Abstract

Within current art and architectural circles the term postmodernism has a dated air about it. It has long been shorn of its currency in any meaningful dialogue about the state of art and architectural production. Instead, the name recalls for most a notion that was fashionable in the 1970s and 1980s, suggesting a manifold of concepts like historical quotation, allegory, appropriation, pastiche, the culture of late capitalism, the end of grand narratives, the critique of the authorial subject, the collapse of the Enlightenment project, pluralism. Yet, for all this, it has not been properly historicized.

This thesis proposes to historicize the production and circulation of the term postmodernism, paying attention to two of its most important sites: October, a journal of art criticism founded in 1976, and Oppositions, an architectural periodical that was first published in 1973. With this aim, I turn to the dialogue between Rosalind Krauss and Peter Eisenman that took place between 1969 and 1976, as each broke ties with certain aspects of her and his intellectual formation represented by Michael Fried and Colin Rowe. The rejection of the latter critics’ anti-literalism propels the dialogue. But it was founded on a faultline – one that points to a difference much more significant than supposed between art and architecture, and one that could only be diffused by a discourse on institutions.

The political critiques of the institutions of art and architecture that emerged alongside alternative spaces and that were enunciated in October and Oppositions are part of a broader discourse on institutions and have their mirror reflection on the right. Neoconservatives set up their own alternative spaces in corporate-funded think tanks and from there launched their attacks on the liberalism they saw as being entrenched in the institutions supported by government and the university. I argue that the fantasy of postmodernism served to make illegible deep contradictions, not between claims about institutions by left and right, but between the different significations called forth by the figure “institution,” showing that fantasies of efficiency have a deeper set of effects and conditions than the political claims based on them.
**Table of Contents**

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... ii

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... iii

List of Figures .................................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................... x

Epigraph ........................................................................................................................... 1

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 2

*Window Blow-Out: First Take* ......................................................................................... 2
The Fantasy of Postmodernism .......................................................................................... 10
Outline of the Argument .................................................................................................... 25

1. Efficiencies .................................................................................................................... 35

*Window Blow-Out: Second Take* .................................................................................. 35
Alternative Spaces, Think Tanks, The New Class, and The Last Intellectuals .................. 41
The Discourse on Institutions ............................................................................................ 46
*Window Blow-Out: Third Take* ..................................................................................... 55

2. Institution in the Garden ............................................................................................... 60

The New England Mind and the Republic of Texas ......................................................... 60
The Republic of Learning .................................................................................................. 67

3. Rowe-Eisenman ............................................................................................................ 89

4. Fried-Krauss ................................................................................................................ 114

*Excursus* ......................................................................................................................... 143


6. Machine ......................................................................................................................... 186

7. Crux .............................................................................................................................. 215

8. Blowout: Eisenman-Krauss, 1976 ............................................................................... 244
List of Figures

Figure 1: Gordon Matta-Clark, Bronx, 1976 (photograph used for Window Blow-Out, 1976). Gordon Matta-Clark (London: Phaidon, 2003), p.103

Figure 2: Gordon Matta-Clark, Bronx, 1976 (photograph used for Window Blow-Out, 1976). Gordon Matta-Clark (London: Phaidon, 2003), p.103

Figure 3: Gordon Matta-Clark, A W-Hole House: Datum Cut, Core Cut, Trace de Coeur, 1973. 6 black-and-white photographs [detail]. Gordon Matta-Clark (London: Phaidon, 2003), p. 72

Figure 4: View of Day's End by Gordon Matta-Clark, 1975. Gordon Matta-Clark (London: Phaidon, 2003), p.10

Figure 5: Gordon Matta-Clark, Day's End, color photograph, 1975. Gordon Matta-Clark (London: Phaidon, 2003), p.9

Figure 6: Gordon Matta-Clark, Doors Through and Through, 4 color photographs, 1976. Gordon Matta-Clark (Marseilles: Musées Marseilles, 1993) p.266

Figure 7: Cover, October 16 (spring 1981), published by the MIT Press for the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies

Figure 8: Cover, Oppositions 6 (Fall 1976), published by the MIT Press for the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies

Figure 9: Back pages, Oppositions 7 (Winter 1976), p.98

Figure 10: Leon Krier, Poster for the exhibition, “Peter Eisenman: House Number X,” at Princeton University, 1977. From Oppositions 14 (Fall 1978), p.59

Figure 11: Louis Hellman, Illustration for “Eisenman’s Bogus Avant-Garde,” by Diane Ghirardo in Progressive Architecture 75 no.11 (November 1994), p.70

Figure 12: Funny Pages, Skyline 3 no.1 (April 1980), p.18


Figure 18: Donald Judd, untitled sculpture; 1965, Aluminum and purple lacquer on aluminum. From *Donald Judd*, by Barbara Haskell (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1988), p.58.


Figure 20: *Artforum* 9 no.9 (May 1966), pp.24-5, “Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd,” by Rosalind Krauss.


Figure 25: Peter Eisenman, House II, analytic diagrams, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 34-5. 335

Figure 26: Peter Eisenman, House I, analytic diagrams, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 22. 336

Figure 27: Peter Eisenman, House II, analytic diagrams, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 32-3. 337

Figure 28: Peter Eisenman, House II, black and white photograph, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 37. 338


Figure 30: Giuseppe Terragni, Casa del Fascio, view looking out onto the piazza. From “Dall’oggetto alla Relazionalità: La Casa del Fascio di Terragni,” by Peter Eisenman, *Casabella* 344 (January 1970), p.39. 340

Figure 31: Giuseppe Terragni, Casa del Fascio, oblique view. From “Dall’oggetto alla Relazionalità: La Casa del Fascio di Terragni,” by Peter Eisenman, *Casabella* 344 (January 1970), p.40. 341


Figure 33: Frank Stella, Installation view, Lawrence Rubin Gallery, *Konskie III, Chodorow I, and Felszyn III*, 1971. Photograph by Eric Pollitzer. From *Artforum* 10 no.4 (December 1971), p. 43. 343

Figure 34: Ronald Davis, *Four Fold*, 1969, at the Castelli Gallery. From *Artforum* 8 no.4 (December 1969), p. 69. 344

Figure 35: *Artforum* 10 no.9 (May 1972), pp.38-39, “Richard Serra: Sculpture Redrawn,” by Rosalind Krauss. 345

Figure 36: Richard Serra, untitled (Pulitzer piece), 1970-71. Three views in *Artforum* 10 no.9 (May 1972), p. 40. 346


Figure 40: *Artforum* 13 no.3 (November 1974), pp. 54-55. "Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture," by Robert Pincus-Witten.

Figure 41: *October* 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 50-51. “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,” by Rosalind Krauss, with two stills from *Centers*, 1971, by Vito Acconci.

Figure 42: Peter Campus, *mem* (below) and *dor* (above), 1974. Photographs by Bevan Davies, from *October* 1 (Spring 1976), p. 63.


Figure 52: *Artforum* 9 no.5 (January 1971), pp. 58-59. From “Jackson Pollock’s Drawings,” by Rosalind Krauss. 362
Acknowledgements

I thank first of all my supervisor, Serge Guilbaut, for bringing his critical eye to this work and for providing always lively discussion as it progressed. The other members of my supervisory committee, Sherry McKay and John O'Brian, also benefited me with their incisive commentary and discussion.

On the occasion of earlier presentations of parts of this research, I was offered valuable feedback from friends and colleagues at UBC. For this I wish to thank, in particular, Aleksandra Idzior, Jasmina Karabeg, Carol Knicely, Becky Lane, Kimberly Phillips, and William Wood. And for reading versions of this thesis and responding with scholarly attentiveness special thanks are due to Becky Lane, again, and to Victoria Scott.

My research was made possible by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and from the University of British Columbia, and by a research grant from the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. The staff at the CCA was particularly helpful. I thank Andrea Kuchembuk for assisting me in the archives, and Renata Guttman, Pierre Boisvert, and Paul Chénier for their help in the library. For facilitating the collections research grant program I thank Alexis Sornin. And for sharing his insights about the life of the IAUS archive I thank Howard Shubert.

Finally, this thesis would not have been written were it not for the support of my family. For the hospitality of Kevin and Vickie offered at numerous points throughout this research, but especially as it began, and for the continual support and encouragement from my parents, they deserve a special gratitude.
The intriguing question, in hindsight, is how this could have happened. How could so many grown men and women share in the collective delusion? ... Part of the answer, I think, lies in the magic of a new theory....

Introduction

Window Blow-Out: First Take

The work of Gordon Matta-Clark has sustained the interest of critics and historians for its engagement of community – particularly the artistic community of the old industrial area of downtown Manhattan that in his time was yet to be given the name SoHo – and for its multiple forms of criticism of the practice of architecture. Said to be involved partly with the inquiries of minimalism and partly with conceptualism, his work has been summoned to give historical coherence to the art of the 1970s precisely by shedding light on the relation between such art-historical concepts, as evidenced in the recent spate of writings dealing with the late artist.¹ An example of his more conceptual work that has been singled out at the same time for being a particularly stinging critique of the profession of architecture is his Window Blow-Out. Like much of the rest of Matta-Clark’s work, which mostly tended to have an element of performance, little remains of this piece. Where his well-known building cuttings were in each case destroyed, some form of document has been made, often by Matta-Clark himself. But as for Window Blow-Out, apart from the photographs that comprised one element of this piece, what remains of it, and what is now essential to understand it, is a narrative told more or less

anecdotally by witnesses and persons who knew Matta-Clark who may or may not have witnessed the performance themselves.\(^2\)

To review this narrative as it has circulated within Matta-Clark lore: *Window Blow-Out* owes its inception to an invitation to exhibit work in a show held at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York in December of 1976. Initially Matta-Clark planned to perform a cutting in the Institute’s gallery, removing sections of wall and arranging the cut-out pieces on the floor of the gallery. Late in the show’s preparation stages, the artist devised a new piece which would involve blowing out windows at the Institute and placing photographs in the casings of the damaged windows. Those photographs, which survive, depict windowed facades of derelict brownstone buildings [figs. 1 & 2]. They represent, that is, windows that are, as well, cracked and smashed in, recalling the more desperate living conditions for inhabitants of other parts of the city.\(^3\) The thrust of Matta-Clark’s critique, then, was directed toward the Institute that staged the exhibition, an institute representing the profession of architecture, which did little to ameliorate the situation depicted in the photographs.

The full force of this critique, however, is mostly registered in the anecdotal parts of the narrative that has come to represent this piece. When Matta-Clark abandoned his original plans and came up with the idea for the work that later became known as *Window Blow-Out*, he made certain arrangements to do so. He is said to have asked for, and to have been granted, permission to shoot out windows at the Institute that were

---

\(^2\) “Witness” may be the best term, given the covert and, alleged by some, criminal nature of the performance. Joan Simon, Interviews, in Mary Jane Jacob, *Gordon Matta-Clark* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985).

