms of site was to produce a type of phenomenological investigation of one of the niches of the Guggenheim which manipulated the lighting, walls, and slanted floor of the Museum. Nauman's installation, titled *Bar Piece* (fig.4), consisted of simply one two-inch by four-inch bar of wood, placed at eye-level and spanning the exhibition niche. Since the bar of wood paralleled the earth, while the floor of the Museum slants at a three-degree plane, the left side of the bar was higher than the right. The lighting of the niche was arranged in such a way that it darkened the center of the bar, while rendering the right and left ends which butted into the walls almost white.

In order to engage with the specific architecture of the Guggenheim Museum the Italian avant-garde artist Mario Merz placed a series of fifteen blue neon lights on the outer face of the rising spiral walls of the Museum. Titled *Fibonacci's Progression* (fig.5), the neon lights in Merz's installation denoted numerical figures. The digits enacted a spiraling mathematical progression based on the theory of Leonardo Fibonacci in which numbers develop in progressive series toward infinity, starting from number one, with each successive number adding onto the one following it. As Merz explained, "This compounding of each number in the one that follows is the basic, rhythmic law of numbers in which Fibonacci develops the mathematics of organic growth in nature."

Further extremes in the use of site were taken by the Americans Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner, the Brazilian Antonio Dias, and the Japanese Jiro Takamatsu, all of whom went a step farther along in adapting their works to the Guggenheim space. Each of their contributions to this show involved the direct communication of ideas depending heavily upon the written word. For example, for his piece entitled *The Eighth Investigation: Proposition One*, Kosuth arranged tables and chairs for viewers to sit and read material on time and linguistics. On the wall of the facing niche, Kosuth set up a bank of international clocks which would tick away as people read. Weiner used the written word to negate every visual possibility by leaving a niche empty, and issuing two banal statements in the catalogue: one which read "Flanked Beside" and the other "Done Without."

47. Press release, "Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition Opens February 12," dated January 29, 1971, p.2, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

48. As cited in the memo "Guests for T M M party," in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

49. As cited in the memo "Prior to the opening of the Eleventh (11th) Guggenheim International Exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum Feb 11th 1971," in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

50. As cited in the memo "Guest of VIP for GIE Opening 2/ii/7i," in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

51. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives have a sixteen millimeter, four minute film of the 1971 Guggenheim International, which was made by the United States Information Service (USIS). The contents of this film consist of Director Messer taking the camera on a guided tour of the International exhibition. When on February 17, 1989, I asked Ward Jackson, the Chief Archivist of the Guggenheim Museum, what function the film served, I was informed that it was distributed abroad, "behind the Iron Curtain and places like that."

According to *International Information, Education and Cultural Relations: Recommendations for the Future*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1975, p.28, the USIS is a foreign intelligence agency whose role includes the

familiarization of foreign audiences with American life and institutions through seminars, articles, lectures, films, and radio/TV programs.

52. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), p.376.

When President Nixon sent New York Governor Rockefeller and an entourage on a fact-finding tour of Latin America in 1969, they reported back to the President that "forces of anarchy, terror, and subversion are loose in the Americas," and called for major new counter-insurgency in the region. But it was the coming to power of left-wing governments in several of these countries, and their nationalization of U.S. based industries, which worried the Nixon Administration the most. Fearing the spread of Communism and subsequent threats to U.S. interests in Latin America, the Administration intensified its propaganda campaigns in that region. The Latin American nations were, as Rockefeller succinctly put it, extremely important to U.S. interests and should be kept under the American sphere of influence because "the United States depends on them to provide a vast market for our manufactured goods" and "looks to them for raw materials for our industries." [See Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America: From Hiroshima to Watergate*, p.360.]

The trustees of the Guggenheim Museum also had personal reasons for wanting to influence the perception of American culture in Latin America. Soon after the election of

Salvador Allende in Chile in 1970, a giant subsidiary of the Kennecott Copper Corporation operating in that country was nationalized. The President of the Guggenheim, Peter O. Lawson-Johnston, was a member of the Board of Directors of the Kennecott Copper Corporation at the time of the nationalization, and one of the trustees of the Guggenheim, Frank R. Milliken, was the President of this corporation. As Hans Haacke found in his research on "Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Board of Trustees" (1974) reproduced in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1986), pp.110-17, representatives of the Kennecott Copper Corporation were in 1973 called before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations who were investigating U.S.-directed efforts to destabilize Chile.

53. Grace Glueck, "Nay-Sayers," *New York Times*, March 21, 1971, IV, p.22.

54. Edward Said, "Secular Criticism," *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 9.

55. Brian O'Doherty, "Introduction" (1971), in *Museums in Crisis* (New York: Braziller, 1972), p.3. In the early 1970s, O'Doherty was the Program Director of the NEA's Visual Arts program.

For a discussion of the rising deficits of New York museums in the late 1960s and early 1970s, see Karl E. Meyer, *The Art Museum: Power, Money, Ethics* (New York: William Morrow, 1979), p.15, p.59-60, passim; and Brian O'Doherty, ed., *Museums in Crisis*, passim.

56. Thomas M. Messer, from "Project Grant Application," National Foundation for the Arts, dated February 23, 1971, in National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities Archives, Washington, D.C..

Thomas M. Messer, in a personal interview which I conducted with him in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum on February 16, 1989, informed me of the seriousness of the budget crisis which the Museum faced in the early 1970s, and of how the impending crisis might affect the Museum's standards.

Karl Meyer, in *The Art Museum: Power, Money, Ethics*, p.143, writes that the fiscal problem of the Guggenheim Museum was due to decreased revenue from admissions, combined with operating costs: "Since the Wright building was not energy-efficient, it became increasingly costly to heat and to air-condition its 1,265,000 cubic feet." Thus by the early 1970s, the annual deficit was in the vicinity of a quarter of a million dollars.

In order to meet its operating deficits, beginning in the early 1970s the Guggenheim Museum was forced to deplete its endowment. This was "an inauspicious route," as Messer later explained in an interview with Barbaralee

Diamondstein: "If it [the money to cover the deficit] comes out of the endowment long enough and big enough, there won't be any endowment." [Barbaralee Diamondstein, "Interview with Thomas M. Messer," *Inside New York's Art World* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), p.237.]

57. Personal correspondence from Edward Fry, dated March 5, 1989. Fry writes:

The financial crisis preceded the Buren incident.... I do remember a meeting of the entire curatorial staff at Messer's house in late 1970 or early 1971 to discuss the budget crisis, and also discussing with Messer at another time that winter whether to seek public or private funding.

58. Messer was quite open about the Guggenheim's strategy: "Our plan is to...enlist support of a growing membership; *play as hard for the government dollar as we can*, and seek corporation support." [Thomas M. Messer interviewed by Barbaralee Diamondstein, in *Inside New York's Artworld*, p.238. Italics mine.]

In a personal interview with Thomas M. Messer, February 16, 1989, he informed me that authority in Guggenheim Museum is distributed hierarchically from the Trustees, down to the Director, and then to the lesser officials like Curators. Thus for example in times of financial crisis the Trustees request that the Director propose a solution to the problem, and the Director's responsibility in turn is to try to work out a solution with the lesser Museum officials. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that the Director's decisions are always accountable to the Trustees.

59. Senator Jacob Javits, as cited in Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living*, p.103.

60. President Lyndon B. Johnson, National Endowment for the Arts, "The National Council for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts during the Administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson: The History," Vol. 1, (unpublished document available from the Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas, 1968), p.9; as cited in Fannie Taylor and Anthony L. Barresi, *The Arts at a New Frontier* (New York & London: Plenum, 1984), p.37.

Some of the most prominent politicians to lobby the federal government for an arts program were Governor (later Vice-President) Nelson Rockefeller, Senator Jacob Javits, and Congressman (later New York Mayor) John Lindsay. All three of the politicians cited above were Republicans in a constituency with a large cluster of liberal voters, therefore their receptiveness to an "art's constituency" was pragmatic in more ways than one. Moreover, since the Second World War, New York City's art market had become increasingly dominant both nationally and internationally.

Therefore it is hardly surprising that politicians from this part of the country should take an active role in mustering up government support to the arts. See Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1982), p.100-10, for a good discussion on New York politicians and their "interest" in the arts; and Dick Netzer, *The Subsidized Muse: Public Support for the Arts in the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.61-2, for a discussion of the "political history" of the NEA.

61. Fannie Taylor and Anthony L. Barresi, *The Arts at a New Frontier: The National Endowment for the Arts*, p.169. In their "Appendix A: National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities," p.244, Taylor and Barresi cite authorization of funds to the NEA as \$8,250,000 in Fiscal 1970, and \$72,500,000 in Fiscal 1974.

According to the NEA's official records, the shifting governmental attitude towards the arts was especially sharp between 1970-1972, rendering these years as ones which "will undoubtedly be judged in the future reckoning of the arts in America as among the most significant in their history." [NEA, *New Dimensions for the Arts 1971-1972*, Washington, 1972, p.5; as cited in Taylor and Barresi, p. 143.]

62. The irony that the Nixon Administration should increase the allotment of federal funds to the arts was heightened by the nation's deteriorating economic situation. For example, Lawrence Wittner writes in *Cold War America*, p.354, that

During the first eighteen months of the Nixon Administration, unemployment climbed to over 5 per cent, real weekly earnings declined, and the nation entered its worst recession in a decade.

On the Nixon Administration's "highly organized drive to cutback even the existing programs," see Jonathan Schell, *The Time of Illusion* (New York: Knopf, 1976), p.340. For a discussion of how "Nixon worked to cut back social programs," see Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America: From Hiroshima to Watergate* (New York & Washington: Praeger, 1974), pp.340, 356-7. For a sympathetic analysis of "Nixon's explicit war against the War on Poverty," see Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1979), pp.226-28.

The Nixon Administration's support for the NEA took many people by surprise. Upon Nixon's election to the White House, many had predicted that the new Administration would be disastrous for arts funding. This belief was underscored by an "Editorial" in *Arts*, 43 (March 1969), p.5, published two months into the Nixon Administration's first term:

President Nixon and his advisors must start with an invidious fact: their predecessor, Lyndon B. Johnson, did more for the arts in America than any previous President even though it was pitifully little.... Due to his deep commitment to the role of corporate enterprise in our national life, the President might transfer the government's responsibility for the funding for the arts to Big Business, completely and unqualifiedly.

63. John J. O'Connor, "Mr. Nixon on 'The Quality of Life'," *Wall Street Journal*, January 2, 1970, p.6.

During its early years, the Nixon Administration's cultural policy was comprised of vague, ambiguous and often confusing statements. On the surface, it appeared to endorse a continuation of the United States government's practice of using American avant-garde art as proof of American's liberal attitudes. In the 1950s and 1960s avant-garde art was invoked to support the claims of American freedom and democracy in the context of the Cold War. The "revisionist" interpretation of the period following the Second World War, such as expressed by Max Kozloff, Eva Cockcroft, Serge Guilbaut, and others, shows that United States government agencies, with the help of important New York museums, began to promote avant-garde art abroad. In the United States, certain cultural and political elites realized that an argument could be made to the effect that the ideology of the American avant-garde art group which came to be called the Abstract Expressionists, and the form taken by their paintings, paralleled the ideology of "new liberalism" and Cold War aggression which had swept post-war America. This political ideology saw the image of dissidence within the country's cultural sphere as an opportunity to promote the myth abroad of the freedom that existed in America. Furthermore, this image could be used to enhance American claims that the Cold War was the fault of the communist countries' inability to tolerate dissidence. Intolerance at the domestic level was used as proof that aggression and intractability were fundamental to the communist nature. The suppression of avant-garde works of art as well as of the ideology of modernism by Nazi Germany and Stalinism, further supported the argument that those nation-states which accepted the avant-garde were in fact the defenders of artistic freedom, and, by extension, of freedom in general. Of course, it does not follow that since one group who suppresses the avant-garde is generally repressive, that another group is generally progressive if it does not suppress it. Nevertheless, Cold War battles were often fueled on such specious and underdeveloped arguments.