\(^3\) Andrew MacNair, interview by Joan Simon, in Jacob, 96; Marianne Brouwer, “Laying Bare,” in *Gordon Matta-Clark*, IVAM Center, 363-5; Jane Crawford, interview by Jürgen Harten (27 March 1979) in *Gordon Matta-Clark: One for all and all for one*, by Städtische Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle, 1979), unpaginated; Crow “Site-Specific Art.”
already cracked. Upon arrival, sometime during the night before the show’s opening, he proceeded to shoot out all of the Institute’s windows with a firearm (said variously to be a b-b gun, an air gun, or a gun of unknown fire power appearing to be a rifle – though the gun’s avowed owner, Dennis Oppenheim, acknowledges that it was an air gun). This gesture contravened the permission given by Andrew MacNair, the show’s organizer (said sometimes to be its curator, though MacNair was a staffperson at the IAUS, and the exhibition was the conception of Peter Eisenman, the Institute’s director). That Matta-Clark destroyed more than the already cracked windows was evidently read as a deliberately destructive act directed toward the Institute itself. This was amplified by the aggressive manner in which the artist chose to carry out his performance. According to the account by MacNair (interviewed by Joan Simon on the occasion of Matta-Clark’s first major retrospective in 1985, it remains fullest account published to date), the action angered Eisenman, who unreservedly compared it to the actions of Nazi stormtroopers on Kristallnacht (Eisenman has acknowledged and stands by his resolute condemnation of Matta-Clark’s action). The circulated reports of this response, including the fact that Matta-Clark was booted out of the show and that the damaged windows were immediately repaired, leaving no trace of the artist’s involvement at the Institute, has in many accounts confirmed the reactionary nature of the architectural profession, which was the artist’s object of critique in the first place.

---

4 MacNair; Dennis Oppenheim, interview by Joan Simon, in Jacob, 21; Peter Eisenman, interview by Louis Martin, 22 February 2001, transcript, Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies archives, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.
6 MacNair; Eisenman, interview, 22 February 2001.
7 Brouwer; Crawford; Crow, “Site-Specific Art.”
Other details have been called on to support this. For example, the exhibition in question has been identified as *Idea as Model*, a show of architects' models that included work by the so-called New York Five (in most accounts, Eisenman, Richard Meier, and Michael Graves, are the only members of the Five who are identified individually, though the other two – Charles Gwathmey and John Hejduk – were also represented in the show). The exhibition, then, was a venue for a form of production that suited the conceptual (and, it is sometimes pointed out, market) leanings of this group of architects that found an institutional home at the IAUS.\(^8\) (As was Eisenman's customary editorial and curatorial practice, however, a range of architectural opinion was represented in the show – that is, apart from the modernist “Whites” of the New York group, there were also representatives of the postmodern “Grays” (e.g., Robert A.M. Stern, Charles Moore, and Stanley Tigerman)).\(^9\) Against the prolonged rhetoric of modernist purity within the architectural profession, Matta-Clark’s intervention at the IAUS struck by exposing the neglect of architects to consider the conditions that bear on the inhabitants of architecture, rather than simply the act of building, thus giving the lie to the presumptions behind that blandishment known as development. Of the photographs meant to be included for display in the casings of the cracked windows, it has even been suggested that some are of developments in the Bronx resembling one just completed by Richard Meier.\(^10\)

---


10 Meier’s project in the South Bronx was one of a number in the Twin Parks neighborhood built under the auspices of the Urban Development Corporation, a state agency devised to provide non-profit affordable housing. Deutsche, 94.
For all the attention paid to the ingenuity of Matta-Clark, however, none of the published accounts of *Window Blow-Out* describe the circumstances of his being invited to exhibit at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in the first place. And these circumstances have much to tell us. Not just in terms of reading this one piece, or of Matta-Clark’s work in general, but in terms of the art-historical descriptions of the period that have found in Matta-Clark a means of historicizing its practices (e.g., in the variations on conceptualism, minimalism, site-specificity, performance, etc.).

Key among the circumstances not published is the fact that Matta-Clark had — within the circles of the IAUS — an advocate who petitioned on his behalf. This advocate was in the person of Rosalind Krauss, who reportedly defended the artist upon Eisenman’s angered response.\(^{11}\) Krauss had that same year, 1976, co-founded *October* — this much is as widely known as the journal itself. What is much less discussed, however, is that *October* owes its beginnings — in legal and financial terms — to the IAUS. For it was with a commitment from the Institute, secured by its director, Peter Eisenman, that the new art journal found a publisher. More than a contractual and financial state of affairs, the relation of *October* to the IAUS points to the intellectual connection that underpinned the art journal’s attachment to the architectural institute. Beginning in 1969 when they met, Eisenman and Krauss maintained a dialogue that tested the points of connection between practices in art and architecture that could be grouped under headings such as conceptual and minimalist.

This dialogue occurred as Eisenman and Krauss each came to reassess the modernisms they were trained in (those represented by Colin Rowe and by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried respectively). This dialogue involved explorations of

\(^{11}\) Eisenman, interview, 22 February 2001.
linguistic and Gestalt theory. Broadly speaking, Eisenman and Krauss were committed to reflexive practices. In a sense, this put them within a tradition of modernist thinking that held to notions of self-critique, but the kinds of reflexiveness they each promoted were meant as a check against what they took to be the primarily perceptual or phenomenological orientations of the modernisms they sought to critique. By turning to what they felt were the more rigorous theories of gestalt psychology and Chomskian linguistics, Krauss and Eisenman developed forms of reflexiveness that they claimed were founded on more solid epistemological ground rather than what they saw as the recourse to transcendentalism of their mentors. At the same time, the practices they promoted had to reflexively incorporate their material bases, despite the fact that neither gestalt theory nor Chomskian linguistics alone, in their view, dealt with materiality adequately. The modification of their preferred theoretical models in order to emphasize materiality was seen as a check against ungrounded conceptualism that could lead to a merely anomic situation, a threat that they regarded as present in much of the new conceptual art.

In light of this dialogue, then, it is possible to see how Matta-Clark’s building cuttings could have been read with admiration by both Krauss and Eisenman. As I will elaborate later, within Krauss’s framework they may have demonstrated a figure-ground relationship that did not lose sight of what gestaltists called the field – namely, the environment’s bearing on the work, to which Krauss appended a material importance. As for Eisenman’s linguistic orientation, Matta-Clark’s cuts could each be read as a signifying element that is only legible in relation to another and to the building’s own signs. The name of one of Matta-Clark’s first building cuttings, A W-Hole House –
Datum Cut [fig. 3], points to this potential affinity, as it was Eisenman's custom to refer to building elements not in terms of their function but as pieces of information - calling, for example, the plane of a wall a datum. Certainly, Matta-Clark rejected the kind of conceptual gamesmanship practiced at the IAUS and at the Cornell school of architecture where he trained as an architect, and indeed this may have provided an ironic basis for the subtitle Datum Cut. But it is not impossible to see how the practice may have been understood by Eisenman's conceptual framework. (Indeed, the term “deconstruction” as it came to be applied to Eisenman's later work has been retrospectively used, perhaps more literally, in the context of Matta-Clark's work, and has thus begged a comparison).

It is not certain how Matta-Clark felt about Rosalind Krauss's advocacy of his work, given his predilection for community-based involvement, which did not seem to resound with the individualist practices that she still supported. However, that Krauss instigated his invitation to the Idea as Model exhibition in 1976, and the fact that it was presaged by a dialogue with Peter Eisenman, sets out circumstances to Window Blow-Out quite different from what are usually attributed to the piece. In fact, I will argue that the usual reading of Window Blow-Out as provoking and demonstrating the conservative and reactionary nature of the architectural profession, or even of this particular architectural institute, is mostly misguided. Instead, I will argue that the piece needs to be understood as an intervention (albeit not an intentional one) in the circumstances just described, that it in fact functioned as a wedge that drove apart the shared points of contact between the projects of Krauss and Eisenman.

In the wake of Window Blow-Out, then, a set of differences emerged which have proven to be quite significant. The usual contrast of an alternative art founded on
makeshift means and an institutionalized architectural profession does not tell the whole story. It is true that art and architecture are made into opponents in *Window Blow-Out*, but the important differences, I will argue, lie elsewhere. In the two-part essay that she published in *October* in the months following the *Idea as Model* exhibition, Krauss describes Matta-Clark’s building cutting work in structuralist terms that were for her soon to become the basis for a theory of postmodernism. “Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America” set the parameters for “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” which was to appear in less than two years and was the first of a number of articles that were to appear in *October* in the late 1970s and early 1980s that set out a theory of postmodernism. Up until this moment Krauss was quite content to describe her project as a modernist one, though since the beginning of the 1970s it was a modernism expressly different from that espoused by Greenberg and Fried. What set her new commitment to a postmodern project apart from her architectural counterpart, of course, was that at the IAUS and in its flagship journal *Oppositions*, postmodernism meant something entirely different. There, postmodernism was a sign of the growing conservative forces in architecture and was to be combated at all costs. A conservative architectural postmodernism was, to be certain, identified by writers in the circle of *October*. But what this confirmed for them was the existence of two kinds of postmodernism: one of reaction and one of criticism.¹²


However, just why *October* critics established two postmodernisms, while *Oppositions* and the architects could conceive of just one requires some accounting.

The Fantasy of Postmodernism

Within current art and architectural circles the term postmodernism has, for the most part, a dated air about it. It has long been shorn of its currency in any meaningful dialogue about the state of art and architectural production. Instead, the name recalls for most a notion that was fashionable in the 1970s and 1980s, suggesting a manifold of concepts like historical quotation, allegory, appropriation, pastiche, the culture of late capitalism, the end of grand narratives, the critique of the authorial subject, the collapse of the Enlightenment project, pluralism. Yet, for all this, it has not been properly historicized. A recent library catalogue search produced six hundred entries under the subject heading of postmodernism (with dozens of new titles appearing every year, now mostly in areas like philosophy and cultural studies), while a search under the *history* of postmodernism produced only six.

This thesis proposes to historicize the production and circulation of the term postmodernism, paying attention to two of its most important sites: *October*, a journal of art criticism founded in 1976, and *Oppositions*, an architectural periodical that was first published in 1973. I will forego any attempt to discuss postmodernism as a movement, a period, or an ethos, as though the term were transparent or its referent were actual. Instead, I am interested in how the term was produced, what it responded to, and how it was used.
This is not to say, to repeat the most well-worn of postmodernism’s clichés, that postmodernism has so many meanings that the term itself is meaningless. On the contrary, just such a claim is one of the things that should be analyzed. In fact, I shall call postmodernism a fantasy, not in the sense that it is simply something that does not actually exist, but in the precise sense that, taken as term reproduced in a range of contexts, it does have a coherence in the effects of its deployment. In other words, the differences in meanings applied to the term postmodernism throughout the period under study need to be understood as something like a system of differences. And this system is what I aim to uncover, for the primary role of the fantasy of postmodernism has been to dissipate the effects of its composite discourses.\(^{14}\) This particular definition of fantasy will be important to understand why it is not like other discourses. I will argue that it is why postmodernism has resisted historicization. In order to discuss this further, it will be important to consider the ways the fantasy of postmodernism has continued.

I have in mind two ways in which the fantasy of postmodernism has persisted and has not allowed itself to be opened up to historicization. First is through the cliché just mentioned. Consider the opening lines of the *Postmodernism* volume of the Tate Gallery’s series, *Movements in Modern Art*:

Like the concept of God who is everywhere and nowhere, ‘postmodernism’ is remarkably impervious to definition. A term thrown about to describe phenomena as diverse as the *Star Wars* films, the practice of digital sampling in rock music, television-driven political campaigns and the fashion designs of Jean Paul Gauthier and Issey Miyake, postmodernism seems to permeate contemporary life....

\(^{14}\) This will serve to distinguish my use of “fantasy” from more common psychoanalytic uses – that is, it is not the sign of an unconscious drive in conflict with a symbolic order; rather it is the production of a mode of efficiency through different kinds of knowledge (practical and speculative). For this I draw on the work of Thorstein Veblen, which I will discuss in chapter 2.
... Postmodernism is modernism’s unruly child. And since the definition of modernism itself remains in dispute, it should come as no surprise that even postmodernism’s ardent advocates seem unable to come to any consensus about what, exactly, it is.