The success with which the New York School of painters was launched and endorsed internationally led to subsequent claims of the supremacy of American avant-garde art, referred to as the "triumph of American painting." The strong international profile gave credence to the promotion

of New York as the center of the avant-garde. Propagation of the image of New York City as the cultural center of the world would greatly benefit the United States. As a nation which aspires to be a world leader imitated by others, American imperialist ambitions would be fortified by the establishment of New York as the world art center. Once the country's centrality and primacy had been established, by virtue of this fact alone, other nations would be attracted to and strive to imitate the United States. See Edward Said, "Secular Criticism," *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, pp.1-30.

64. The use of culture by American Federal Administrations in the particular twenty year period that I am discussing has not yet been analyzed in sufficient depth. However, what is important for my study is that there was an apparent overlap in the rhetoric with which these Administrations addressed culture. For example, compare President Kennedy's statement during the dedication of the Robert Frost Library on October 26, 1963: "Art establishes the basic truths which must serve as the touchstones of our judgement," and President Johnson's remark at the signing ceremony for the NEA on September 29, 1965:

Art is a nation's most precious heritage, for it is in our works of art that we reveal to ourselves, and to others, the inner vision which guides us as a nation

with Nixon's remarks when campaigning for President in 1968:

Art is the most profound and ultimately the most sacred form of freedom of expression that we have. Within its depths and its mysteries is the source of new ways of looking at the world and ourselves.

Underlying each of the three Presidents' comments on art, there is an invocation of universality. [See John F. Kennedy, "The Artist in America," *New York Times*, October 27, 1963, p.83; Lyndon B. Johnson, National Endowment for the Arts, "The History," p.22, as quoted by Taylor and Barresi, *The Arts at a New Frontier*, p.49; Richard M. Nixon, as cited in "Richard Nixon," *Arts*, 43 (November 1968), p.6.]

65. "Freedom," as Serge Guilbaut writes in *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1983), "was the symbol most actively and vigorously promoted" during the early years of the Cold War. (p.201)

66. Excerpts from this text of the President's remarks to the Associated Councils of the Arts, Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C., May 26, 1971, appear in Taylor and Barresi, *The Arts at a New Frontier*, pp.147-148.

The notion of freedom to which Nixon appeals appears to be closely connected with the Cold War rhetoric one finds, for instance, in President Truman's famous "Truman Doctrine" speech to Congress in March of 1947, in which he constructed a diametrical opposition between American freedom and communist oppression. Truman maintained that the principal difference between the two forms of political life lies in the degree of self-expression permitted the individual:

One way is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion and freedom from political repression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression and controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

Given the historical sequence of events, one can see how connections may have been drawn between ideas of political self-expression, American political dominance, and American cultural dominance. [See Harry S. Truman, "Truman Doctrine" speech delivered to Congress on March 12, 1947; as quoted in David Horowitz, *From Yalta to Vietnam: American Foreign Policy in the Cold War* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1967), p.68.]

The similarities between the Nixon's notion of "freedom" and that of Cold War rhetoric were further accentuated by Nixon's statements on national television on April 30, 1970, when he officially informed the nation that he had ordered American combat troops and bombers into Cambodia to "clean out" Communists in the name of "freedom":

We will not be humiliated. We will not be defeated. If the U.S. acts like a pitiful helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world.

Richard Nixon, as quoted by Wittner, *Cold War America*, p.350

67. Richard Nixon, Special Message to Congress, December 10, 1969, reprinted as "Mr. Nixon on 'The Quality of Life'," in *Wall Street Journal*, January 2, 1970, p.6.

68. When I interviewed Thomas M. Messer, February 16, 1989, he informed me that the International series was the Guggenheim's most prestigious event.

69. These languages included German, French, Japanese, Polish, Yugoslavian, Greek and Spanish. These exhibitions were also recorded on film by the USIA's motion picture service, *NEWS OF THE DAY*, to be distributed to libraries and news services abroad. See the "Guggenheim International

Award 1960 Press Preview Data: Background Based on GIA 1958," and "Guggenheim International Awards: Press Review" (1960) for more details, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

70. In a letter to Sir Philip Hendy, President of the International Council of Museums, Oct, 1961, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, Harry Guggenheim states that

Our Trustees now feel that we have gained enough experience in these last three Awards so that we should restudy their structure and determine whether there are means by which this can be made more efficient and effective.

71. Laurie Monahan, in "The New Frontier Goes To Venice: Robert Rauchenberg and the XXXII Venice Biennale" (Masters thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985), p.6, has shown that with the coming to power of the Kennedy Administration, although the aims remained essentially the same, the manner in which the United States government employed the cultural dominance strategy changed:

While the aims of the U.S. government had not changed substantially [in regard to its efforts to advance its claims of freedom and democracy with respect to the Cold War] by the 1960s, the way in which they were expressed was altered under the Kennedy Administration. In part this was an organizational change of 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.

72. Grace Glueck, "At the Guggenheim International, They Know What They Don't Like," *New York Times*, January 26, 1964, II, p.22. As is well known, one of the top priorities of the United States government in the 1960s was to topple the communist regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba. When economic sanctions, political pressure, and U.S. backed bombing raids and landing attempts failed to affect the stability of the Cuban government, the U.S. resorted to more covert methods. See Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey*, pp.197-205.

The honouring of a Cuban painter by a major New York Museum like the Guggenheim, can thus be seen as part of an attempt to advance the claims of American freedom and democracy as opposed to Cuban intransigence. The Guggenheim's co-operation with the Voice of America, a pirate radio station operated by the USIA, would ensure that the message was communicated over Cuban airwaves.

73. Although Minimalism had been featured in large 1966 shows such as the Jewish Museum's "Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors" (1966), and the Guggenheim's "Systematic Painting" (1966), it was only after 1967, in major exhibitions like the Museum of Modern Art's "Art of the Real" (1968), and the "Documenta IV" (1968), that it began to be promoted as the most important avant-garde movement of the late 1960s.

The 1967 International, curated by Museum Director Thomas M. Messer and Edward Fry, was comprised of over 100 works of sculpture produced in the 1960s. This exhibition featured eighty artists from twenty nations and travelled to three major cities in Canada: Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal. Artists from a wide range of countries were selected, including Australia, Japan, Israel, Colombia, and most of the countries of Western Europe. The Fifth International also marked the inclusion of the largest amount of artists ever from Eastern bloc countries, with a total of six artists selected from Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

The critical reception to the 1967 show by the local and national press was generally positive. For instance, Hilton Kramer, "Sculpture: No Surprises," *New York Times*, October 20, 1967, p.52, praised the show's organizers for having done a "commendable" job:

As anthologies go, this one is not at all a bad one. The organizers of the exhibition...display a commendable intelligence and caution.... The first thing to be said about the installation is that Frank Lloyd Wright remains pre-eminent in this exhibition; there is no work in the show that can compete with the grandeur of his forms and the sheer imperiousness of the space he has created in this building. But the second thing to be said is that the directors of the exhibition have done exceedingly well in struggling with a difficult problem.

74. The Guggenheim Museum's first formal request for financial assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts is dated February 23, 1971. See "Project Grant Application" (#A11296 71) in the archives of the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C..

75. Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn, "Don Judd," *The Fox*, 2 (1975), p.138.

76. *Ibid.* Judd listed these neutral sculptural materials as "formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglass, red and common brass and so forth." See Donald Judd, "Specific Objects" (1965), reprinted in *Complete Writings* (New York & Halifax: NASCAD Press, 1975), p.123.

77. *Ibid.*

78. Beveridge and Burn, "Don Judd," *The Fox*, p.138. This aspect of Beveridge and Burn's argument is complemented by Ernest Mandel, who in *Late Capitalism*, trans. Joris De Bres (London: NLB, 1975), p.509, writes that "The real idol of late capitalism is...the 'specialist'."

79. Messer, *Guggenheim International Exhibition: 1971*, p.9. According to Messer, museums, "which, after all, were made for objects," had found themselves in a serious predicament in the late 1960s as the object was rapidly receding from view. (p.9)

80. In Thomas M. Messer, "Impossible Art -- Why It Is?" *Art in America*, 57 (May/June 1969), p.31, the Director of the Guggenheim complained that the new art trends seemed to deny the "machinery consisting of dealers, critics and museums." Messer went on to express his concern that the new art, because it was resistant to its commodification, engendered

an unease upon that other art -- the art of the beautiful object, which in private collections, in art galleries and on museum walls and pedestals continues to play its part. (p.31)

81. Waldman, "New Dimensions/ Time-Space," in *Guggenheim International Exhibition: 1971*, p.15.

82. *Ibid.*, p.16. Even if we leave aside the dubious claim that the Minimalists were "de-emphasizing the importance of the end-state," Waldman's statements are still highly problematic. The issue of de-emphasizing the importance of the end-state has been fundamental to modern art. For example, the negation of tonality in the paintings of Edward Manet, the broken brushwork and radical cropping of Impressionist painting, Pablo Picasso's use of newsprint in Cubist collage, Andre Masson's automatic paintings (!), and so forth, all downplayed a concern with the end-state. Clearly, in the catalogue for the Sixth International Waldman was disseminating her ignorance on a broad cultural platform.

De-emphasizing the end-state is one of the "practices of negation" which social art historian T.J. Clark, in "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art" (1982), *Pollock and After*, ed. Francis Frascina, p.55, argues have characterized avant-garde practice. Clark defines "practices of negation" as

some form of decisive innovation, in method or materials or imagery, whereby a previously established set of skills or frame of reference -- skills and references which up till then had been taken as essential to art-making of any seriousness -- are

deliberately avoided or travestied, in such a way as to imply that only by such incompetence or obscurity will genuine picturing get done.

For an interesting discussion of how the end-state was anything but "de-emphasized" in Donald Judd's "specific objects," see Charles Reeve, "Squarehead" (Masters thesis, University of British Columbia, 1989).

83. Richard Nixon, Special Message to Congress, December 10, 1969, reprinted as "Mr. Nixon on 'The Quality of Life'," in *Wall Street Journal*, p.6.

84. This would be a case of what Edward Said in "Secular Criticism" *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, calls the "power of culture." According to Said, a culture "by virtue of its elevated or superior position to authorize, to dominate, to legitimate, demote, interdict, and validate" is empowered to dictate standards of appropriateness and acceptability. In this way, it functions as "an agent of, and perhaps the main agency for, powerful differentiation within its domain and beyond it too." (p.9) Assumption of the ideology of objectivity in values is an essential part of the cultural dominance strategy. The strategy involves a straightforward claim with respect to cultural superiority, a self-validating argument backed by the problematic but unquestioned assumption of objectivity. The strategy also discredits by implication any claims to the contrary, which other cultures might make with respect to their own self-sufficiency. As Said argues, in our highly technologized age modern methods of communication enable those who are in control of communication networks to render messages of cultural superiority in a seemingly objective way. That is to say, the standards of one culture are presented in such a way as to encourage the impression that they are universal standards.

In other words, if the United States assumes a position of cultural superiority, it follows by definition that art practitioners in the United States are, as a group, advanced beyond artists in other countries. Furthermore, if we consider the avant-garde from within each country, then the avant-garde in the United States would be the most advanced. Any controversy over what counts as truly avant-garde would be settled simply by consulting practice in America, or more specifically, practice in New York City. Due to the dynamic of cultural power, there is a great deal at stake politically and economically in the contest between countries for cultural primacy.