The severity of postmodernism’s identity crisis can be glimpsed in some of the terms used to describe it. Characterised variously as ‘an incredulity toward metanarratives’, ‘a crisis of cultural authority’ and ‘the shift from production to reproduction’, and tossed into conversation in the company of words like ‘decentred’, ‘simulation’, schizophrenic’, and ‘anti-aesthetic’, postmodernism seems to exist tenuously, as a thing that can only be defined as the negation of something else. To a student of the subject, postmodernism may feel very much like Narcissus’ reflection in the water, which disintegrates the moment one reaches out to grasp it.

This, as it turns out, is a very postmodern way to be.¹⁵

Not only does postmodernism have so many meanings that any attempt to fix the term results in its disintegration, but this very condition is what postmodernism is said to be about. The attempt to analyze the term postmodernism has been cut off from the history of how it has been used and, as it turns out, this disconnect is a sign of the postmodern times.

Compare the above with the following journalistic account of postmodernism written in 1980:

Yes, “Post-Modern” is vague, but this vagueness allows us to pull in a large catch, incorporate phenomena in all the arts, in society, and in politics.... Yes, “Post-Modern” is a negative term, failing to name a “positive” replacement, but this permits pluralism to flourish (in a word, it permits freedom, even in the marketplace).... In this sense, this impossible phrase, this unreal Post-Modernism, is completely possible now, Richard Schechner [whose epigraph to the article in quotation here asked: “ ‘Post-modern’? Is it a good term – that is, does it say anything? And if it does say something, what is needed to be said now?”]. And it does say something – many things, in fact, all at once, as befits an age that distrusts dogmatic simplicity.¹⁶

Pluralism, in the arts, in society, in politics, and in the marketplace, is the sign of the times, and the polyvalence of the term postmodernism is just one more marker of this. The author of this account concluded with the following speculation about the phrase, however: “Where will it lead us? I suspect, in the end, it will follow us, and become finally, a period piece. Period.” Indeed, postmodernism has, as I suggest, become as dated as any period piece. But for all this sense of datedness, the same de-historicizing and tautological cliché persists when it comes to accounting for it: the plural definitions of postmodernism form a sign of the pluralist, postmodern times.

A second resistance to historicization is less obvious. Recent surveys of late-twentieth-century art have attempted to historicize key markers of the postmodern period, but in so doing they have followed the accounts offered by theorists of the postmodern writing in the 1970s and 1980s. For example, in Art Since 1960 Michael Archer begins his chapter on “postmodernisms” by naming economic deregulation as an investment impetus for collectors like Achille Bonito Oliva, Peter Ludwig, and the Saatchis, who fueled the return of figurative painting. Some critics in the late 1970s and early 1980s, many of whom writing for October, identified the return to painting as part of a conservative formation in which artists and collectors cynically adapted to the shift in the economic and political winds. “In contrast to the negativity of these positions, described by the American critic Hal Foster as a ‘postmodernism of reaction,’” Archer writes, “there was also a critical, radical postmodernism.”17 Here, the historical basis for the conservative postmodernism is identified following the same criticism that Foster promoted – that is, it recognizes economic factors and their concomitant political circumstances. But as for the formation of a critical postmodernism, the prose of this

survey has historical explanation replaced by the itemization of the different
postmodernisms that coexisted, however much they actively competed with one another.
By itemizing the emergence of "postmodernisms" and by tying them one to the other,
however, a certain causality is implied that appears to reverse the causal direction laid out
by Foster. That is, if one is to infer that this latter postmodernism described by Foster is
critical of the former, that it responded to the conservative postmodernism, would not the
label "reaction" apply better to the ostensibly critical postmodernism rather than the other
way around? What Foster saw the conservative postmodernism reacting to, of course,
were the advances by the left and various forms of cultural criticism beginning in the
1960s. By broadening the historical field that formed the conservative postmodernism, as
many who have historicized this period have done, Archer has effectively taken the
critical postmodernism out of the specific chain of contest, of action and reaction,
described by Foster. This has the advantage of treating the formation of
"postmodernisms" as a group, but by holding to the prevailing account of political and
economic history, the criteria of historicization remain applicable to only one of the two
postmodernisms identified by Foster – there is a broad cultural, economic, and political
trend, which is historical, and then there is the critical activity in response to it, which in
this survey does not require more historicization than just that.

The general reorganization of the polyvalence and vagueness of the term
postmodernism into two camps was codified by Foster in 1983 in the introduction to the
landmark collection of essays he edited, The Anti-Aesthetic. In the manner used by
Archer it has continued to be another standard means of reading the art of the 1980s. In
After Modern Art: 1945-2000, David Hopkins, like Archer, identifies the economic shifts
of the 1970s as foundational to the period of postmodernism: “Whereas previous monopoly or imperialist phases of capitalism had been linked to cultural modernism, late capitalism was to be seen as synonymous with a ‘postmodern’ epoch.” This economic historicization was most famously propounded in the cultural context of postmodernism by Frederic Jameson, an influence on Foster and one of the authors who appeared in *The Anti-Aesthetic*. Jameson had borrowed this periodization from the Belgian Marxist economist, Ernest Mandel, whose *Late Capitalism* was first published in German in 1972.<ref>
One question that will have to be asked is how the work of a Marxist economist, so firmly rooted in the European events of 1968, can still serve as a model for the periodization of art historical surveys and not itself be historicized. And a related question: Why do 1980s cultural criticism and the recent ‘histories’ of it, which ostensibly bear witness to the opacity of discourse, continue to rely a science of the ‘real’ (which Mandel’s work is) when it comes to economic matters? Why has no one in this context treated economic discourse as discourse?

For Hopkins, ignoring this route and following the periodization established by Mandel and repeated by others allows the organization of postmodernism into the divisions set down by Foster. Although he acknowledges a practice of photo-painting by artists like Thomas Lawson, David Salle, Malcolm Morley, Eric Fischl, and Gerhard Richter, that fit neither the photo-based “critical postmodernism” advanced by *October* nor the archetypes of the resurgent painting, Hopkins says that,

<ref>

<ref>

<ref>

<ref>

<ref>

<ref>

<ref>

<ref>

<ref>
it can be asserted that postmodern art in the early 1980s broadly resolved itself into two camps. First there were those who were content to surrender to the ‘free play of the signifier’, even in its most lurid consumerist garb. Alternatively there were those postmodernists who set about reassessing modernism, utilizing Duchampian, Situationist, or Conceptualist strategies to open up fault-lines in the capitalist ‘spectacle’.

By again treating the incipiently historical aspects of postmodernism as those determining the actions of artists who would surrender to its lurid, consumerist movement, and by maintaining the active resistance to this movement as that outside the realm of historicization, surveys such as this repeat the line codified in the early 1980s by Hal Foster and critics writing in *October.*

The ascendance of the *October* account of late twentieth-century art may by confirmed by the recent publication of *Art Since 1900*, a book bound to appear on the syllabi of many an undergraduate Art History course, which was written by four current *October* editors – Rosalind Krauss, Hal Foster, Benjamin Buchloh, and Hal Foster. Here too, the chain of action and reaction set up by Foster in the early 1980s is replaced by different criteria of historicization (those again of a survey text), as the book’s subtitle – *Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* – reads less as chronological list than a set of artistic formations that characterize “art since 1900.” Further, the discussion among the authors at the book’s conclusion suggest not simply the datedness of “postmodernism”

---

20 Hopkins 203. The reference is not simply to Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, but, more pointedly, to Foster’s use of that work in his assessment of a postmodernism of reaction, in “The Art of Spectacle,” *Art in America* 71 no.4 (Apr.1983), 144-149, 195-199.

21 This is not to say there have been no historical revisions of the *October* line. In the effort to establish a history of a different postmodernism, historians like Maurice Berger and Amelia Jones have been critical of the exclusions made to the art of the 1970s by critics writing for *October*. Maurice Berger, *Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989); Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994). However, as I will argue later, despite their critique, they maintain the same basic historical model – that governed by the figure institution – as established in *October.*
but the outdatedness of that notion, as they (or, three of them, at least) return commitments to the category of modernism.  

I claimed at the outset that the term postmodernism was dated in both art and architectural circles. That the architectural counterpart to the criticism produced in October, especially that in the journal Oppositions, did not devise a “critical postmodernism” in opposition to what was identified as a largely conservative architectural postmodernism (in particular, that advanced by the critic Charles Jencks), has made postmodernism an even more historically specific term in architectural history. But here, what has happened is that subsequent attempts to historicize it have necessarily been forced to account for developments outside architecture. Thus, the more strict use of postmodernism in the architectural criticism of the 1970s to mean things like historical quotation and semantic polyvalence, has been subject to the demands of broader definitions of postmodernism, such as those produced in the contemporary art scene. In this way, the identification of architectural postmodernism as one type of reactionary

---

22 Hal Foster et al., Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2004). Krauss’s recent work on the concept of medium as logical rather than material form has made the sharpest turn away from the concept of postmodernism. Throughout the seventies and eighties, Bucholoh had never developed a critical project in the name of postmodernism, remaining always tied the project of the historical avant-garde. Foster, who of the four has had perhaps the greatest investment in the concept of postmodernism, is suspicious of the continuation of modernism as he questions Krauss’s work on medium, 675. At the same time, postmodernism has become problematic for him as well: “in the last several years the two models we’ve used to articulate different aspects of postwar art have become dysfunctional. I mean, on the one hand, the model of a medium-specific modernism challenged by an interdisciplinary postmodernism, and, on the other, the model of a historical avant-garde (i.e., ones critical of the old bourgeois institutions of art such as Dada and Constructivism) and a neo-avant-garde that elaborates on this critique…. Today the recursive strategy of the ‘neo’ appears as attenuated as the oppositional logic of the ‘post’ seems tired: neither suffices as a strong paradigm for artistic or cultural practice, and no other model stands in their stead; or, put differently, many local models compete, but none can hope to be paradigmatic,” 679. In a way that is typical of how “critical postmodernism” has now become “historical,” Bois links up Foster’s formulation with his own account of the formalism of earlier periods: “Hal [Foster] wrote an essay in the early eighties stressing that there were two kinds of ‘postmodernism’ in art, an authoritarian one and a progressive one, and he also wrote in a similar way about the divergent legacies of Russian Constructivism and Minimalism. This goes hand in hand with what I mentioned about the two kinds of formalisms, a morphological one and a structural one,” 672. An example Bois gives is the distinction he and Krauss make between Breton and Bataille in their Informe exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in 1996.
postmodernism by critics outside the field of architecture, like Foster and Jameson, has been made to bear on subsequent histories of architecture. And this has raised the same historicist quandary. One important issue to be explored in this thesis is the reason for the different uses of the term postmodernism in art and architectural discourse in the 1970s and 1980s.

The fantasy of postmodernism, then, is still with us. However dated the term seems, however much it can be identified as a marker of the 1970s and 1980s, it has not opened itself up to historicization. One way of conceiving of the resistance to historicization is through a distinction between a discourse on postmodernism and a discourse of postmodernism. A discourse on something, I will suggest, is easier to read. It is a sort of reflexive or self-analysis, as in the journalistic attempts to assess all the different meanings of the term postmodernism, or in the critical attempts to categorize different types of postmodernism. A discourse of something is what is produced through, or even despite, the analytic mode of the discourse on that thing. It is comprised of neighboring discourses that produce the effects of the discourse on that thing. This is the discourse that I want to historicize, that has been so resistant to historicization.

Thus, in the journalistic account I first identified, the discourse on postmodernism led fairly directly to a discourse of postmodernism. That is, the identification of a plurality of different meanings for the term postmodernism suggests, as the cliché goes,

---


24 On this prepositional distinction, I am loosely following that made in Peter de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics, and the Subject* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), see especially pp. 7-12.
that pluralism itself is a condition of postmodernity. If pluralism is an aspect of the
discourse on postmodernism, this has not made the problem of historicization easier,
however. As we will see, the notion of pluralism is open to competing uses on both the
left and the right. And to understand these competing uses, to give coherence to them,
will be the task of an analysis of the discourse of postmodernism.

In the second resistance to historicization, the repeated recourse to the broad
categorization of two postmodernisms – one of reaction and one of radical criticism – has
really made historicization responsive only to the former, to the cultural logic of late
capitalism, as Jameson put it. Critical postmodernism and the postmodernism of reaction,
have been resistant to historicization together. Surveys, for example, have paid attention
to the discourse on postmodernism established by critics like Hal Foster. In so doing, they
have accepted the two postmodernisms but have taken the conservative cultural
postmodernism as historical. Whereas the rhetorical thrust of Foster’s label
“postmodernism of reaction” was to identify that it was a reactionary response to the
critique of the modernist consensus culture begun in the 1960s and carried through to the
1980s’ critical postmodernism. Thus in the criticism of the 1980s and in recent histories
of that criticism, the two postmodernisms have a causal relation, but the recent histories
have reversed the order, making the reactionary postmodernism causally prior.

What this resistance shows is that a discourse of postmodernism returns to the
matter of causal efficiency. And just as the first resistance revealed a second discourse of
pluralism, here, as I aim to show, postmodernism returns to a discussion of causality,
which takes the form of a discourse on institutions. For, according to this discourse,
institutions were above all the agents that caused and propelled the reactionary
postmodernism of late capitalism. Institutions, however, were figured in often
contradictory ways. The important issue to consider is that, although the matter of causal
efficiency was subject to contradictions, these were obscured through the production of
different modes of criticality that appeared to cohere, especially in the journals October
and Oppositions, around a common project dealing with postmodernism.

My major contention in this thesis is that the fantasy of postmodernism (or, the
discourse on postmodernism) served to mask and make illegible the deep contradictions
between the different uses of the figure "institution." These contradictions, like the ones
surrounding pluralism, cut across the political field. Thus, the usual cultural history of the
late 1970s and early 1980s in the US, of a right-wing political resurgence and a more-or-
less leftist criticism of it in the alternative institutions and the alternative press, does not
tell the whole story. The more important historical matter lies in the changes effected by
those discursive elements that cut across the political field – and these have to do with the
relation between the production of knowledge and the economy of its use.

In order to approach the historical events in question I have turned to the often
forgotten work (at least, in the fields of art and architectural history) of Thorstein Veblen,
whose collective writing forms one of the most sustained investigations into the concept
of institutionality. Known primarily for Theory of the Leisure Class – a study of that
class’s consumption habits whose subtitle is An Economic Study of Institutions –
Veblen’s work incorporated a broad range of knowledge, from economics and
anthropology to modern Darwinian evolution, and the study of the institutions of higher
learning. His account of the relation between the institutions of knowledge and the institutions of economy is particularly important to my story.\(^{25}\)

Following a strictly materialist Darwinism, Veblen says that there is no inherent order in the world that causes things to turn out in a particular way. Instead, he says, efficiency is strictly a trait of conscious beings, which allows them to determine and compare ways and means in the attainment of practical ends. However, it is also a human characteristic to attribute efficiency to certain things, anthropomorphizing causality in the world of things by giving it an external agent. Thus, the basic feature of institutions is the separation of practical and speculative knowledge — the separation of things into matters of fact, describing those things that are available to the efficiency of persons, and matters of imputation, describing those things that are caused by an external agent. In the west, Veblen explains, the history of institutionality begins to have its first clear expression in the middle ages, when the speculative schooling of the church emerges as a domain of learning distinct from the handicraft training of the guilds. This historical description is applied by Veblen to his own time, however, in a critique of modern economic institutions. The thrust of his critique is to argue that contemporary economics is no less reliant on a speculative scheme of things (as in the way Adam Smith describes the invisible hand that guides the market and benefits all) than any supernatural thinking that has informed the western church or any other religious institution.\(^{26}\)


\(^{26}\) See Thorstein Veblen, "Why is Economics Not an Evolutionary Science?" and "The Preconceptions of Economic Science," in *The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation and Other Essays* (New York: Heubsch, 1919), 56-81, 82-179. Smith is the classical example. In the neoclassical marginal analysis of the 1890s and later, economics supposes the same causal scheme as in contemporary thermodynamics. See
This basic description of institutionality – the separation of practical and speculative knowledge – informs my study. But just as Veblen was also careful to describe the process whereby institutions change, it will be important to consider how institutions are subject to the contingent forces of historical mutation. Put simply, Veblen describes this as a process where things previously held to be caused by an external agent are now made available to the efficiency of persons, and at the same time, things previously said to be the objects of practical knowledge are now assigned an external cause.

Veblen gives his students much to use in a study of institutions, and the history of his career suggests he was highly aware of how his own work was implicated in the very processes he described. This was an implication that perhaps Veblen did not live long enough to deal with fully. His most immediate followers did employ a theory of institutions in his lifetime, and Veblen felt dissatisfied with the way they were using it. But a full discourse on institutions was to emerge only a little bit later. In fact, such a discourse appeared in the 1930s well before the one I am concerned with in the 1970s and early 1980s.

The argument I make in this thesis employs Veblen's study of institutionality in order to account for the emergence of a discourse on institutions, a distinction that is crucial in what follows. Veblen's account provides us with a way of thinking about the relation between institutions of research and speculative learning – in particular, the university – and institutions of economy. These two kinds of institutions are far from separate. In fact, rather than referring to them as institutions, it might be better to describe

---

these areas of activity as being formed by a common bond, or, to use a term I feel better fits Veblen's thought (or, at least, better distinguishes it from a discourse on institutions), a common institutionality. The discourse on institutions, on the other hand, is a production of knowledge that aims to describe these two areas of activity. But what gives it its specific historical dimension is, as I will show, that it appears largely from the alternative spaces, the think tanks, and the independent research institutes. As a discourse on the social construction of knowledge, on the conventional character of knowledge, the discourse on institutions supposes at the same time a knowledge (itself) outside those conventions. This is part and parcel with the loci of its production.

In defining the discourse on institutions as a "discourse on the discursive construction of knowledge," I want to suggest that it is at once like and unlike other discourses. It is, firstly, like other discourses in that it is a production of knowledge and can no more claim to speak transparently about "actual" social relations than the objects of its analysis (i.e., knowledge that is discursively produced). However, in supposing an outside to conventional or constructed knowledge (this is not usually an obvious supposition), the discourse on institutions differs from other discourses. More than a matter of this discourse being produced from the alternative spaces and therefore outside the usual institutions of speculative learning, the discourse on institutions supposes a knowledge that differs from the usual speculative knowledge of the institutions of higher learning. That is, in marking its difference from usual speculative knowledge, it claims to identify in that knowledge the conventional. Unlike speculative knowledge, which by Veblenian definition is the attribution of efficiency to the world of things, the conventional is entirely a matter of human efficiency. The important historical crux I read
in the discourse on institutions follows from the fact that it at once identifies conventions in place of speculative knowledge and supposes an outside to those conventions: it is that the discourse on institutions is productive of a fantasy of pure human efficiency unhindered by conventions.

In this sense I distinguish a fantasy pure human efficiency from a speculative scheme that attributes efficiency in the world of things. However, although a fantasy may be different from a speculative scheme, it may nonetheless be productive of one. The task therefore is to show how a speculative scheme (postmodernism) emerges out of a fantasy of efficiency (the discourse on institutions). And to show at the same time how such a fantasy underpins, and remains with, such a speculative scheme.

In other words, if we may describe institutionality as that binding university (speculative) learning and (the) economy, then we may show the discourse on institutions as providing the transition to a new regime of efficiency for the way it enabled a reorganization of the areas of activity touched by the university and economy. As I will argue, the discourse on institutions cut across the political field and across domains of knowledge, informing both the criticism of postmodernism and the new conservative economics and cultural criticism associated with the Reagan period. If the culture of consensus of the 1950s and 1960s, the liberalism of the Vital Center, may be described as one regime of efficiency, then it may be shown that, with the critique of it by both the left and right through a discourse on institutions, what emerged by the 1980s were the fantasies of postmodernism and Reaganomics. I call these *fantasies* in particular, because they belied the effects of the discourse on institutions – and they continue with us
because they provide an account (a supernatural one, as Veblen would have it) of the
major shifts in the university and in the economy since the 1980s.

Outline of the Argument

This study covers the arc of a dialogue between Rosalind Krauss and Peter
Eisenman, a dialogue that shows the affinities between an art and an architectural
criticism until the pressures of the emergent thinking on institutions could no longer hold
it together. That dialogue initially emerged out of the criticisms each had made of her and
his intellectual formation – formations that in each case involved a kind of mentor figure.
In the case of Rosalind Krauss, this was in the person of Michael Fried, whom she met in
graduate school at Harvard, when he had just begun his vocation as an art critic. In the
case of Peter Eisenmen, Colin Rowe, his graduate advisor at Cambridge, England, was
his interlocutor in a dialogue that continued as they both returned to the US, where
Eisenmen eventually founded the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. 27 What
follows here is, firstly, an outline of the argument of this thesis, followed by a description
of its layout chapter by chapter.

Extending Veblen’s thinking, I will suggest two ways in which institutionality has
defined the rules of causality by linking up fantasies of human efficiency with causal
schemes in the world of things:

---

27 As such, I am less interested in what actually comprised such “mentor” relationships – a term that
requires all kinds of qualifications. Instead I am more interested in the “breaks” that were, and have
continued to be, part of the self-positioning of both Krauss and Eisenman. For such breaks to have the force
they are meant by Krauss and Eisenman to be understood as having, the closeness of something like a
mentor relationship is assumed.
1) One's practical work, which is free of any hindrance, is guaranteed by an external causal scheme. The practical efficiency of persons is not determined by an external scheme, but it is made possible by it. One may say that it is the total practical work in the world that is caused by this external scheme. (Following Philip Mirowski’s reading of Norbert Wiener, I will call this Augustinian causality.)

2) The task of one’s practical work is to uncover the causal scheme in the world in order that one may work in accord with it and benefit by it. In other words, it is an efficiency that may be harnessed, but only if one synchronizes with it by combating the inherent disorder in the world. Without this synchronization, practical work in itself is merely arbitrary, and in fact, by the measure of the causal scheme, is not efficient at all. (And after Mirowski again, I will call this Manichaean causality.)

These two logics combine to form what may be described as a regime of efficiency. And they become the bases for the criticisms of modernism made by Fried, Rowe, Krauss, and Eisenman. I will outline these criticisms point by point in fairly Veblenian terms here, but the analysis in the body of my thesis will be closely involved in the critical language used by these four.

Here, to begin with, is an account of the history of art criticism surrounding Rosalind Krauss.