85. The organizers of the 1971 International were aware of the international character of these new developments of the avant-garde. For instance, curator Diane Waldman wrote in the International's catalogue that

Unlike New York based Pop art and color abstraction, both of which have their sympathetic counterparts in Europe, but whose supremacy has nonetheless been conceded, the work of the last five years is more truly international in scope. (p.15)

The famous show, "The New York School, 1940-1970," which Henry Geldzaler organized in 1970 at the Metropolitan Museum to attempt to prove the supremacy of New York's art establishment, symbolized for many the end of the era when New York had any right to make such claims. See Harold Rosenberg, "Ecole de New York," *New Yorker*, 45 (December 6, 1969), pp.171-84; and Pierre Restany, "1972: The American Crisis and the Great Game of the Establishment," *Domus*, 507 (February 1972), p.51.

86. For example, between 1967 and 1970, the following major international exhibitions were organized in Europe: "Art Povera" in Genoa (1967-68); "Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form," which began at the Bern Kunsthalle (1969), and travelled to Amsterdam and London; "Op Losse Schroven" at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1969); "Prospect '69" at the Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf (1969); the "Konzeption/Conception" at the Stadtische Museum, Leverkusen (1969); "Happenings and Fluxus" at the Kunstverein, Cologne (1970); as well as Seth Seigelaub's project whereby he restructured the magazine format into an exhibition by inviting guest curators/editors to select artists who would then produce site specific pieces for the July/August 1969 issue of *Studio International*.

87. "Information," The Museum of Modern Art, 2 July- 20 September 1970, organized by Kynaston McShine; New York Cultural Center's "Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects," New York Cultural Center, 10 April- 25 August 1970, organized by Donald Karshan; "Software," the Jewish Museum, 16 September- 8 November 1970, organized by Jack Burnham.

88. Kynaston L. McShine, "Introduction," *Information* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), p.209.

89. For a critical analysis of this understanding of the avant-garde, see Hadjinicolaou, "The Ideology of Avant-Gardism," *Praxis*, and Perry Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution," *New Left Review*, 144 (March-April 1984), pp.96-113.

90. Harold Rosenberg himself argued that the avant-garde's strenuous requirement that it call attention to itself inevitably scuttled whatever critical value an avant-garde work might have had. As he noted in "The Avant-Garde," *Quality: Its Image in the Arts*, ed. Louis Kronenberger (New York: Atheneum, 1969),

The tie between the vanguard and the middle class becomes visible in the processes by which the movements expand and develop their singular idioms and costumes. Attracting the attention of the bourgeoisie and its patronage becomes, increasingly, the major concern. The result in every case is a dilution of the movement and a dulling of its edge. In the last analysis, all modern art movements are movements toward mediocrity. (p.430)

91. Hilton Kramer, "Art and Politics: Incursions and Conversions" (1970), reprinted in *Age of the Avant-Garde: An Art Chronicle of 1956-1972* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p.528.

92. *Ibid.*

93. Hilton Kramer, "Do You Believe in the Principle of Museums?" *New York Times*, January 18, 1970, II, p.25.

94. See Peter Steinfels, in *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). Citing an article from *Newsweek*, November 7, 1977, Steinfels begins his identification of the neoconservatives as follows:

In intellectual circles, the social thinkers who were the driving force of Democratic liberalism -- men like Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and John Kenneth Galbraith -- have been upstaged by a group of "neoconservative" academics, many of them refugees from the liberal left, including Daniel Bell, Nathan Glazer, Irving Kristol, James Q. Wilson, Edward Banfield, Seymour Martin Lipset and Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan of New York. (p.4)

Steinfels then goes on to list many more members of this group such as Samuel P. Huntington, Lionel Trilling, Norman Podheretz, Roger Starr, and others.

Alexander Bloom, in his review of Steinfels book [*Telos*, 42 (Winter 1979-80), pp. 181-188], takes issue with the latter's claim that neoconservatism is a new phenomenon, and argues instead that although there was a shift in the way that these intellectuals manifested themselves, what they were saying in the 1950s and 1960s was consistent with their point of view in the 1970s. Nonetheless, Bloom agrees with much of Steinfels argument and discusses the early 1970s political landscape in similar terms. Bloom adds that the neoconservatives went on to become some of "the intellectuals most favored in the Republican White House from 1969 to 1977." (p.182)

95. Daniel Bell, "The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism," *The Public Interest*, 21 (Fall 1970), p.18.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*

98. *Ibid.* Bell's abrupt turn from his previous proclamations that the ideological age had ended is striking; yet it provided him with a basis from which to disavow liberalism and the avant-garde.

99. Waldman, "New Dimensions/ Time-Space," in *Guggenheim International Exhibition: 1971*, p.15.

100. Messer, "Impossible Art -- Why It Is?" *Art in America*, p.31.

101. What I am referring to here is the community of interest -- the group of major New York cultural institutions including The Museum of Modern Art, the Jewish Museum, Peggy Guggenheim's Art Of This Century, the Whitney Museum -- which can crudely be summed as concentrated around Clement Greenberg, as well as around a certain group of commercial galleries which had very marked identities and connections with that group of public museums -- e.g., Betty Parsons, Sidney Janis, Pierre Matisse, Charley Egan, and others.

For a discussion on the formation of the relationship between these museums/galleries and Greenberg, see Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, passim; and Cox, *Art-as-Politics: The Abstract Expressionist Avant-Garde and Society*, passim. Also see Sidney Janis' recollections in Laura de Coppet & Alan Jones, *The Art Dealers: The Powers Behind the Scene Talk About the Business of Art*, pp.32-41, for a discussion of how Greenberg's art criticism continued to affect the agendas of New York galleries in the 1950s and into the 1960s.

102. Clement Greenberg, "Where is the Avant-Garde?" *Vogue*, June 1967, p.112.

103. And of traditional culture at that. This is why Greenberg, as early as 1939, saw that the avant-garde was completely dependent on the bourgeoisie. "No culture can develop without a social base," he wrote in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review*, 6 (Fall 1939),

without some source of stable income. And in the case of the avant-garde this was provided by an elite among the ruling class of that society from which it assumed itself to be cut off, but to which it has always remained attached by an umbilical cord of gold. (p.37)

104. Daniel Buren, in "Round And About A Detour," *Studio International*, 181 (May/June 1971), p.246, claims that his installation was "a piece of work which had been known as a project for a considerable time (since October

1970) and accepted in writing by the Museum (6 January 1971)."

In "The Guggenheim Affair: Reply to Diane Waldman," *Studio International*, 182 (July/August 1971), p.5, Buren maintains that he had been in correspondence with the show's curators and had described the work that he anticipated installing in the Guggenheim "in sufficient detail to obtain the exact measurements of the interior of the museum.... Mrs. Waldman even told me the maximum size of canvas I could use (35 feet). A size I adhered to."

When I researched the Guggenheim Museum's archives on the 1971 International, this correspondence was missing from the files, and I was told that Diane Waldman had them in her office because they were confidential.

Edward Fry, another of the curators of this exhibition, informed me in a telephone interview (February 21, 1989) that the Museum had been fully aware ahead of time of what Buren's work would consist of. Fry explained to me that the decision to remove Buren's work came from Museum Director Thomas M. Messer who "was very upset" at the time.

105. Diane Waldman, "Statement by Diane Waldman," *Studio International*, 181 (May/June 1971), p.248. Waldman continues: "This issue was one of incompatibility: there was simply no way of reconciling Buren's project with the other work in the exhibition." (p.248)

106. "'Which is in fact what happened': Thomas M. Messer in an interview with Barbara Reise 25 April, 1971," *Studio International*, p.37.

107. For a discussion of this petition, which was drafted by Buren, see Daniel Buren, "Round And About A Detour," *Studio International*, p.246; Diane Waldman, "Statement by Diane Waldman," *Studio International*, p.248; and Daniel Buren, "The Guggenheim Affair: Reply to Diane Waldman," *Studio International*, p.5.

Following the censorship of Buren's installation, American artist Carl Andre withdrew his own work from the International in solidarity with Buren. In "Statement by Diane Waldman," *Studio International*, p.248, Waldman maintains that Carl Andre removed his installation from the show only because he was "dissatisfied" with his work. These claims were later refuted by Andre, in "Letter to the Editor," *Studio International*, 182 (July/August 1971), p.6, who states that

Daniel Buren's assertion that I removed my work from the Sixth Guggenheim International solely in protest against the suppression of his work is true. Diane Waldman's assertion that I removed my work because of any dissatisfaction with it is not true.

108. Douglas Crimp and Benjamin Buchloh have previously discussed this particular censorship by the Guggenheim Museum in historical articles. In "Daniel Buren's New York Work" (1976), an overview of the reception of the work Buren exhibited in New York between 1970 and 1975, published in the exhibition catalogue for *Discordance/ Coherence*, ed. R.H. Fuchs, (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1976), Crimp takes the official explanation at face value and states that Buren's work was removed "when it was determined that it interrupted the viewing of several other works." (p.75) In "Formalism and Historicity" (1977), an analysis of the differences between European and American art in the postwar period, published in the exhibition catalogue *Europe in the Seventies: Aspects of Recent Art*, 8 October - 27 November, 1977, (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1977), Buchloh also discusses the censorship of Buren's work in terms of the Museum bowing to the "serious objections" raised by a few of the artists in the exhibition. (p.102) However, neither of these studies adequately address the complexities of the matter. They exclusively focus on the relatively minor conflict between the artists, and conclude that the Guggenheim acted as an intermediary for the whims of a few artists. Underlying this supposition is the assumption that artists play a significant role in the administration of museums. In fact, the reverse is true. Museums are not regulated by artists' opinions. It is artists who follow museum's opinions -- that is, if they want to participate in the institutional game. On this issue I agree with the French philosopher Louis Althusser who in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" (1970) explains that it is the ideological apparatuses, of which the cultural apparatus is a part, that function to position the subject/artist in ideology, and not the reverse. And although ideological practice as manifested through the apparatuses has its own "relative autonomy" from economic and political practice, the administration of the apparatus still functions in a hierarchical manner with the apparatus ultimately in control of positioning subjects/artists within the dominant ideology. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. (Notes towards an investigation)" (1969) in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (New York & London: Monthly Review, 1971), pp.127-86.

More specifically, referring to the function of New York museums in the late 1960s, Theresa Schwartz, in "The Politicalization of the Avant-Garde," *Art in America*, 59 (November 1971), p.100, writes:

In New York especially, [during the late 1960s] the contemporary museums (the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney, the Guggenheim) had attained enormous tastemaking power, exercising a profound interest on galleries and collectors, elevating some art styles and making others obsolete. With their ability to make

"stars," they were the most important single influence on an ambitious artist's life.

109. Thomas M. Messer, "'Which is in fact what happened'," *Studio International*, p.37.

110. Insofar as both of Buren's paintings were identical and formed an ensemble, a dialectic was created not only between the painting inside and its Museum context, but also between the painting outside and its street context, between the painting outside and the painting inside, and between the two contexts of street and Museum. Consequently, a rhetoric of private and public space emerged, not by altering the space as such, but rather by enforcing the reality of each space. Opposing the two, inside and outside, the Museum simultaneously became a symbol of private territory with its specialized audience, while being revealed as the place where art is defined and where that mythic definition finds its legitimacy. See Buren, "Round And About A Detour," *Studio International*, p.247.

111. Two days prior to the opening of the 1971 International, Buren informed *New York Times* art correspondent Grace Glueck, the first critic to preview the show in the local press, that "[The Guggenheim Museum] really kills a piece of art, primarily because it's a work of art itself." [Grace Glueck, "Museum Presents Wide Media Range," *New York Times*, February 10, 1971, p.26.]

Buren elaborated on the power of the architecture of the Guggenheim Museum in "Notes on Work In Connection With The Place Where It Is Installed," *Studio International*, 190 (September 1975), where he writes:

The Guggenheim Museum is a perfect example of architecture which although enveloping and welcoming, in fact excludes what is exhibited there (normally) for the benefit of its own exhibition. Holding out its arms, yes, but in order to smother. Any work venturing unconsciously into such an "envelopment" is irrevocably absorbed, swallowed up by the spirals and curves of this architecture. The role of protector, acquired by the Museum, is here taken to the point of paradox by the architect himself. The Guggenheim Museum behaves like an overbearing mother to the art it houses.