---

i) The major precedent is the criticism of Clement Greenberg. We may describe his model of efficiency to be that of (2): as much as Greenberg claimed to follow Kant, he fairly consistently espoused, as Fried pointed out, a Hegelian scheme in his model of the historicity of modernism. The “modernist ‘reduction,’” the reduction of painting and the other arts to the essential features of each medium, was the schematic current to his historical model, which one was to emulate.

ii) In his critique of the “teleology” in Greenberg, Fried attempts to isolate “practical knowledge” from any sort of externally causal efficiency. As this comes to be a critique of literalism (an important concept of Fried’s, which I will discuss in chapter four) as well, Fried takes particular objection to false claims to practical knowledge – “literalism,” in Fried’s view, is a form of practical production that is based on the presumption that one has history on one’s side. Thus, despite his disparagement of literalist art, what Fried aims to recover is that which is truly practical in the literal. This critique, despite the complaints of Fried’s own critics, is in fact a fairly strong critique of external causality. Because he “isolates” the practical, or unhinges it from a causal scheme, this produces, by some accounts, a sort of undecidability between literalism and what he dubs “presentness.”

iii) Owing, one might say, to this undecidability, Krauss is suspicious of Fried’s project, and claims, as many of his critics would, that the “practical” in Fried’s project (what I am saying is truly practical in Fried’s politics of communication, an art that he describes in terms of presentness) is in fact dependent on a causal scheme. Krauss identifies in Fried’s notion of presentness a metaphysical
narrative of art which presumes that one can be copresent with a given work and all works in the history of modernism that come before it and on which it relies.

iv) Krauss thus reverses the valuation that Fried had inscribed in his notoriously polemical essay of 1967, "Art and Objecthood." Literalism is now held up as the model of practical knowledge. Only that Krauss does not attempt to isolate it from a causal scheme. Instead her task is now (1): to demonstrate that the practical has its foundations in a gestaltist materiality. An account of the gestaltist field becomes the external scheme that guarantees what is effective in the art she espouses.

v) At a critical point in this history, which I am associating with Matta-Clark’s Window Blow-Out, Krauss comes to recognize that the causal scheme in (iv) is identical to the causal scheme she had found in the Fried and Greenberg lines, in (iii).

vi) Now that causality is identified as “artificial” it is given the name “institutional,” and at this point the ground is clear for the discourse on institutions in October.

The second critical history to describe is that surrounding Peter Eisenman. (Note that each of the numbered points in what follows correspond, in mirror image, to the above.)

i) The major precedents in architectural criticism are perhaps more numerous, but Rowe is particular to identify Sigfried Giedion. Giedion’s project may be described as (1): it is, to Rowe, a technological fetishism. It propounds the great freedom to build and practical achievement that are the workings of a schematic modernism.
ii) Rowe attempts to isolate a causal scheme to modernity, one that does not merely guarantee the unhindered pursuit of practical aims. For Rowe, the literal is simply literal (unlike Fried, for whom literalism is an ideology) – the manipulation of materials to announce the technology of a building is merely being literal about function. What Rowe calls phenomenal transparency, on the other hand, is an attempt to isolate an experience that does not have this literal function. This is found in the experience of perceptual reversals described by gestalt theory. But in order to isolate a causal scheme from being merely an assistance to literal and practical aims, Rowe adapts gestalt theory to his own ends in order to claim that certain figures of a given period are given “field properties.” There is thus a historicity to gestalt, but one that has no role in practical pursuits, that in fact is antithetical to practical pursuits.

iii) Eisenman’s critique of Rowe is directed toward this gestaltist scheme. Identifying what may be described as the counterpart to the undecidability in Fried’s project, Eisenman argues that the forms produced by Rowe’s gestaltist scheme are merely arbitrary.

iv) Like Rowe (or, at least, the Rowe up until the rift between him and Eisenman), Eisenman argues that there is a main current to modernism, which may be described as a *Zeitgeist*. But for Eisenman, the critical task of the architect is to uncover it, to speak from its inner logic. And this is the logic of being able to announce the intentions of architecture to speak as architecture. It is, in other words, an attempt recover the practical as communication, which Eisenman takes as task (2): drawing on the linguistics of Noam Chomsky, Eisenman claims to
circumvent what is merely arbitrary in contemporary architecture, and to speak from its rational core, which has its own external causal scheme – one that, as I will show, is founded on a field concept of recursion.

v) At roughly the same critical moment that emerged for Krauss, in the fallout to *Window Blow-Out*, Eisenman recognizes that the causal scheme in (iv) is identical the one he espied in Rowe’s project, in (iii).

vi) The final move Eisenman makes is one that does not mirror Krauss’s. His own architectural project after 1976 becomes focused on what he calls decomposition, which would eventually be related, after Derrida, to the project of deconstruction. In other words, Eisenman seizes on the undecidability that was earlier identified by Krauss in Fried’s project. But he maintains this as a program particular to modernism, and thus holds on to the *Zeitgeist* concept. An architectural mirroring with the development of institutional critique in art criticism does take place, however. And this is because the discourse in *Oppositions* had already begun to deploy the figure institution, along similar lines.

The key moments in these two paths that I will trace are, firstly, that in (iii) where Krauss and Eisenman each make a critique of their intellectual formations. And then secondly in (iv) where the tasks of each nearly converge. Here, what holds the individual projects of Krauss and Eisenman together is the uncertain relation between art and architecture. The two ambulate over it and nearly identify this relation as the key issue in their two projects but are never able to settle whether there is or is not a difference between art and architecture. This relation is what makes the schemes of efficiency under
critique almost visible as a form of institutionality, but ultimately it serves as the necessary distinction between the two modes of causality. Thus, finally, what makes institutionality as such ultimately invisible is the subsequent discourse on institutions. And in this case the impetus is provided by Window Blow-Out. This invisibility is productive of the fantasy of postmodernism.

In order to set the stage for what follows the opening chapter draws out some of the problems posed to historians by Window Blow-Out. The categories used in usual conceptualizations of the work are set in the broader dimensions of a discourse on institutions that extends beyond that normally supposed by historians. Chapter 2 sets out the thematic of practical and speculative knowledge as they were already present in the modernist criticism of the 1960s in the US. Leo Marx’s 1964 study of technology and the pastoral tradition in American literature, Machine in the Garden, is just one of a number of attempts of the time to provide figures for the practical and the speculative. And in order to provide a key to this problematic, I turn to the work of Thorstein Veblen, which provides us with a rigorous account of the concept of institutionality (which has also been much neglected in terms of the important work it does in this regard). He also reminds us that, as much as the new critics of postmodernism liked to style themselves as having discovered the actual workings of institutions (the critical purchase presumed by the discourse on postmodernism relies on its own sense of actuality), the analysis and critique of institutions had been around since much earlier.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 are a close examination of the dialogue among the four critics under study here (or, perhaps better, the two art critics, one architectural historian, and
one architect-critic). The narrowness of this focus will allow me to isolate the particular dilemmas faced by these four. These three chapters will deal with, successively, the dialogues between Colin Rowe and Peter Eisenman, Rosalind Krauss and Michael Fried, and Eisenman and Krauss. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the “breaks” that Eisenman and Krauss each made with their “mentors.” Chapter 5 will focus on the period from 1969, when Eisenman and Krauss met, until 1974 when Krauss quit writing for *Artforum* and began to plan with Annette Michelson the formation of a new art periodical, and when Eisenman made his last use of Chomskian theory in his work. This chapter will outline the ambulatory mode of the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman, as one borrowed from the other, never quite settling on the precise relation between art and architecture.

Chapter 6 will expand the focus and put some bearings on the dialogue between Eisenman and Krauss from outside the limited fields of art and architectural criticism. Eisenman had, since 1969, been working with the linguistic theory of Noam Chomsky. And Krauss, since approximately the same time, which was also that of her departure from the Greenbergian and Friedian lines of modernist criticism, had been incorporating aspects of gestalt theory. I will show that the two methods have a conceptual affinity and a genealogical unity in the sciences that incorporated the concept of entropy. This pairing, however, is a combined statement on the efficiency of the world, which it restored in the causal function of the “field.”

In chapter 7 the presumptions of the field concept are put to the test. I argue that they have informed all of the major readings of Michael Fried's “Art and Objecthood,” and especially that in Hal Foster's “Crux of Minimalism.” The field concepts of gestalt theory and Chomskian recursiveness as employed by Krauss and Eisenman within the
years 1969-1974, can be seen to be succeeded by the figural uses of "institution." I argue that rather than being high modernism's last gasp, a puritanical recourse to faith, "Art and Objecthood" speaks to a much more complicated notion of institutionality, which had been articulated by Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

After *Window Blow-Out* it remained only for Krauss and the other critics surrounding *October* to redirect this opposition into a discourse on postmodernism, in which the figure "institution" would now come to bear the unresolved contradictions that were at the center of the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman. This would put *October* in alignment with the architectural criticism of *Oppositions*. Chapter 8 outlines the Eisenman-Krauss dialogue throughout 1976, a final exchange before this breaking point is finally reached. It points to the ways in which the decisive sense of what the relation between art and architecture was all about came near the surface through the issue of irony, and then was dissipated upon the intervention by Matta-Clark.

Chapter 9 describes the significance of the discourse on institutions. What it demonstrates is that the figural uses of institution served to designate the competing versions of causality that were evident in the dialogue of Krauss and Eisenman. However, the "institutionality" at the core of that dialogue was always just below the surface. To approach this, the full significance of the Merleau-Pontyan institution will also be drawn out in chapter 9. It is a concept that is meant to cover two aspects of the event of institution – to institute and to be instituted. The reading of Veblen provided in chapter 2 shows that what Merleau-Ponty had described was the imbrication of practical and speculative knowledge. Thus, the real crux in the critique of modernism is not the identification that art or architecture is an institution, or an already instituted set of
conventions, rather the crux lies in the way the instituted is at once instituted practical knowledge, and instituted speculative knowledge – a regime of efficiency that is not determined by conventions as such but by the ways they are imagined to determine what is possible, or what is available to human efficiency. The conceptual pair at the core of institutionality – the practical and the speculative – is never identified as such by Krauss and Eisenman, however. It forms instead an alternating opposition between art and architecture. The relation between art and architecture, which had been a point over which their dialogue ambulated, turns out to be an empty opposition, or one, at least, that could not describe that other, more operative, conceptual pair that formed the regime of efficiency.
1. Efficiencies

Window Blow-Out: Second Take

Of the readings of Window Blow-Out that take it as an effective critique of the architectural profession, one of the more convincing appears in Thomas Crow’s short essay on site-specificity. Window Blow-Out is an example of what he identifies as “strong site-specific art,” work whose “presence is in terminal contradiction to the nature of the space it occupies,” as opposed to the weaker variety of site-specificity which, borrowing the words of Richard Serra, is “‘subordinated to/accommodated to/adapted to/subservient to/required to/useful to …’ something other than itself.”¹ According to these criteria, Window Blow-Out sits alongside Matta-Clark’s 1975 cutting of an abandoned warehouse in the lower Manhattan pier district, known as Day’s End [figs. 4 & 5]. Both works are intolerable to the authorities that oversee those spaces. Just as Peter Eisenman put an immediate end to Window Blow-Out, so too did the police with Day’s End when they reinforced the closure of the work’s site until the building was eventually demolished. For Crow, then, the critical edge in Matta-Clark’s work lies in its ability to expose the nature of the space it occupies, which, in the intervention at the IAUS, had a particular investment from a certain quarter of the architectural profession.²

In his more recent monograph on the artist, however, Crow reconsiders the earlier assessment that placed the intervention at the IAUS and Day’s End among Matta-Clark’s “stronger” works. Here, Window Blow-Out and other of the artist’s works of 1976 that

¹ Crow, “Site-Specific Art,” 135, 146.
² Ibid.
were made in the midst of personal and professional turmoil are said to have taken Matta-Clark to "the edge of nearly purified rage, criticality, and invisibility" – poignant works, undoubtedly, but lacking the consummate skill evident in the earlier works like *Photo-Fry, Walls, Pig Roast*, as well as the early cuttings like *Bronx Floors* and *Splitting*. The skill Crow now holds up in those earlier works is that of the anthropologist-*bricoleur* – in other words, Matta-Clark’s manipulation of the codes of alchemy, gastronomy, archaeology, and so on.3

Despite this new angle on Matta-Clark’s *oeuvre* Crow essentially repeats the reading of *Window Blow-Out* made earlier. Because of the reaction by Eisenman, the work’s “critical point was neatly made, with greater power than any polemic, because the subject of the piece – the Institute itself – was manoeuvred into acting out its message…”4 However, in revisiting the earlier argument, a particular lapse takes place. In the newer text, the Institute in question is misidentified as the Institute for Architecture and Urban Resources (the deliberateness of this identification is reflected in Crow’s description of the Institute’s “summoning of the ‘urban resources’” to repair the windows damaged by Matta-Clark).5 To misidentify the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies as the Institute for Architecture and Urban Resources is a simple enough oversight.6 But in this case it points to a further issue in the reading of Matta-Clark’s work.

The site of another Matta-Clark work carried out earlier in 1976, *Doors-Floors-Doors* (a building cutting sometimes known as *Doors Through and Through*), was the

---

5 Ibid., 104.
6 Crow is not the first to misidentify the site of *Window Blow-Out*. In an interview in 1978, Jane Crawford, the artist’s widow, named it as the Architectural League: Crawford.
newly reclaimed school building in Long Island City named Project Studios One, or PS1. The building was initially leased to the Institute for Art and Urban Resources, an artists collective founded by Alanna Heiss to find and promote exhibition and studio space among New York's abandoned buildings. The inaugural show for PS1, called "Rooms," included *Doors-Floors-Doors* and was the subject of the second half of Krauss's essay, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America" [fig. 6].

The name of this artists' collective, which founded one of the many "alternative spaces" to emerge in New York in the 1970s, is evidently the source of confusion in Crow's monograph. The "urban resources" referred to by the artists' collective does not so much differ from that presumed by Crow to belong to the architectural Institute, but it undoes the apparent opposition between Matta-Clark and the quarter of the architectural profession represented at the IAUS. For the point "neatly made," one might say, by Crow's oversight is that Matta-Clark and other artists represented in the so-called alternative spaces in SoHo and at PS1 were involved in a process, however complicated, of gentrification that was no less responsible for the conditions of urban neglect in the other parts of the city that Matta-Clark drew attention to in *Window Blow-Out.*

Despite this point and the many studies that have reconsidered the role of artists and alternative spaces in the process of gentrification, an opposition between institutional

---


8 The gentrification of SoHo, as has been well studied, pushed up rents and forced the relocation of long-time inhabitants of lower Manhattan. Many would have been forced to take up residence in the kinds of buildings in the Bronx that were photographed by Matta-Clark for *Window Blow-Out.* See, for example, Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change,* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). Though Rosalyn Deutsche does not include Matta-Clark in this process (like Crow, she reads *Window Blow-Out* as a critique of the architectural profession), she has examined gentrification in New York in relation to the rise of neo-expressionism: Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan, "The Fine Art of Gentrification," *October* 31 (winter 1984), 91-111.
space and alternative space is still maintained in the reading of Matta-Clark's work. Crow's reading of strong site-specificity, of course, depends on the way Matta-Clark maneuvered an institution into acting out its contradictions. Pamela Lee, on the other hand, insists on the "alternative" siting of Matta-Clark's work: "...the place of art-making for Matta-Clark cannot be described as an institutional given. Matta-Clark could hardly proffer a critique of such places as institutions, then, because none of the sites he worked in had yet to assume such a mantle, wielding none of their cultural purchase."9 This opposition between institutional space and alternative space is in effect a part of the same discursive operation. As Lee continues,

And so, in a manner that may seem to contradict the critique of institutions but which dialectically compliments its conceptual sensibilities, Matta-Clark's art demonstrates that the terms of art making may, in fact, shape the terms of property, even facilitate its constitution as such. If architecture acts as the support or the ground to the "figure" of the work of art, his work announces the ground in turn.10 However, the "complimentary sensibility" of alternative space and institutional critique is not so much a part of the same criticism of property development in SoHo as Lee takes it to be, but rather it is a part of a discourse on institutions, whose broader effects I historicize in this thesis. The emergence of this discourse on institutions — which informs Matta-Clark's critique of modernism and Lee's pairing of alternative space and institutional critique — is dependent on a conceptual distinction between art and architecture, a distinction that upon closer examination proves to be empty.

That Lee turns to a figure-ground reading of Matta-Clark's building cuttings returns her discussion to one formulated by Krauss in her "Notes on the Index." As I will

---

9 Lee, Object to be Destroyed, 88.
10 Ibid., 88-90.
describe, Krauss’s writings, from the time of her departure from the Friedian and Greenbergian lines of modernist criticism, is deeply involved in recovering certain insights from gestalt theory. Her 1977 essay on the index in seventies art in America marks a turn toward structuralism that nonetheless still draws on her earlier, gestaltist work. Lee’s description of a figure-ground ambiguity in Matta-Clark’s work is the sort of account Krauss had put forward about other cases of post-60s sculpture, claiming that figure-ground reversals pointed to the material basis of the work, as a counter to the kinds of subjectivism she was coming to perceive in the criticism of Fried and Greenberg.11 In “Notes on the Index,” Krauss comes to conceive of such reversals as being like those of an indexical sign, or “shifter” – that is, a linguistic element whose content is arrived at strictly by way of the context of its use (as in, for example, the words “you” or “me”). This kind of meaning-making is evident in the work of Duchamp as well as that in the “Rooms” show at PS1, and what it demonstrates is that not only is it dependent on context, but it shows the conventionality of normal linguistic usage. On the shifter, Krauss writes,

It is a sign which is inherently “empty,” its signification a function of only this one instance, guaranteed by the existential presence of just this object. It is the meaningless meaning that is instituted through the terms of the index.12

Krauss moves from the material ground described by way of gestalt theory, which in her system had earlier been the foundation of meaning, to the determination of meaning by context in a conventionalized system. The structuralist Krauss may indeed be the more well-known Krauss, but I argue that her arrival at this method involved a working

---

12 R Krauss, “Notes on the Index” (part 1), 78. The “shifter” had been theorized by the linguist, Roman Jakobson.
through of the problems and limitations of gestalt theory, which from the start was always read by Krauss in terms of its material determinations as against the cognitive and Cartesian accounts of the same theory. The awkwardness of the phrase “meaningless meaning” may be accounted for by this shift in thinking, but it will ultimately stand as the transition from a gestaltist ground to an institutional ground. This institutional ground is the basis for the theory of postmodernism that was about to emerge in October – that is, the critical postmodernism espoused there was one that identified institutions, in one form or another, as the object of critique. What will be important to consider, however, is the way in which the so-called critical postmodernism was at the same time founded on a discourse on institutions. In other words, to historicize this discourse it will be necessary to point to the figural use of the term “institution” and to uncover the logic behind these figurations. As Krauss’s account of the index shows, this grew out of another theory – in this case, gestalt – versions of which she had been drawing on since her first criticism of Fried and Greenberg. For this reason, the historicization of postmodernism I am undertaking turns to an earlier formative moment, over a number of years from the time when modernism (or, a particular aspect of it that one might associate with consensus culture in general) is first critiqued by Krauss and, at the same time, by Eisenman until the moment when the discourse on institutions began to take shape. Throughout this study, the discourse on institutions will be held in view as I examine the formulations of institutionality touched on by Krauss and Eisenman in the late 1960s and early 1970s – one of the most important of which will be that of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.
Alternative Spaces, Think Tanks, The New Class, and The Last Intellectuals

The linking up of institutional critique and alternative space maintained by Pamela Lee, in her recent monograph on Matta-Clark, does indeed appear to bear out the historical developments in the visual arts in the US. Many of the critical practices that Krauss favored in “Notes on the Index” and elsewhere were supported by a grant system that tied those practices to artist-run centers or alternative spaces. The National Endowment for the Arts was founded in 1966 and directly funded both artists and alternative spaces, which tended to show artists who had received NEA grants themselves or had at least been educated in the same university system that granted MFA degrees and measured the competencies that were the granting criteria. This same educational system, it may be fairly said, was the one that began to produce the different forms of institutional critique. Since institutional critique and alternative space were linked in this way, it will be worthwhile to consider how institutions came to be defined in the broader dimensions of that discourse.

Broadly speaking, the modernism that was the object of critique for Krauss and others who took up the “critical postmodernism” banner may be said to have been a part of a culture of consensus. The initial criticism directed toward Fried and Greenberg, from a range of figures like Robert Smithson, Lucy Lippard and Annette Michelson, was against the modes of subjectivism they supported – a subjectivism that Krauss viewed as being tied to self-mastery and transcendence. In a larger sense, Krauss felt that the modernism they described no longer had any political purchase. And indeed, as other

---

14 The range of Fried’s critics will be discussed in chapter seven.
studies show, Greenberg's modernism did by the sixties have discursive and institutional links to a politics of the Center, which in the US meant an anti-communist, anti-ideology, Cold War consensus culture.\textsuperscript{15} The Vital Center, as it was called by the prominent liberal, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., had come to describe the way partisans of different political stripes had given up their partisanship in order to unite around a common goal: the defeat of communism and the promotion of liberty.\textsuperscript{16} The blindness of the Vital Center to minority rights, and its expansionist global politics led to the civil rights movement and the debacles in Southeast Asia. As most histories of the 1960s will describe, these threw up major challenges to the ideology of the Vital Center. Insofar as modernism had come to be seen as a piece of this consensus liberalism, the critique of modernism may be studied in relation to the rise of the New Left, and the student movements that challenged the liberalism that put US troops in Vietnam and refused to make significant changes with respect to civil rights.

The Vital Center, however, was not just viewed with suspicion by the New Left, but the left's own vocal criticisms of the role of government and universities in the politics of consensus was viewed with suspicion by those on the right. Only that they, like the left, were coming to define themselves as a new political movement, a new right, blaming the problems they perceived to have emerged with the counter-culture and the student movements on the shortcomings of liberalism. Indeed, many who moved in


liberal anticommunist intellectual circles during the fifties, now began to use the term “liberal” derisively as they came to define themselves, and to be defined, as neoconservatives.17

What will be of interest to this study is the way the critique of modernism shared certain terms with the critique of liberalism by the neoconservatives. In fact, given that by the 1980s neoconservatism and the cultural criticism that one associates with critical postmodernism were so completely opposed to one another, it is often forgotten that the critique of liberalism was at one point broad enough to share terms that were used by both the left and the right. One of the central points recognized across the politics of left and right was the fact that liberalism owed its strength to a professional class that had grown significantly by the 1960s. The New Class, as it was called, was made up of university trained white-collar professionals and provided the technical expertise and know-how to all the major institutions of government.18

The New Left, and in particular the students that first revolted at Berkeley in 1964, recognized that government was supported by the universities that produced the professionals that serviced it. And in this way, the university was a primary target of critique. But as these students moved up in the educational system, eventually (for those that stayed in academia) becoming professors, that criticism entered the classroom. By the late sixties already, the prospect of aligning the New Class with the political aims of

the left appeared feasible for some, like Michael Harrington, who thought a democratic majority could be founded on this alliance.

To the right, meanwhile, all of the campus upheaval and “race riots” in the streets could be attributed to the permissiveness of the New Class. What was more, the university classrooms were being taken over by the left and the counter-culture. Neoconservatives saw the political interference of the New Class, now referred to with the epithet “liberal,” as a corruption of the institutions of democracy, precisely because of its identification of rights with “special interests.”