Such architecture is damaging to art as it is, and by the same token very clearly reveals the limits of the so-called art. This architecture is heartening. (p.125)

112. When Harry Guggenheim commissioned this building from Frank Lloyd Wright, J.J.Sweeney, then the Director of the Museum, was adamantly opposed to Wright's unconventional design. It was Sweeney's view that Wright's design, an avant-garde statement in its own right, would be unsuitable

for displaying art objects. However Harry Guggenheim disagreed, and Sweeney subsequently resigned six weeks after the new Museum opened. See Meyer, *The Art Museum: Power, Money, Ethics*, p.143.

113. The concept of *bricolage* was first used as a metaphor for mythical thought by Levi Strauss in *The Savage Mind* (1962). See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London & New York: Methuen, 1979), pp.103-104, for an interesting elaboration of this concept.

114. Although this particular power of the museum is made emphatic in the Guggenheim because of its architectural plan, it is characteristic of most museums. The devices which museums employ to order of the visitor's experience are vast. Some of these include arrows which direct people through the building, guide manuals which are usually the only thing in museums distributed at no cost, even the guides or pre-recorded tapes which read the works for spectators also lead the latter on a designated path.

For an interesting analysis of the ways that museums convey ideological meaning through a symbolic structuring of visitors' experiences and perceptions, see Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "Museum of Modern Art As Late Capitalist Ritual: An Iconographic Analysis," *Marxist Perspectives*, 3 (Fall 1978), pp.28-51.

115. This discussion of the function of the architecture in the Guggenheim is indebted to Benjamin Buchloh, "Formalism and Historicity," *Europe in the Seventies*, pp.102-3; and Daniel Buren, "Round And About A Detour," *Studio International*, pp.246-247.

116. The concept of *détournement* was originally articulated by the Situationists to refer to a kind of guerilla warfare of signification, and has connotations of illicit appropriation, piracy, detouring, deflecting, and the sudden reversal of an original meaning or purpose. It is in effect a transformation process whereby the conventional meanings of forms of architecture, urbanism, cinema, advertising, are subverted, and new meanings are created. The fact that the new meanings often have such a broad and drastic range of reverberations -- blatant censorship in the present context -- renders the *détournement* as evidence that the present system of social relations has become forcibly homogenized. The potency of this concept lies in its capability to elicit these revelations.

Détournement was defined in *internationale situationiste*, 1 (June 1958), p.13, as follows:

S'emploie par abréviation de la formule: *détournement d'éléments esthétiques préfabriqués*. Intégration de productions actuelles ou passées des arts dans une construction supérieure du milieu. Dans ce sens il ne

peut y avoir de peinture ou de musique situationniste, mais un usage situationniste de ces moyens. Dans un sens plus primitif, le détournement à l'intérieur des sphères culturelles anciennes est une méthode de propagande, qui témoigne de l'usure et de la perte d'importance de ces sphères.

117. Although Donald Judd's work (fig.9) was installed in one of the ramps which made up the main exhibit area of the Museum, it is very difficult to understand how he could maintain that Buren's painting obstructed some of its view-points. In keeping with the circularity of the building, Judd's installation consisted of two cylinders of sheet metal. These were separated by a nine inch interval. One was fifteen feet in diameter, and the other was placed inside the first. Taking into consideration that the Museum's interior walkway is a three-degree circular plane, Judd's two rings exploited the tilt of the ramp upon which they were placed. The outer circle, twenty-four inches high on its uphill side and thirty-two inches on its downhill side, leveled the slope of the ramp and maintained the horizontal plane. The inner circle, however, paralleled the slope of the ramp. Thus Judd's piece acknowledged the concentricity, the slope and spiral quality of the location, and played the level base of the building off against the ascent of its ramps. By counterposing the circular plane and the incline plane of the building's ramps, Judd had neatly accommodated his work to the Museum's architectural structure. However, since the height of the work echoed the height of the parapet-like walls which serve as a protective railing, Judd's installation was visible from the opposite side of the Museum's spiral only from the higher level floors (and even then only in part). It revealed itself primarily as the spectator approached that part of the ramp where the work was set up. Therefore Judd's claim that a banner placed in the central well of the Museum visually obstructed his work, a work carefully positioned in the spiral and hidden behind the concrete railing, was clearly unfounded.

Walter De Maria joined in protest with Heizer and Judd. His installation took up three succeeding niches to exhibit three large swastikas. The swastika in the center niche was three feet by three feet, and was made of aluminium. In the center of the hollowed out swastika, which protruded four inches from the wall, was placed a stainless steel ball which gave the symbol a maze-like semblance. In the niches on either side of the aluminium sculpture were placed exact-size photos of the swastika in the center niche. Since the three swastikas were suspended on the wall at the viewer's eye-level, the view of De Maria's installation from across the central well of the Museum would have been partially obstructed by a large painting in the center of the Museum. Yet this could have been easily rectified by simply adjusting Buren's banner so that the thin edge aligned with

De Maria's swastikas, thereby solving the problem without having to resort to the drastic measure of censorship.

118. Although Flavin's installation was untitled, it had a lengthy dedication which read: "to Ward Jackson, an old friend and colleague who, when, during Fall, 1957, I finally returned to New York from Washington and joined him to work together in this museum, kindly communicated."

119. In his account of the events that led up to the censorship of his work, Buren explicitly names Flavin as the ringleader of the artists who wanted his work removed. See Buren, "Round And About A Detour," *Studio International*, p.246.

Flavin himself admitted that he "complained about Buren's enormous intrusion" in "Letter to the Editor," *Studio International*, 182 (July/August 1971), p.6. Yet he argued that Buren was purposely seeking to disrupt the *International*, and dismissed Buren as a fly-by-night radical:

It must be a sinister American "petit-bourgeois" "imperialist" plot to please me. Well, I'll have to check out the latest composite fantasies of French radicalist party lines on American artists and their seasonal comforts with little Buren, if ever again he surfaces in New York.

120. Greenberg's analysis maintained that the arts should concern themselves only with the particular contingencies of the medium being employed. For instance, in his central theoretical essay of the 1960s, "Modernist Painting" (1960), *Arts Yearbook*, 4 (1960), pp.101-108, Greenberg insisted that painting should accomplish only those effects which were proper and distinctive to painting alone (e.g., the delimitation of flatness, shape of the support, and properties of pigment), and that its fundamental conditions were to articulate these effects as a unique, unrepeatable and uncopiable cultural experience. Representation, illusionistic space, figuration, gesture, and the like, were seen as extraneous to the art of painting when reduced to its fundamental terms.

121. Part of that same milieu were writers like Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss who studied at Harvard University in the late 1950s when a similar instrumentalism predominated.

122. Dan Flavin, "some remarks...excerpts from a spleenish journal," *Artforum*, 5 (December 1966), p.27.

123. Although Judd's work of the 1960s did not itself embody this idea of site specificity, the manner in which it conceived of the art object shifted the focus away from the

Modernist idea of self-referentiality and made possible the development of site specificity in the work of artists such as Flavin. With Flavin's practice of site specificity, whatever remained in Modernist art of a dialectic between the artwork and the viewer was eliminated. Since the emanating light of his installations completely engulfed the spectator, the experience of the work was one-dimensional. Moreover, the experience was without the possibility of contradiction since the intensity of the viewer's relationship with the objects and site remained consistent as the viewer moved around in the space shared with the object. Even the most basic of reflections that might have remained for the viewer, e.g. to explore the perceptual consequences of the particular intervention performed on the site, were eliminated once the viewer entered into that site and was completely absorbed by it. Thus Flavin's site specific works of art permitted the spectator only a powerless acceptance and enervated passivity. Prohibiting reflection and criticism, these works valorized submission and spectacle. It was this aspect of the new avant-garde art trends that led Herbert Marcuse to complain in "Art as a Form of Reality," *New Left Review*, 74 (July/August 1972), p.57, that rather than destroying "illusion," the new trends had the effect of strengthening it.

124. John Russell, *The Times*, London, March 20, 1971.

125. Waldman, "Statement by Diane Waldman," *Studio International*, p.248.

126. On Buren's elimination of "the concept of progress and perfectibility" from his work, see Daniel Buren, in Georges Boudaille "Entretien avec Daniel Buren: L'Art n'est plus justifiable ou Les points sur les 'i'," *Les Lettres Francaises*, Paris, March 13, 1968, p.29:

En effet, le point le plus important, c'est la prise de conscience de l'élimination du concept du progrès, de perfectibilité.

On the pursuit of the "total depersonalization of the thing on display," see Buren, in Boudaille "Entretien avec Daniel Buren...", *Les Lettres Francaises*, p.29:

Il faut que le fait de répéter entraîne une dépersonnalisation totale de la chose donnée à voir et non que cela devienne un rituel qui n'aurait alors comme fonction que de re-sacraliser l'art.

On the effort to negate all "originality" through his paintings, see Buren, "Beware," *Five Texts*, p.16.

127. Buren spoke of his attempt to remove "the object's quality of being a unique work" during his interview with

Georges Boudaille "Entretien avec Daniel Buren...", *Les Lettres Francaises*, p.29:

La répétition enlève également à l'objet son caractère d'oeuvre unique qui, quel qu'il soit, peut par son unicité être un jour récupéré par l'art.

128. Buren, "Beware," *Five Texts*, p.15. For Buren then depersonalization and the avoidance of evolution are essential components of a formula which comes together to produce a neutral form. As he informed Boudaille in "Entretien avec Daniel Buren...", *Les Lettres Francaises*, p.9, if either of the components is absent, the work immediately leads back to "un art hieratique":

La répétition n'est valable que si elle ne se charge pas elle-même d'une signification. Qu'elle ne devienne pas à son tour mythique. Le second stade, le plus important, c'est de mettre en doute le concept répétitif dans son stade primaire afin de le faire passer du mythique à l'historique.

129. See Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968); and *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill & Wang, 1972).

130. Buren's critique of the dialectical relationship between the aesthetic sign and its environment, parallels Barthes' theory in *Writing Degree Zero* of the possibility of obtaining a (scientific) "zero degree" of language, and his definition in *Mythologies* of "myth" as the inversion of a historical signified into a natural, universal signifier.

131. Buren, "Beware," *Five Texts*, p.12. The "zero degree of writing" was posited by Barthes in *Writing Degree Zero* as a disengaged,

colourless writing, freed from all bondage to a pre-ordained state of language.... [Writing] is then reduced to a sort of negative mood in which the social or mythical characters of a language are abolished in favour of a neutral and inert state of form; thus thought remains wholly responsible [i.e., historical], without being overlaid by a second commitment of form to a History not its own. (pp.76,77)

For Barthes, as for Buren after him, the zero degree of form was seen as capable of resisting the "language-robbery" of myth which turns "an historical reality" into "a natural image of this reality." As he put it in "Myth Today"

In a fully constituted myth, the meaning is never at zero degree, and this is why the concept can distort

it, naturalize it... At bottom, it would only be the zero degree which could resist myth.

Barthes, *Mythologies*, pp.131,142,132.

132. See Andre Parinaud, "Interview with Daniel Buren," *Galerie des Arts*, 50 (February 1968); as reprinted in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (London: Studio Vista, 1973), p.41.

133. Daniel Buren, "Function of the Museum" (1970) in *Five Texts*, trans. Laurent Sauerwein (New York: John Weber Gallery, 1973), p.5.

134. As Benjamin Buchloh argues in "Formalism and Historicity," European artists in the 1960s and 1970s tended to employ different methods of aesthetic signification than did American artists. According to Buchloh, the "prominent specific difference" between American and European art during this period is found in "their different attitudes toward the idea of history and the historicity of art." (p.83) Whereas European art tended to be historicist, dialectical and linguistic, American art in the same period was more pragmatic, positivist and formalist.