The common reference by left and right to the concept of the New Class reaches back at least as far as the 1930s. Since many of the new neoconservatives were anticommunist liberals in the fifties, and anti-Stalinist leftists in the 1930s, some of the conceptual baggage of their youth reemerged in their critique of liberalism in the 1970s. Gary Dorrien has traced the New Class concept of the sixties and seventies back to its initial popularization by James Burnham in *The Managerial Revolution*, a work by a one-time Trotskyist and then strident anti-Stalinist who prophesied in the midst of WWII the world takeover by a class of managers in both a corporate capitalism and an international communism (as well as a corporate fascism which he thought would survive the war).

This text was a part of the long-standing anticommunist rhetoric that survived usage by

---


the independent left in the thirties, Cold War liberals in the fifties, and now appeared among neoconservatives in the seventies. It was a rhetoric that could describe the corruption or the infiltration of democratic institutions by a bureaucratic and managerial class.

Though the argument of Harrington could claim the potential of the New Class as an ally to the New Left, others on the left would draw on the earlier formulation and point to the New Class as one of the stumbling blocks to an effective politics. Christopher Lasch and Russell Jacoby have both suggested that the voices of the left in the sixties were able to find a home in the university and, feeling accommodated, gave up on radical politics. This argument owes in no small measure to that of the neoconservatives – both observe the occupation of institutions by a mostly left-leaning New Class. The only difference lies in whether the university has any social function, a difference that, in the end, is total. For Lasch and Jacoby the institution blunts any political action, while for the neoconservatives the institutions are entirely manipulated and corrupt the principles of democracy.

The political critiques of the institutions of art, which emerged alongside alternative spaces, are thus part of a broader discourse on institutions and have their mirror reflection on the right. For the neoconservatives set up their own alternative spaces in corporate-funded think tanks and from there launched their attacks on the liberalism that they saw as being entrenched in the university. Given that both left and right employed a common discourse of institutions, it will be necessary to examine it more

closely, paying attention its own logic, rather than the logic presumed by either the left or right.

The Discourse on Institutions

While the neoconservatives had their own journals, like *Commentary, The Public Interest* and others, and these took part in the discourse on institutions, my focus to begin with will be on the journals *October* and *Oppositions*. It will be possible to read different uses of the figure “institution” in these journals – but these differences, I will argue, do not reflect a difference between art and architecture. They suggest something more complicated, or something, at least, that is not legible strictly on the surface of the discourse on postmodernism.

Some accounts of the publishing histories of *October* and *Oppositions* have already been made and they do not need entire repeating here. But it is worth noting some of their general observations. Both journals model themselves after the “little magazines” of the European avant-garde, and thus have an investment in a particular history of modernism, however much they were critical of recent representatives of modernism in the US. Both announce avant-gardist politics in their names, and both have found those politics questioned, precisely in the way that avant-gardism in general has been revised and questioned for its own exclusions and elitism.

---


24 These criticisms of *Oppositions* appear in Ockman and Pecora. Considerations of the *October* legacy has been spurred on by the recent appearance of *Art Since 1900*, which rehashed a number of its authors’ writings already appearing in *October*. For reviews of the book, see Charles Harrison, “After the Fall,” *Art Journal* 65 no.1 (Spring 2006), 116-119; and those by Nancy J. Troy, Geoffrey Batchen, Amelia Jones,
Along these lines it has been claimed that the format of these magazines announces a particularly high-brow investment of intellectual content. And as a sign of this, it is often noted that for being magazines devoted to architecture and the visual arts there is a relatively small proportion of illustration, which itself is limited to black and white reproductions. These layout choices were, of course, deliberately made as a response to what were seen as the superficial glossy magazines of the commercial press [figs. 7 & 8]. But they have also left the editors open to the charge that they neglect the study of objects in favor of the production of theory and a strictly specialized discourse. It cannot be said that the editors of *October* and *Oppositions* wished a limited readership – both journals’ opening editorials announce the hope for a bridge between specialized academic discourse and a popular readership – but to the extent that a specialization of discourse was deliberate, a relatively narrow readership must have certainly been expected from the start. (It has been noted that the editors of *Oppositions* had hoped for as wide a readership in Europe as in the US, which the founders of the IAUS disparaged for its insularity. This, however, did not turn out to be the case.)

This has given the sense that both *Oppositions* and *October* (especially in the late 70s and early 80s when the contemporary art it considered largely revolved around a small group of artists associated with the critical term “Pictures,” which I will discuss shortly) have promoted a kind of clubiness. For readers of *Oppositions* this was especially apparent in the back pages, which reproduced snapshots of the cocktail parties that followed seminars at the IAUS [fig. 9].

---

Pamela M. Lee, Romy Golan, Robert Storr, Jodi Hauptman, and Dario Gamboni, in *Art Bulletin* 88 no.2 (June 2006), 373-89.

25 Ockman, 183.
These details demonstrate that if *October* and *Oppositions* were going to critique institutions and speak from the position of alternative space, or alternative press, their own investment in a sort of specialization demanded that they be attentive to the particular purchase institutions might have for their own success. Still, the language of institutions appears in these magazines primarily to identify the conservative political formation that their editors opposed. This places both *October* and *Oppositions* in what I am identifying as a broad discourse on institutions. However, given their specific histories, which revolve around personal and conceptual breaks with certain modernist precedents, the way the criticism in these journals reach back to those moments gives unique coherence to, by closely grouping together, differently held but complementary arguments about institutions. This coherence, was present in *Oppositions* from its inception, and in *October* from the time the critics Benjamin Buchloh and then Hal Foster began to write for the magazine and anthologize some of its contributions.

From its start in 1973, *Oppositions* had a range of intellectual positions, which guaranteed that institutions would be considered from alternate points of view. This was had by the fact that the IAUS had drawn a number of its fellows from overseas. Kenneth Frampton and Anthony Vidler, for example, came from England, Manfredo Tafuri from Italy, and the Argentinian couple Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas from Paris where they had studied under Roland Barthes. Thus, different forms of dialectical materialism and structuralism appeared in the magazine from its inception.

*October*, on the other hand, revolved around a smaller editorship, consisting of its co-founders Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson (initially including Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, and then later Douglas Crimp as managing editor). Krauss and Michelson
represented an interest in structuralism and poststructuralism, which was shared by Crimp and Craig Owens. The anthology, *The Anti-Aesthetic* (1983), which codified “critical postmodernism” and that came to be identified with the critical line set down by *October* was edited by Hal Foster. Foster, who was along with Crimp a student of Krauss’s, had been an editor at *Art in America*, which for many had surpassed *Artforum* as the most critically engaging popular art magazine when the latter’s publisher sold the magazine that had in the late 60s put to print many of the most important essays on minimalism. Foster’s writing at *Art in America* had made references to Krauss’s criticism but it became much more focused on the discussions of postmodernism found in the *New German Critique*, which had published work by Jürgen Habermas, Peter Bürger, Andreas Huyssen, and Frederic Jameson among others. Foster’s criticism in *Art in America*, then, represented an approach rooted in the more or less Frankfurt School tradition of dialectical materialism.

When Foster framed the essays in *The Anti-Aesthetic* he thus came to find the same problems of postmodernism to be taken up by the (post)structuralist *October* critics he included – namely, Douglas Crimp, Rosalind Krauss, and Craig Owens. Bürger’s dialectical theory of institutionalization was also taken up by Benjamin Buchloh, and by the mid-80s both Buchloh and Foster had begun to write for *October*. The conceptual linkage of structuralist and dialectical approaches through the theory of postmodernism found an exemplary historicization in Foster’s 1986 essay, “The Crux of Minimalism,” an

---

important essay which I revisit in this thesis. Minimalism's crux was not just the point at which high modernist criticism broke down, but it also provided the genealogical link for the two strains of critical postmodernism - the minimalist-site-specificity strain and the Duchampian-conceptual strain - which also turn out to retrace the two critical methods that had converged in *October* by the mid-80s (i.e., the dialectical approach of critics like Foster and Buchloh, and the (post)structuralist approach of critics like Krauss, Crimp, and Owens).

The discourse on institutions in both *October* and *Oppositions* produces an antinomy, which corresponds more or less to a distinction between dialectics and structuralism. This antinomy, however, is suggestive of a much deeper distinction. Put simply, the term institution was used to designate the visible signs of doubling, and the antinomy lies in the term's ability to designate that doubling as sameness and as difference. A brief look at some examples will illustrate this.

The 1977 exhibition, *Pictures*, curated by Douglas Crimp, served as the site of much theorizing about postmodernism, not only for Crimp but for others who would also come to identify the mode of picture-making, as opposed to painting, as forming an important investigation into the process of representation. In the second version of his catalogue essay, which was published in *October* in 1979, Crimp associates the artists in the exhibition (Sherrie Levine, Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Robert Longo and Philip

---

Smith) as well as Cindy Sherman, with the notion of postmodernism.\textsuperscript{28} Taking the problems of \textit{painting} to be explicitly those of \textit{modernist} criticism, Crimp employs the non-media-specific term “pictures.” In later essays he would become more precise about the tactics of this postmodern alternative. For example, claiming the period of modernism to be at the same time the period of the museum, he argues for a practice that would dissolve the museum and its essentialist classification of objects. In “The End of Painting,” Daniel Buren’s work is described in a manner very similar to Krauss’s account of the works in the “Rooms” exhibition at PS1, such as \textit{Doors-Floors-Doors}.\textsuperscript{29} That is, it is precisely the ability of Buren’s stripe painting to be enunciated by their museum context – by doubling as figure and ground, to use Krauss’s earlier terms – that points to the institution as the content of the painting. The difference here is that Crimp has named the institution under critique as the modernist museum. Similarly, in Crimp’s account of photography, it is precisely the photograph’s ability to double as a \textit{record of} a work of art and \textit{to be} a work of art itself that has confounded the modernist classificatory system.\textsuperscript{30} The doubling that Krauss had identified as a function of “shifters,” is here taken up to signal a repetition that confounds the institution’s ordered set of differences.

In Hal Foster’s criticism, the so-called pictures artists are discussed just as much, but rather than following the model of “institutional critique” defined by Crimp, the

\textsuperscript{28} Douglas Crimp, \textit{Pictures: An Exhibition of the Work of Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo, Philip Smith: Artists Space, September 24-October 29, 1977} (New York: Committee for the Visual Arts, 1977); Douglas Crimp, “Pictures,” \textit{October} 8 (spring 1979), 75-88. The conceptualization of Sherman as a “pictures” artist here has often obscured the fact that she did not appear in the original exhibition which was surely seen by far fewer people than who would eventually read Crimp’s revised essay. (The original catalogue essay does not mention Sherman either, nor does it discuss postmodernism). The revised essay was reprinted in The New Museum’s anthology, \textit{Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation}, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984).

\textsuperscript{29} Douglas Crimp, “The End of Painting,” \textit{October} 16 (spring 1981), 69-86. See also Alanna Heiss, ed. \textit{Rooms}.

theory of institutionalization as set out in Peter Bürger’s *Theory of the Avant-Garde* offers the conceptual armature.\(^\text{31}\) According to this theory, institutionalization is the name for the way avant-garde practices, when repeated, become a redundancy that can be reproduced for the market. In this way, the market demands of low culture steal from the high. Foster argues, however, that an artist like Cindy Sherman steals from this low culture, and performs a second doubling, where the repetition is transformed into a difference. In other words, the critical capacity of a Sherman film still lies in the perceptible difference, however subtle, between it and the 1950s movie still that it takes as a model.\(^\text{32}\)

The antinomy that appears in the criticism surrounding such artists, then, is one that sees the figure institution as a sign of doubling that is either a difference or a repetition. It appears throughout the discourse on postmodernism in *October*, whether it is in Craig Owens theory of allegory, or Krauss’s study of repetition and the avant-garde. The logic of this antinomy is not limited to art criticism, however, as it also extends to the pages of *Oppositions*. There, “institution” signals not the object of critique of a “critical postmodernism.” Rather, the term institution is employed to designate the conservative political formation that had come to take on the guise of an architectural postmodernism. But despite this difference it forms the same antinomy as appears in *October*.