135. Buren, "Function of the Museum," *Five Texts*, p.5.

136. Just as one of the prime aims of French intellectuals in the 1960s was the definition of literature within the context of language as a whole, some artists in France, of which Buren and his colleagues in the BMPT group are prime examples, began to put an equivalent effort into the consideration of the different frameworks within which the social definition of art takes place.

137. "The spectacle," according to Guy Debord in *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. anon. (Detroit: Black and Red, 1970), "is the moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life." (thesis 42)

This concept takes the economic theories of the later Marx, in particular *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (1867), and infuses them with the studies on ideology found in Marx's earlier writings such as *The German Ideology* (1945). What results is an update of Marx whereby the commodity and ideology -- in the sense of an upside-down version of reality -- are so perfectly overlapped that they become one. For example, compare the first sentence of Marx's chapter on "Commodities and Money," in *Capital*, vol. 1 (The Process of Capitalist Production), 1867, ed. F. Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967):

The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as "an

immense accumulation of commodities," its unit being a single commodity. (p.35)

with the first thesis to Debord's *Society of the Spectacle*:

In societies where the modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.

The commodity becomes the spectacle, it becomes "the heart of the unrealism of the real society," as ideology becomes crystalized in the commodity form. (thesis 6) As Debord writes, "The spectacle is capital to such a degree of accumulation that it becomes an image." (thesis 34)

These ideas permeated into the European cultural milieu of the 1960s, especially in France. For instance, Buren has on various occasions remarked on the considerable influence which Debord and the Situationists had on the development of his work, and the work of the BMPT group of which he was a part in the late 1960s. See "A Little Situationism...: Daniel Buren Interviewed by David Batchelor," *Artscribe International*, 66 (November/December 1966), 51-52; and Daniel Buren, *Daniel Buren/ Entrevue: Conversations avec Anne Baldassari* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), p.24.

For the main features of the situationist analysis, see the twelve issues of the journal compiled and reprinted as *internationale situationiste: 1958-69* (Paris: Editions Champs Libre, 1975); Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*; and Raoul Vaneigem, *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Left Bank Books & Rebel Press, 1983); also see Ken Knabb, ed. & trans., *Situationist International Anthology* (Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981).

The discussions on the Situationists which I found most useful were Alfred Willener, *The Action Image of Society: On Cultural Politicization*, trans. A.M. Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1970); Edward Ball, "The Great Sideshow of the Situationist International," *Yale French Studies*, 73 (December 1987), pp.21-37; and Peter Wollen, "From Breton to the Situationists: The Situationist International," *New Left Review*, 174 (April 1989), pp.67-95.

Debord and the Situationist's articulation of the increasingly spectacular nature of capitalist society was complimented in the 1960s by the publication of other texts with similar analyses. For example, Henry Lefebvre's, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, trans. Sacha Rabinovitch (New York: Harper & Row, 1968); Jean Baudrillard's *Le Systeme des objets* (Paris: Denoel-Gonthier, 1968); and Baudrillard's *La Societe de consommation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), also argued that there had been a fundamental shift in capitalist society in the post-Second World War period, from a society of production to a society of consumption.

138. Guy Debord, "Perspectives de modifications conscientes dans la vie quotidienne," *internationale situationiste*, 6 (August 1961), p.25. Debord continues by commenting on the condition of modern art in the increasingly spectacular society:

La disparition de toutes les anciennes valeurs, de toutes les références de la communication ancienne, dans le capitalisme développé; et l'impossibilité de les remplacer par d'autres...produisent non seulement l'insatisfaction particulièrement aigue dans la jeunesse, mais encore le mouvement d'auto-négation de l'art. L'activité artistique avait toujours été seule à rendre compte des problèmes clandestins de la vie quotidienne, quoique d'une manière voilée, déformée, partiellement illusoire. Il existe, sous nos yeux, le témoignage d'une destruction de toute l'expression artistique: c'est l'art moderne.

139. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, thesis 193.

140. Parts of this discussion are indebted to Hans Magnus Enzenburger, "The Industrialization of the Mind" (1962), in *The Consciousness Industry* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), pp.3-15.

On the response by French artists to the perception that the encroachment of the cultural industry on their activities was growing, see the essays in *Art and Confrontation: The Arts in an Age of Change* trans. Nigel Foxell (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1968); and the chapter on "Cultural Politicization: Precedents and Parallels" in Alfred Willener, *The Action Image of Society: On Cultural Politicization*, pp.193-276.

In the late 1960s, many people in France called for the end of art because it had become evident that art was incapable of resisting co-optation and commodification by the "consumer society." The street performance, the political demonstration, the cobble-stone brick, were all described as a superior form of creation than the art object confined in the museum -- the mausoleum of culture. Museums came to be seen as functioning as distribution apparatuses for reified culture; and museum/official culture itself came to be understood as an indispensable ingredient in the commercial and political attempts to confuse the public with a constant barrage of new commodities. [See Michel Ragon, "The Artist and Society," and Andre Fermingier, "'No more Claudels'," both in *Art and Confrontation*, pp. 23-40, and 41-62.]

Similar critiques against the art establishment took place across Europe in the late 1960s. For instance, the 1968 "Documenta IV" exhibition in Kassel, West Germany, was protested by many artists who argued that large commercial exhibitions such as the Documenta served to legitimate the

false claims that democracy and freedom existed in late capitalism:

The propertied classes accumulate art as a capital investment and an object for speculation. Artists become fools who supply a democratic alibi for a society whose affinities with Fascism are becoming more and more obvious.

Quotation taken from leaflet distributed at "Documenta IV," and cited in *Studio International*, 176 (September 1968), pp.63-4.

The belief that cultural politicization could have a progressive effect on society was prevalent not only in Paris, but also in large parts of Europe during the late 1960s. For instance, in Brussels during 1968, hundreds of artists took over the Palais des Beaux Arts, a large profit-making museum run by a private corporation, and hoisted up a banner which read: "THE FIRST REVOLUTION WAS POLITICAL, THE SECOND ECONOMIC, THE THIRD CULTURAL." [See Theresa Schwartz, "The Politicalization of the Avant-Garde," *Art in America*, 59 (November 1971), p.103]

141. Buren, "Critical Limits" (1970), in *Five Texts*, trans. Laurent Sauerwein, (New York: John Weber Gallery, 1973), p.52.

142. As I read it, Buren is here not only alluding to the Situationists theory of spectacle, but also to Marx's theory of production, which in turn was fundamental to Situationist theorizing. This parallel between Buren and Marx becomes clear if we place a few key passages from Marx beside Buren's cultural theory. Specifically important parallels can be found in Marx's view of history as it appears in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 3 (The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole), 1867, ed. F. Engels, trans. Progress Press (Moscow: Progress Press, 1959), and his observations in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852, trans. anon. (New York: International Publishers, 1963), of the process that culminated in art-for-art's-sake. For example, in the chapter titled "The Trinity Formula" in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Marx presents a view of history which explains how

Like all its predecessors, the capitalist process of production proceeds under definite material conditions, which are, however, simultaneously the bearers of definite social relations entered into by individuals in the process of reproducing their life. Those conditions, like these relations, are on the one hand prerequisites, on the other hand results and creations of the capitalist process of production; they are produced and reproduced by it. (pp.818-9)

Thus the capitalist system of production, like the primitive and feudal modes before it, functions by "producing and reproducing" the relations of production. In other words, all production under capitalism -- whether it be of cities, buildings or artworks -- is historical, motivated by the capitalist system of production. Therefore, in capitalist society, precisely because the society is defined by a historically determined system of production, all claims of autonomy, objectivity, or universality, are necessarily false. What that means for art production under capitalism is that art looks the way it does because it is produced under these definite material conditions, which are simultaneously the bearers of definite social relations producing and reproducing themselves. Art then, as Buren states, is historical and "exclusively political."

Buren's observation that it is only in a repressive society that there exists the privilege of "freedom in art" has its foundations in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. There Marx describes the way in which the republican bourgeoisie adopted the despot Louis Bonaparte and, "through the brutal abuse of their own press," called upon him "to suppress and annihilate its speaking and writing section, its politicians and its literati, its platform and its press," in order to secure its control not only of the means of material production, but also of the process of signification. (p.104) As Walter Benjamin later noted in "Addendum to 'The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire'" (1939), *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* (London: NLB, 1973), p.106, it was only after the bourgeoisie in 1851 abruptly abandoned its distinctive cultural practice defining aesthetic judgement as subjective and opposed to the objective rules and norms of the *ancien regime*, that the theory of art-for-art's-sake was theorized. These ideas are immanent in the passage cited above, where Buren acknowledges that the idealistic or formalistic ideas which typify any type of art-for-art's-sake are an ideology, and that art-for-art's-sake is the final form under which the control of artistic psyche can be exerted in the sphere of bourgeois culture. Art is merely a token gesture to liberty, meant to provide the illusion of freedom in a repressive society where freedom does not in fact exist.

As his own theoretical texts reveal, however, Buren's articulation of a dialectical relation between the aesthetic sign and its environment is intended to go beyond mere analysis, towards "a specific form of practice." [Daniel Buren, "Beware" (1969), in *Five Texts*, trans. Charles Harrison and Peter Townsend (New York: John Weber Gallery, 1973), p.22.] In this sense Buren's strategy correlates with Althusser's post-1968 theory of the way in which "Ideological State Apparatuses" function to "interpellate" subjects -- including aesthetical subjects -- and to reproduce the existing relations of production: "the reproduction of the means of production." [Louis Althusser,

Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, p.143, p.174, p.128.] For Buren then a theoretical understanding of the workings of ideological apparatuses reveals that they reproduce the dominant ideology, and it is thus only through "a complete rupture with art" that "a revolutionary practice" can be achieved:

[The] rupture [of the existing social order] can only be epistemological. This rupture is/will be the resulting logic of a theoretical work at the moment when the history of art (which is still to be made) and its application are/will be envisaged theoretically.... [Not] only will theory be indissociable from its own practise [sic], but again it may/will be able to give rise to other original kinds of practice... [As] far as we are concerned, it must be clearly understood that when theory is considered as producer/creator, the only theory or theoretical practice is the result presented/the painting or, according to Althusser's definition: "Theory: a specific form of practice."

Buren, "Beware," *Five Texts* (1970), p.22.

143. Dan Flavin, "Several more remarks....," *Studio International*, 177 (April 1969), pp.175.

144. Daniel Buren, as quoted by Grace Glueck in "Museum Presents Wide Media Range," *New York Times*, February 10, 1971, p.26.

145. Texts play a crucial role in Buren's installations, and are themselves a major part of his work. Buren explains his use of a critical language outside the frame of his paintings in "Preface: Why Write Texts or The Place From Where I Act" (1973), in *Five Texts*, trans. Patricia Railing (New York: John Weber Gallery, 1973), pp.6-8, where he argues that the dialectic between the painting and the text is in reality no different from any other art work whose meaning is constantly reproduced by critics' interpretations. As such, his writings are an attempt to control the meaning of his work to as great a degree as possible. However, Buren warns that while

there is [an undeniable] interaction between the texts and the painting...it would be an absolute misinterpretation to forget which engenders the other: the process is from the work to the text. Neither is a mirror reflecting the other indefinitely. (p.5)

146. Glueck, "Museum Presents Wide Media Range," *New York Times*, p.26.

147. Only two New York art critics mentioned the removal of Daniel Buren's installation from the 1971

International. One of these, Elizabeth C. Baker, in an addendum to "Critics Choice: Daniel Buren," *Art News*, 70 (April 1971), p.58, notes that what upset some of the other artists in the show was that Buren's painting "dwarfed" their own works. After informing her readers that some artists complained to the Museum's officials about Buren's installation, Baker adds:

One wonders, however, if its perhaps arbitrarily overpowering scale was not more simply the reason for the clash.

The hastily added addendum to Baker's article reveals that the article itself was written prior to the events that took place at the International.

The only other New York critic to write about the withdrawal of Buren's installation from the 1971 International was John Canaday, who in "Art: A 'Documentary' at Guggenheim," *New York Times*, February 11, 1971, IV, p.22, writes that Buren's painting was removed by the Museum due to "pressure from the other artists."

148. The show was met with almost unanimous critical condemnation from the public and press. The Museum received more than fifty letters of protest, hundreds of complaints by telephone, and innumerable requests for refund of the fifty cents admission fee. One museum visitor wrote Director Messer informing him that she was about to start a class action suit against the Guggenheim for defrauding the public. [See letter from Mrs. Peter Hauser to Guggenheim Director Thomas M. Messer, dated March 2, 1971; and Messer's reply to Mrs. Hauser dated March 4, 1971, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives] Others wrote letters complaining that, "Of all the frauds perpetuated by all con-artists in New York City, [the 1971 International] is the most despicable!" or "It is a disgrace that you fill your museum with such non-sense." [Both of these letters to the Guggenheim complaining about the International -- one by Julius M. Marek and the other by Mrs. Paul Glaser -- are cited in Grace Glueck, "Nay-Sayers," *New York Times*.] A long-time Associate member of the Guggenheim wrote that he and his family were so "disgusted" by the show's "utter vacuity and meaninglessness," that they were about to cancel their membership. [See letter from Associate Member Ronald Freeland to the President of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, Peter O. Lawson-Johnston, dated March 15, 1971; and Messer's reply to Mr. Freeland dated March 24, 1971, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.]

Most of the New York art critics were equally alarmed about the International. Barbara Rose in "Gobbledygook at the Guggenheim," *New York Magazine*, March 8, 1971, stated that it was evident from what was being exhibited at the International that the artists in this show had political

motivations antagonistic to what they undoubtedly saw as "a decadent bourgeois capitalist society":

Most of the artists have turned their backs on the object -- either in disgust with the art market or with the values of the warring commodity-exchange societies in which they live. (p.28.)

John Canaday in "How to Look Silly and Insult Your Host," *New York Times*, April 11, 1971, IV, p.27, also gave the back of his hand to the International, but was heartened by the fact that people were asking for their money back at the door:

Americans...are only beginning to realize that they don't have to lie down and be insulted by any more exhibitions like the Guggenheim International.

In "New York Letter," *Art International*, 15 (May 20, 1971), p.73, Gerrit Henry, was also indignant about what he saw at the International, but rejoiced in the fact that the exhibition had received such a negative response:

with a fairly unanimous "nay" from the critics...the general hue and cry is for this sort of thing to stop.... [Thus] one will probably see more and more critics (if not scribes and pundits) dancing on the permanently unoccupied graves of the artists in the Minimalist Mafia.

Hilton Kramer, "Playing the Gracious Host -- But to What?" *New York Times*, March 7, 1971, IV, p.21; Emily Genauer in "Art and the Artist," *New York Post*, February 20, 1971, p.34; Douglas Davis in "The Last International?" *Newsweek*, February 22, 1971, p.64; Grace Glueck in "Art Notes," *New York Times*, March 21, 1971, IV, 22; John Gruen in "Point Of Too Many Returns," *New York*, March 8, 1971; Denise Green in "Sixth Guggenheim International," *Arts Magazine*, 45 (April 1971), pp.78-9; Anon., "Art," *Manhattan East*, February 23, 1971; as well as the New York museum guide "Conceptual Miscarriage?: Guggenheim Museum's Labour Bring's Forth a Mickey Mouse of Anti-Art," *Pictures On Exhibit* (March 1971), pp.8-9; all also expressed serious reservations about the show. Byron Belt, "Outlandish, But Is It Art?" *Advance*, March 7, 1971, reviewed the show without stating a value judgement, even though the title of his article reveals his opinion.

There were only two positive reviews to the 1971 International by the New York art press. One was written by a leading organizer of the Art Workers Coalition, John Perreault, and published in the liberal-left journal the *Village Voice*, February 18, 1971, p.19. Titled "International Velvet," Perreault stated in his review that

the work on display in this International was headed in the correct direction:

It is clear that the direction of this excellent exhibition is toward non-object art. Any sophisticated observer of contemporary art would have to agree that this direction is a reality.

Perreault wrote about the Guggenheim International again in an article titled "Coloring Book," *Village Voice*, March 4, 1971, pp.13-14, in which he conveyed the criticism that he himself had received by the majority of his peers "for having been too kind" to the International.

Apart from Perreault's review in the *Village Voice*, the only other positive review that the International received in the New York press was written by James Monte, a curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and published in *Artforum*, 9 (March 1971), pp. 28-31. The review was titled "Looking at the Guggenheim International," and that was almost exclusively what the author did. Monte delineated the new avant-garde trends as deriving directly from American Minimalism, and all of the foreign artists in this show as parroting the Americans:

Pieces depending on one aspect of Minimalism, exact site location,...include works by Burgin, Dias, Dibbets, Long, Merz, Nauman, and Takamatsu. The sequential aspect of Minimalism, the aspect based on intervals, either visual or numerical, includes work by Darboven and Kawara. Minimalism's "conceptual" outgrowth is represented by the work of Darboven, Kosuth and Weiner. (p.28)

When it came to judging the "value" of the various contributions to the International, Monte stated that Flavin was "consistently startling," Judd's piece was "brilliant," Nauman's piece "an elegant delineation," Heizer's, Ryman's and Serra's contributions each "recall the past quite frankly, and look toward future possibilities," and so on. The foreign artists, however, did not fare well:

all the European and Asian artists could be exchanged easily for others of equal merit. But one must remember that the exhibition is avowedly international in its scope, and so it must be what it says, or forgo its title. (p.30)

Monte's review of the International seems to have encapsulated the type of response which the Guggenheim officials had expected when they planned this exhibition. First, implicit in his article is a conviction that Minimalism, and its practice of "exact site location," was an American phenomenon. Second, he interprets American Minimalism as the core movement from which all of the new

trends stem. Third, he identifies the foreign work in this show as second-rate, second-generation copies of American Minimalism, and the artists copyists of American avant-garde art. Consequently, he concludes with a reiteration of the primacy of American art.

Whereas the New York/American press was almost unanimous in its censure of the 1971 International, many of the foreign reviews of this show were positive. See John Russell, *The London Times*, March 20, 1971; Pierre Restany, "Notes de Voyage," *Domus*, 498 (May 5 1971), pp.48-9; Lil Picard, "Radical Art at the Guggenheim: The Sixth International in New York is a Test for the 'Documenta'," *Die Welt*, February 25, 1971, trans. anon. in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives. None of these reviews mention the incident with Buren.

The three foreign reviews that I have seen that do mention the censorship of Buren's installation, are highly critical of the Guggenheim's actions. Michel Claure, who was the spokesperson for the BMPT group of which Buren was a part in the late 1960s, in "Une erreur compréhensible," *Opus International*, 12 (June 1971), pp.73-4, argues that the Guggenheim removed Buren's work in order to protect "l'ideologie dominante." (p.74) Rene Denizot, another French art critic, in "Conclusion," *Opus International*, 12 (June 1971), pp.74-5, wrote that the censorship was more of the author than of the painting:

L'interdiction pure et simple de l'oeuvre est le document de ce paralogisme selon lequel l'oeuvre est confondue avec l'auteur et l'art avec l'artiste. (p.74)

In "Buren, Haacke, Chi Altro?" *Data*, 1 (September 1971), p.31, the editors of this Italian journal wonder out loud what is going on at the Guggenheim.

149. Denise Green, "Sixth Guggenheim International," *Arts Magazine*, p.78.

150. Emily Genauer, "Art and the Artist," *New York Post*, February 20, 1971, p.34.

151. Hilton Kramer, "Playing the Gracious Host -- But to What?" *New York Times*, March 7, 1971, IV, p.21..

152. Hilton Kramer, "Art and Politics: Incursions and Conversions," *Age of the Avant-Garde*, pp.525, 527.

153. *Ibid.*, p.524

154. *Ibid.*, p.525. Kramer warns that in the "new political scenario" where "the air crackles with revolutionary rhetoric," there is a "campaign to impose political criteria on every decision affecting the creation and exhibition and judgement of works of art." This he sees

as devastating for art because it renders it as having "no defensible social functions apart from its alliance with specified political objectives."

155. Kramer, "Art and Politics: Incursions and Conversions," *Age of the Avant-Garde*, p.522.

156. Noam Chomsky, *Language and Responsibility: Based on Conversations with Mitsou Ronat*, trans. John Viertel (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p.20.

157. Personal correspondence from Noelle Nastala, Program Assistant, National Endowment for the Arts, dated July 25, 1989. Nastala informs me that "Although the amount requested was \$25,000, the Guggenheim Museum received a grant in the amount of \$10,000."

In a telephone interview with David Bancroft (August 18, 1989), the public representative of the Museum Program at the National Endowment for the Arts informed me that it was very odd for the Guggenheim Museum have received so little funding from the NEA in fiscal 1971 (\$10,000 in total), since the support of the nation's ailing Museums was at that time a priority for the NEA. Unfortunately, however, Bancroft claimed that the NEA kept very poor records at the time and that all of the information pertaining to the refusal of the Guggenheim Museum's request for funding in early 1971 was missing from the archives.

158. For the detailed plans for the 1971 International to travel to Latin America, see "Sixth Guggenheim International Exhibition: Budget for Circulation to South America," dated May 27, 1971, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

These plans were begun as early as the fall of 1970, as is indicated by the letter from Messer to Gloria Zea de Uribe, Director of the Museo de Arte Moderno in Bogota, Colombia, dated November 16, 1970, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives. Zea de Uribe informs Messer that she is "definitely interested in bringing [the Sixth International] to Colombia." Yet when I asked Messer in a personal interview (February 16, 1989) why the 1971 International failed to travel to Latin America, he answered that he did not remember anything about the travel plans of this show or about the involvement of the USIS.

Edward Fry told me in a telephone interview (February 22, 1989) that it was unclear to him what the involvement of the USIS was with the 1971 International, but that their presence seemed to be ubiquitous. In particular, Fry remembers that Bill Moyers, now a television celebrity, was one of the USIS representatives.

After enquiring further, on April 27, 1989, I received a letter from Ward Jackson, the Chief Archivist of the Guggenheim Museum, who informed me that he had recently spoken to Messer about the interruption of the Sixth

International's travel plans. According to Jackson, Messer now remembered that

The reason that the Guggenheim International did not travel to Colombia, Uruguay, and Argentina in 1971 was apparently there was not sufficient interest.

Clearly, Messer's memory contradicts even the little bit of archival evidence on the 1971 International that his colleagues failed to remove from the files following my request for access.

While on the topic of the withholding of information, it needs to be mentioned that, mystery of mysteries, the file on the 1971 Guggenheim International in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives is approximately one-quarter the size of the files on every other International organized by the Museum.

Finally, archivist Ward Jackson informed me on February 17, 1989, that the USIS was to provide financial assistance for the 1971 International exhibition to travel abroad, but that I would not find records of this in the archives. He was right.

159. John F. Kennedy, "The Artist in America," *New York Times*, October 27, 1963, I, p.83. Although Kennedy praised the avant-garde artists who questioned power, note that in the same speech he was impelled to place a qualification on that questioning:

The men who create power make an indispensable contribution to the nation's greatness. But the men who question power make a contribution just as indispensable, especially when that questioning is *disinterested*. [Italics mine]

160. Richard Nixon, Special Message to Congress, December 10, 1969, reprinted in *Wall Street Journal*, January 2, 1970, p.6.

Essentially the same theme was repeated by Nixon on other occasions when addressing the issue of arts funding. For instance, in a speech to the Associated Councils of the Arts in May, 1971, he stated that "there is a growing recognition that few investments in the quality of life in American pay off so handsomely as the money spent to stimulate the arts." [As cited in Taylor and Barresi, *The Arts at a New Frontier*, p.148]

Nixon's statements on art often made a correlation between art and spirituality. For example, in his Special Message to Congress, December 10, 1969, reprinted as "Mr. Nixon and 'The Quality of Life'," in *Wall Street Journal*, p.6, Nixon stated

Too many Americans have been too long denied the inspiration and the uplift of our cultural heritage.

Now is the time to enrich the life of the mind and to evoke the splendid qualities of the American spirit.

161. For a discussion of the WPA, see Francis V. O'Connor, *Federal Support for the Visual Arts: The New Deal and Now* (Greenwich, Conn.: New York Graphic Society, 1969), pp.26-30; Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp.75-92.

162. Taylor and Barresi, *The Arts at a New Frontier*, p.136, write that Nancy Hanks, the then-Chairperson of the NEA, only got the mandate she was seeking by closely following the President's public statements on the arts. It was following his speeches that she came to understand that the role the President envisioned for the arts was "regional development, diversity, [and] a broadening of the base."

163. That the Nixon Administration was using the arts as a smokescreen is certainly supported by the fact that despite his public enthusiasm for the NEA and for the great value which the arts had for Americans, Nixon was privately antagonistic to "anything that has to do with the arts." This was underscored during the Watergate investigation when it was revealed by one of the transcripts of the tapes which proved his guilt, that on June 23, 1972, the President had insisted that his daughter Tricia Cox avoid museums and other art functions because "they're Jews, they're left wing."

According to Steven R. Weismann, "Arts Officials Deplore Nixon Comment," *New York Times*, August 7, 1974, Nixon's remarks evoked not only adverse comment from officials of arts institutions across the country, but great confusion since the Nixon Administration had funded the arts more than any previous federal Administration.

164. From the introduction to "On the New Cultural Conservatism," *Partisan Review*, 39 (Summer 1972), p.397. This issue of *Partisan Review* is for the most part devoted to the papers which were a part of this symposium, and includes writings by Allen Ginsberg, Clement Greenberg, Christopher Lasch, Ihab Hassan, Mary McCarthy, Harold Rosenberg, and others.

165. Thomas M. Messer, letter to Hilton Kramer, dated March 8, 1971, in Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives. Messer wrote:

Dear Hilton: Your Guggenheim International review and the points you make in it invite some discussion. Would you care to join me for lunch some day next week? I would be glad if you would.

166. See Hans Haacke, "Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Board of Trustees" (1974), reproduced in *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, pp.110-17.

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167. Hilton Kramer, "The Presidency and the Arts," *New York Times*, October 31, 1976.

168. Peter Steinfels, *The Neoconservatives: The Men Who Are Changing America's Politics*.

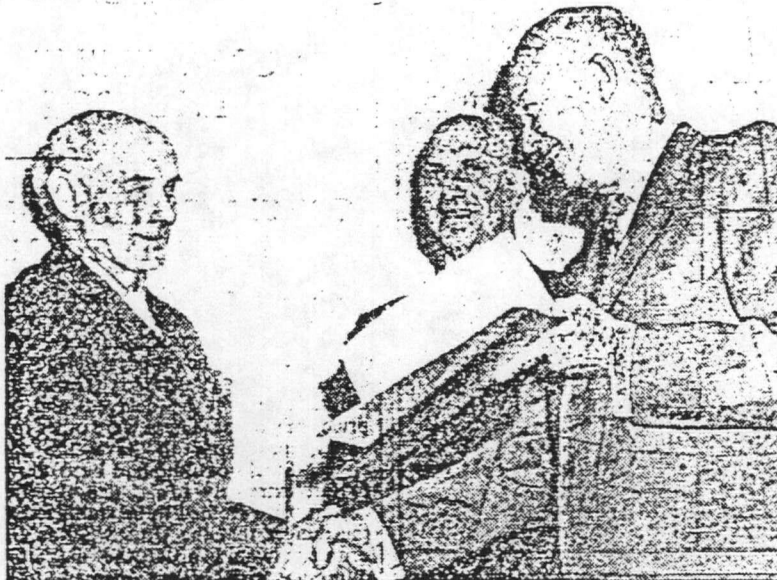


Figure 1: President Eisenhower presenting in Washington the first Guggenheim International Award to the British artist Ben Nicholson. In the centre is Harry F. Guggenheim, chairman of the board of trustees of the Solomon Guggenheim Foundation. (Source: The New York Times, February 27, 1957.)



Figure 2: President Eisenhower presenting in Washington the Guggenheim International Award to Juan Miro in 1959. (Source: The New York Times, May 20, 1959.)

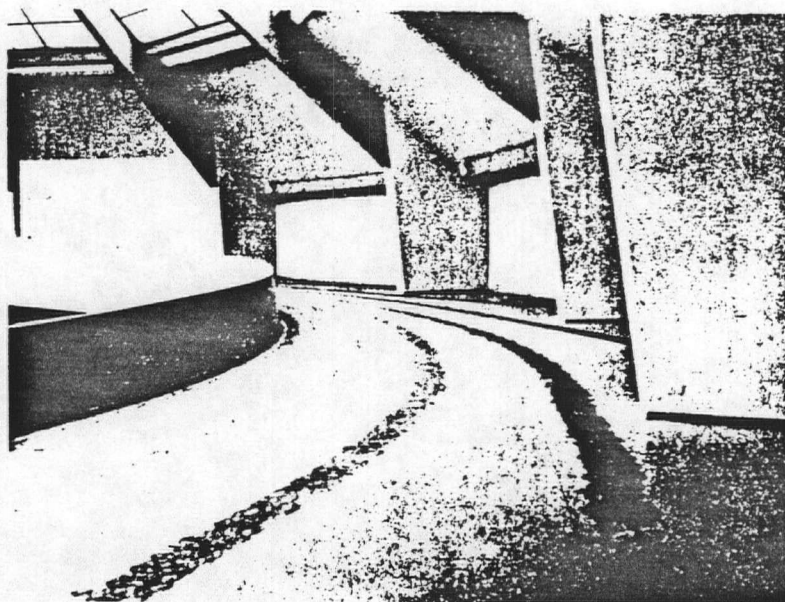


Figure 3: Richard Long, Brooklyn Clay, clay, 1971. (Source: James Monte, "Looking at the Guggenheim International," Artforum, vol. 9, March 1971.)

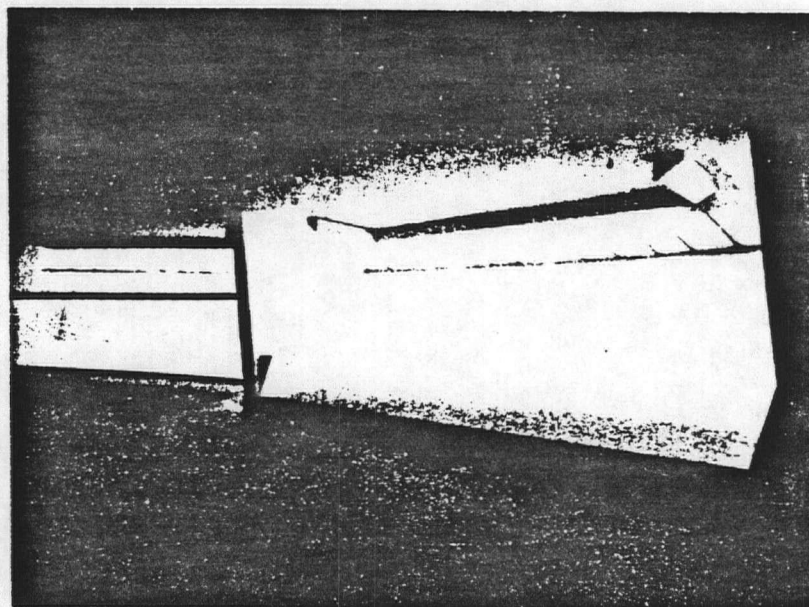


Figure 4: Bruce Nauman, Bar Piece, wood, 1971. (Source: James Monte, "Looking at the Guggenheim International," Artforum, vol. 9, March 1971.)

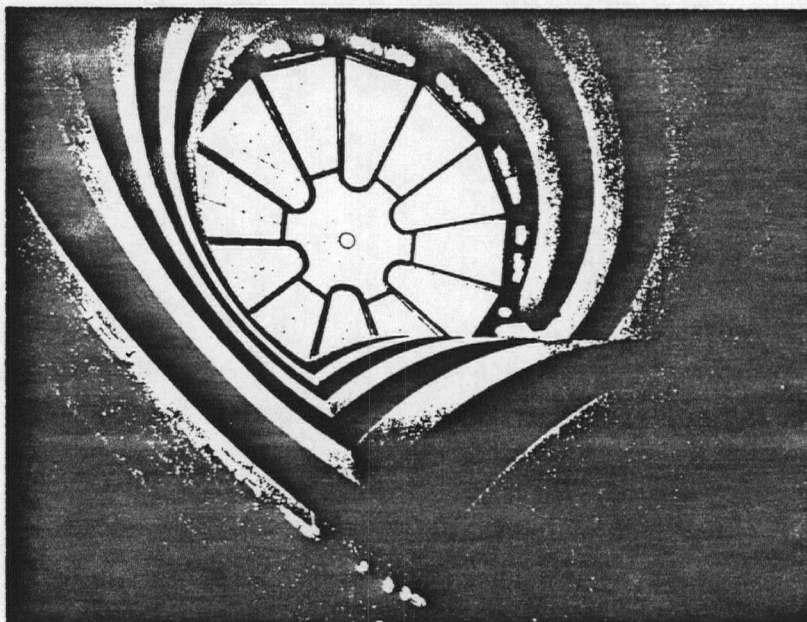


Figure 5: Mario Merz, Fibonacci's Progression, fluorescent lights, 1971. (Source: James Monte, "Looking at the Guggenheim International," Artforum, vol. 9, March 1971.)



Figure 6: Daniel Buren, untitled, canvas with acrylic, 20 x 60 cm., 1971. (Source: Claude Gintz, "Identites nouvelles," in Vingt-cinq ars d'art en France: 1960-1985, Paris: Larousse, 1985.)

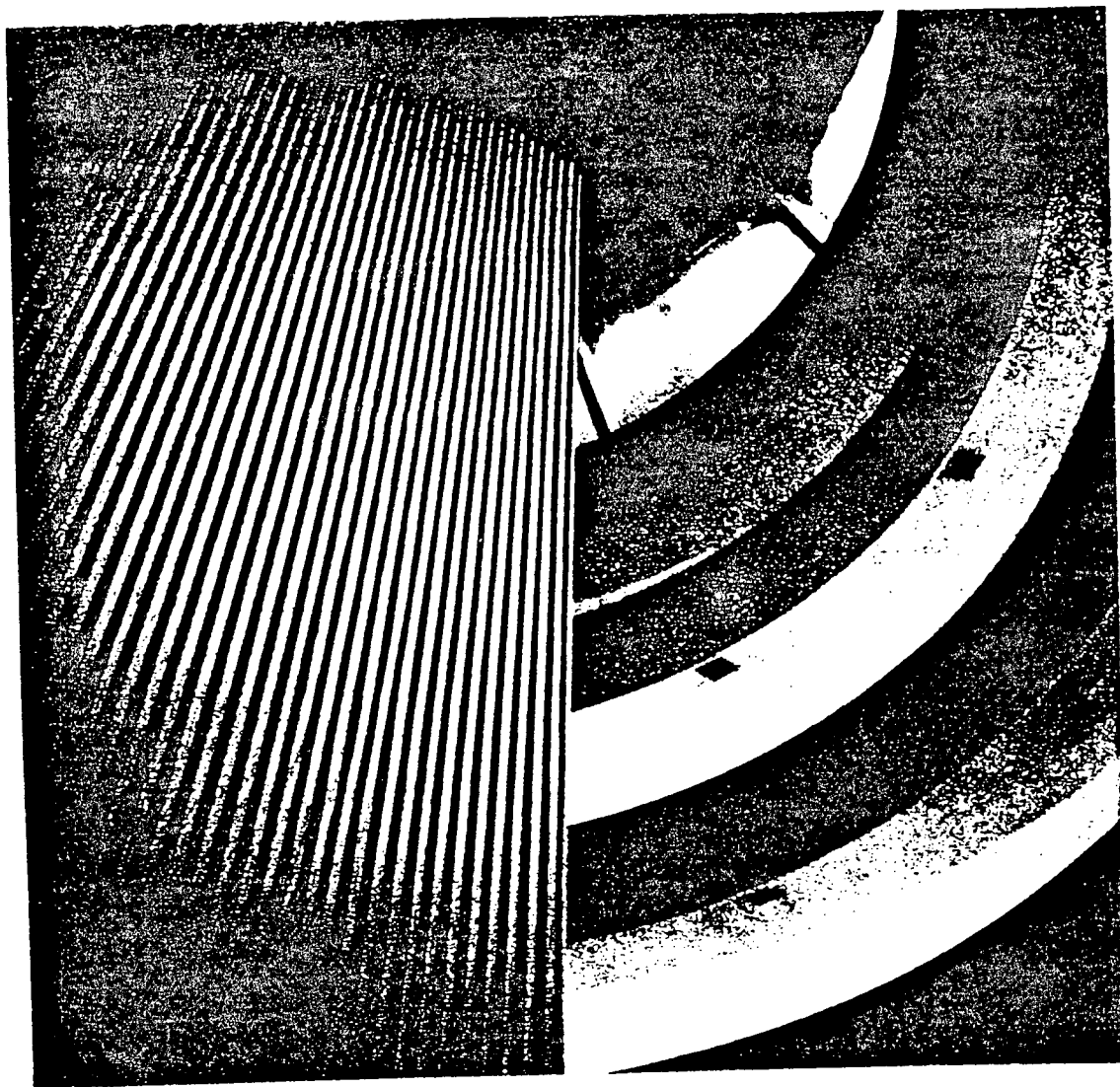


Figure 7: Daniel Buren, untitled, canvas with acrylic, 20 x 60 cm., 1971. (Source: Daniel Buren, Daniel Buren/ Entrevue: Conversations avec Anne Baldassari, Paris: Flammarion, 1987.

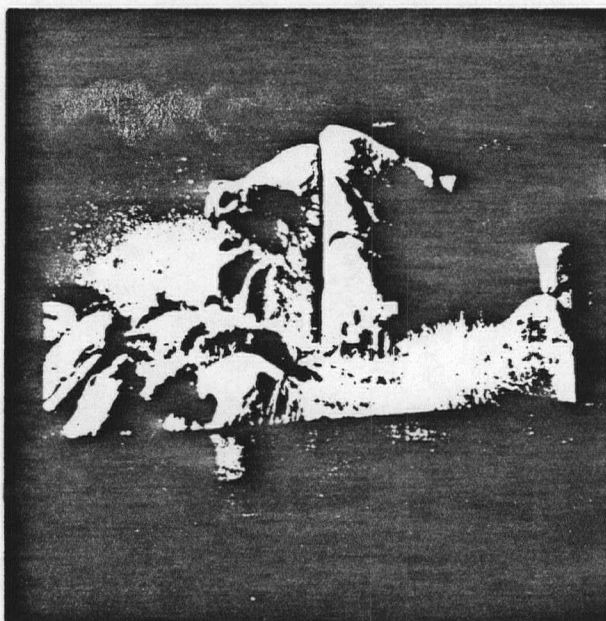


Figure 8: Michael Heizer, Actual Size, slide projection, 1971.
(Source: James Monte, "Looking at the Guggenheim International," Artforum, vol. 9, March 1971.)

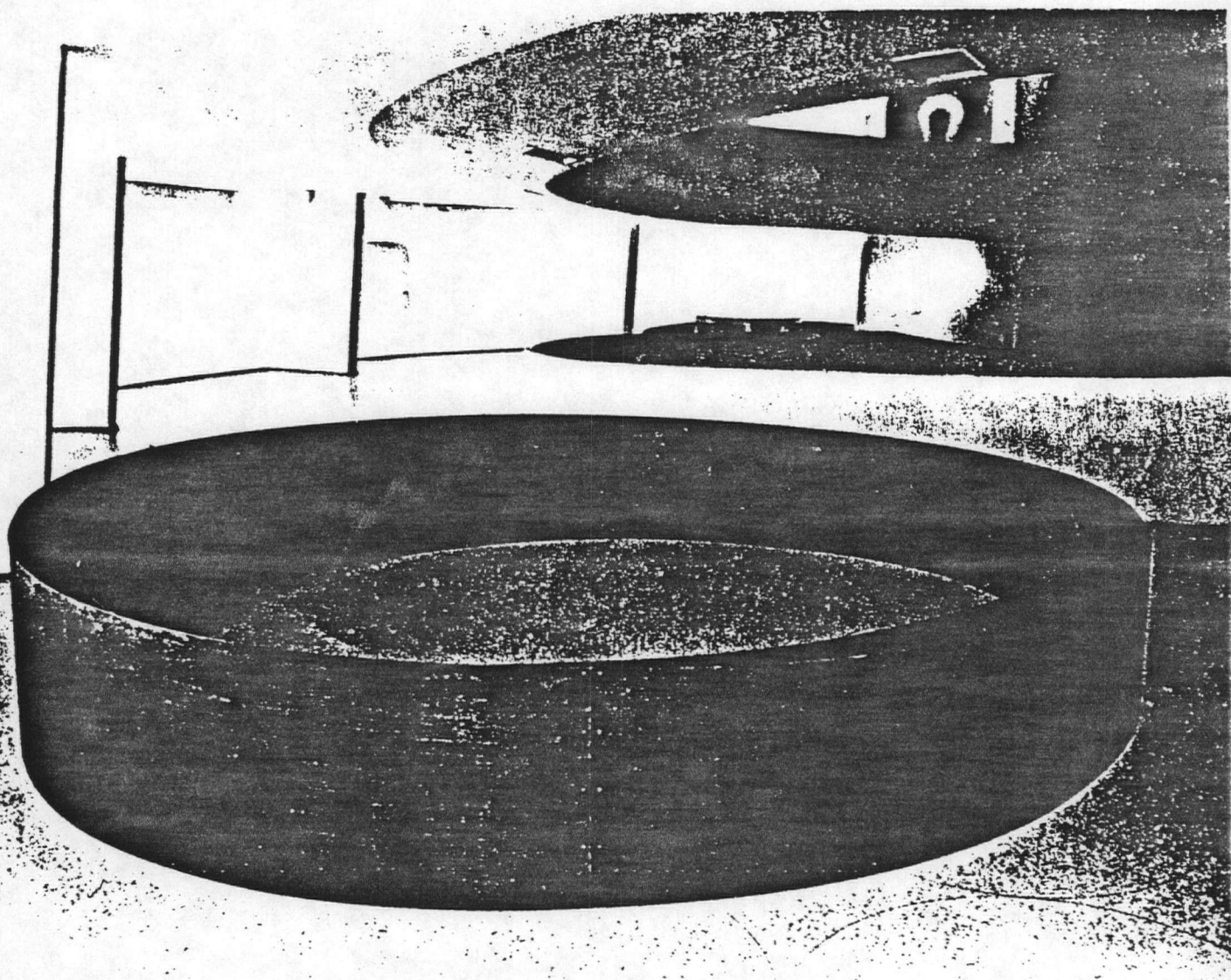


Figure 9: Donald Judd, untitled, hot rolled steel, 83 cm. high x 459 cm. diameter, 1971. Collection of Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. (Source: James Monte, "Looking at the Guggenheim International," Artforum, vol. 9, March 1971.)

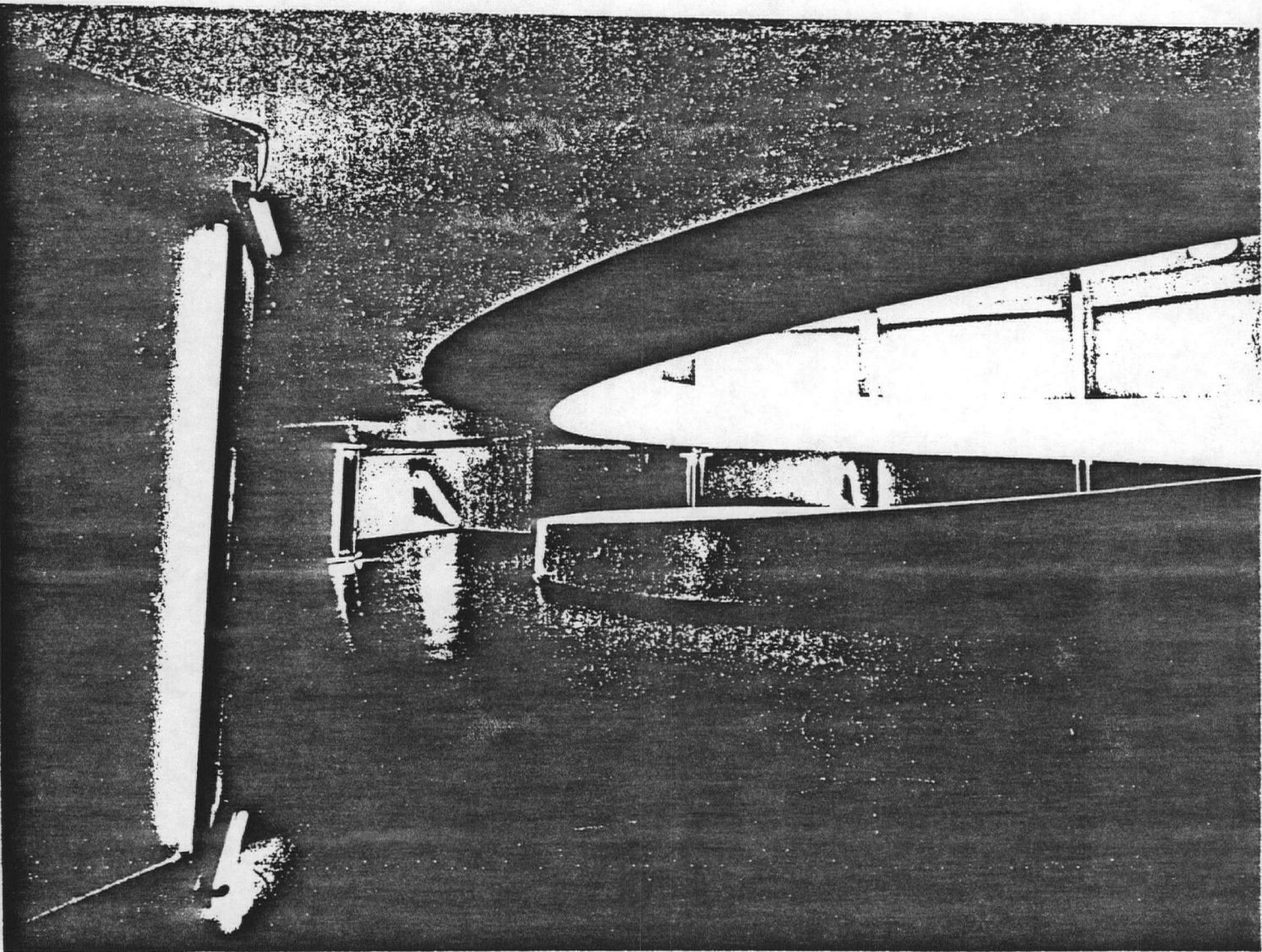


Figure 10: Dan Flavin, untitled, fluorescent light, 1971. Collection of Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. (Source: James Monte, "Looking at the Guggenheim International," Artforum, vol. 9, March 1971.)

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