To consider how the antinomy plays itself out in the pages of *Oppositions*, the different approaches to the work of the Italian architect, Aldo Rossi, will provide a case

---

\(^{31}\) Though Bürger’s book was first published in German in 1974, it was not translated into English until 1984. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984). His arguments did appear in English earlier, however, in related essays published in the *New German Critique*; see note 24 above.

in point. For Manfredo Tafuri, Rossi's recomposition of architectural fragments affirms architecture's character as language. Fusing Marx's account of ideology with Foucault's "discourse on language," Tafuri argues that any attempt to speak about form amounts to "architectural ideology," and that Rossi refuses formal analysis. Instead, his repetition of fragments simply affirms the closed circuit of language, which Tafuri identifies precisely as the institution of architecture. This repetition allows the critic to treat the object in its most historical sense, which is as an object of language.

For Anthony Vidler, on the other hand, Rossi's recomposition of typological form does not so much suggest the repetition of elements, but points to the possibility of a new content out of existing parts. The institutional is the typological reference point, and thus the doubling of institutional form with a difference allows for architecture to house a new social content. The critical possibilities, and dangers, of this are called upon by reference to Foucault's Discipline and Punish: commenting on the combined typologies of city hall and prison in Rossi's design for a regional administrative building in Trieste, Vidler writes, "The dialectic is as clear as a fable: the society that understands the reference to prison will still have need of the reminder, while at the very point that the image finally loses all meaning, the society will either have become entirely prison or,

---


34 Manfredo Tafuri, "L'Architecture dans le Boudoir: The Language of Criticism and the Criticism of Language," Oppositions 3 (May 1974), 37-62. Tafuri is unique among the critics in view here, in that he recognizes and makes explicit the task of the critic (as opposed to simply the artist or architect) under this model of institutionality. That task is to identify the visible signs of doubling. Tafuri goes one step beyond his peers by announcing that this naming process, criticism itself, is the completion of the work.

35 Anthony Vidler, "The Third Typology," Oppositions 7 (Winter 1976), 1-4. Like Foster's, this "difference" is not closely identified and is vaguely connected with artistic intuition.
perhaps, its opposite. The fable here is that under present political conditions, visible
difference is required for the work to perform its critical function.

Again, the deployment of the term institution takes on the designations of
doubling as either a repetition or a difference. And as in October it recurs throughout
Oppositions. It appears as the demand for difference in work of Kenneth Frampton as
well as Anthony Vidler. And, apart from Tafuri's work, it signals a practice of
repetitive doubling in the combined criticism of Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas.

This antinomy is far reaching, and what will be required is an account of the range
of its effects. That it may be described as alternating between a representation of
difference and a representation of repetition lends itself to a Deleuzian analysis. And
Deleuze's critique of the representation of difference and the representation of repetition
as that which is made and that which appears further suggests that the discourse on
institutions may be examined for the modes of efficiency it supposes. My analysis of the
historical effects of this discourse proceeds from the study of institutionality offered by
Veblen, however.

Veblen describes human efficiency as the comparison of ways and means in the
attainment of some stated aim. And he notes that both the aims and the means in practical
efficiency may be a matter of convention. This is a rather straightforward claim but, as a

36 Ibid., 4.
37 Kenneth Frampton, review of Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation, by Charles Jencks and Nathan
Silver, Oppositions 3 (May 1974), 104-5; Kenneth Frampton, "On Heidegger," Oppositions 4 (October
Foster, 17-34. Like a number of the critics of postmodernism in the New German Critique, Hal Foster had
taken his cue from readings of architectural postmodernism.
38 Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas, "Semiotics and Architecture: Ideological Consumption or
Theoretical Work," Oppositions 1 (September 1973), 93-100; Diana Agrest, "Design versus Non-Design,
Oppositions 6 (Fall 1976), 45-68; Mario Gandelsonas, "From Structure to Subject: The Formation of an
Architectural Language," Oppositions 17 (Summer 1979), 6-29.
study of the discourse on institutions will show, it is surprising how difficult it is to think through its implications. In fact, I am suggesting that the antinomy at the center of the discourse on institutions results from considering the conventional as strictly one or the other half of what comprises practical efficiency (aims and means). By taking the conventional as a false form of efficiency in one half, the discourse on institutions supposes a pure form of efficiency, a fantasy of efficiency unhindered by convention in the other half.

That is, when the institution of art or architecture is said to be a false set of differences provided by museum or historical classification, this is said to be belied by a critical repetition (demonstrating the repetition of museum elements by a critical postmodernism, for example). Here, the "aims" are conventional – "art" or "architecture" – and the fantasy lies in the imagined world of things as pure heterogeneity, a fantasy of undetermined aims. On the other hand, when the institution of art or architecture is said to have institutionalized certain "works," the difference claimed between allegedly "avant-garde" works and those of the institution are belied by an actual repetition, which is read in the homogenization of culture. When works repeat avant-gardist tactics of an earlier period, they conform to a repetition demanded by commodification. Here, the "means" are conventional, and the fantasy lies in the imagined function or aim for art or architecture as a pure institution, a fantasy of undetermined means.

**Window Blow-Out: Third Take**

The circumstances surrounding *Window Blow-Out* are at the cusp of a fantasy of postmodernism. Matta-Clark’s work appeared at a moment when a dialogue between art
and architecture, represented by the persons of Rosalind Krauss and Peter Eisenman, no longer seemed to have any common ground – at a moment when an advanced art criticism began to propound a theory of postmodernism at odds with its nearest architectural counterpart. But rather than confirming an opposition between art and architecture, and a lack of coherence to that impending postmodernism, *Window Blow-Out* served its underlying logic.

This logic is still present in accounts of Matta-Clark’s work, regardless of whether a postmodernism is called forth. An unresolved issue in the literature on the artist has to do with how *Window Blow-Out* relates to his more well-known building cuttings. The intervention at the IAUS has been singled out as a particularly strong critique of the architectural profession;\(^{39}\) while his building cuttings have been treated as a more sustained examination of the very material and phenomenological ground of art.\(^{40}\)

Consider two of the more convincing representations of these views. For Thomas Crow, as we saw, *Window Blow-Out* is an example of what he identifies as “strong site-specific art,” work whose “presence is in terminal contradiction to the nature of the space it occupies,” as opposed to the weaker variety of site-specificity, which is merely subordinate to the space it occupies. And in this account both *Window Blow-Out* and *Day’s End* could be considered strongly site-specific in that they challenged the nature of the space they occupied.

Pamela Lee’s monograph on Matta-Clark, on the other hand, identifies in the artist’s cuttings a phenomenological inquiry that challenges the usual perceptual indicators of the status of “work of art.” By subtracting elements from an already existing

\(^{39}\) Crow, “Site-Specific Art;” R Deutsche; M Brouwer.

building, Matta-Clark implies an impossible completion to his work – literally
deconstructing the work that is the building/cutting. Matta-Clark’s “work” has none of
the usual metaphysical properties of that word. In this sense, Lee sees the cuttings as a
critique of the metaphysical closure accorded to the status of “work of art” within high
modernist criticism. The thrust of Matta-Clark’s critique is more or less bolstered by
*Window Blow-Out* through the reactions to it that saw it as an act of violence; for
“violence,” according to such modernist criticism, is the only way to conceive of the
phenomenological critique performed by the artist in his cuttings.

These two views differ, then, on how to treat the sum of Matta-Clark’s work. For
Crow, it is necessary to distinguish between strong site-specific works like *Window
Blow-Out* and *Day’s End* and, implicitly, the weaker works (like the original cutting
planned for the IAUS or other gallery cuttings like the ones at PS1 and the Museum of
Contemporary Art at Chicago). For Lee, there is a consistency to Matta-Clark’s oeuvre,
which spans all of his projects and centers on themes such as community, property, and,
above all, “worklessness.” The consistency of these themes is found in all of the sites he
engaged. More than an historians’ dilemma over the relative merits of an artist’s various
works, the differences between Crow and Lee point to a much broader problematic – the
very same problematic that gave rise to wedge between Rosalind Krauss and Peter
Eisenman in 1976 and placed *Window Blow-Out* on the cusp of a fantasy of
postmodernism.

Worklessness and site-specificity, then, may be seen as directly opposed to one
another. As Lee says of Matta-Clark’s late Paris work, and as if in response to Crow,

---
41 As noted, Crow revises this view of the other works in his more recent monograph, Crow, “Gordon
Matta-Clark.”
It assumes no productive relationship to changes in a site, engages no ideal progress for its own sake, and thus does little of the ‘work’ that site-specific art is often alleged to perform. Nihilistic, perhaps, but ‘revolutionary’ in their nihilism, these ‘workless’ projects offer a cogent political critique framed repeatedly through the form of the hole.  

But how precisely might this opposition between worklessness and site-specificity be taken?

Lee’s honing in on the term work will provide a cue, as the distinction in question revolves around the conventional meanings of that word. Work, customarily, is understood as a practical action that has a measurable effect. The phrase, “work of art” does not so much lose this connotation as it applies it to aesthetic measures. Lee’s critique centers on the way a conventional humanist account might attribute “closure” to a work of art by linking it up with an historical scheme of such objects. The scheme that orders “works of art” has its own coherence and thus sublimes all the individual know-how of the “work” into a larger scheme. Worklessness, then, is paradoxically a demand, not for the unpractical, but for precisely the practical that has given up ties to any other form of causal efficiency.

Strong site-specificity, on the other hand, is a claim not so much about the practical effectiveness of the work performed. Rather, it is a claim about the efficiency of the “site,” which it is the object of the site-specific work to demonstrate. It is a claim that holds no practical efficiency in the work in question. Instead, it posits a causal efficiency that is operative in a class of things themselves – here, “sites.”

The opposition between worklessness and (strong) site-specificity, then, is not so much an opposition as it is the conceptual compliment that Lee had attempted to diagnose.

---

42 Lee, Object to be Destroyed, 207-09. Crow, of course, is not the only historian to speak on behalf of site-specificity whom Lee may have in mind. For an example of the continued use of the concept, see Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity (Cambridge MA: MIT, 2002).
but had landed elsewhere in terms of alternative space and institutional critique. In other words, what is at issue is not the distinction between institutional and alternative space, but that between practical and speculative knowledge, a distinction that may be said to describe a single regime of efficiency. This is the very regime of efficiency that I am claiming emerges as a new mode or ideology of consensus in the 1980s. The important point to take from *Window Blow-Out* is that the conceptual ambiguities that are present have been obscured by a fantasy that has persisted in the two readings outlined above. What has facilitated this fantasy is the distinction presumed to exist between art and architecture. The work of Rosalind Krauss and Peter Eisenman can be shown to ambulate over this conceptual distinction, as it comes close to exposing its vacuity, but upon *Window Blow-Out* the difference between art and architecture becomes solidified and the fantasy of postmodernism takes shape, precisely because, among others, the Matta-Clark piece provokes a discourse on institutions. And in the case of *Window Blow-Out* this depends on differences presumed to exist between art and architecture.
2. Institution in the Garden

The New England Mind and the Republic of Texas

It has been well noted that Peter Eisenman’s role at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies was very much that of an impresario. Not only was he one of the Institute’s founders, its director for most of its existence, and an editor at its flagship journal, *Oppositions*, but it was through his notable PR skills that the IAUS was able to establish a wealthy and influential board of trustees, to find significant corporate sponsors for some of its programs, and to liaise with important institutions and publications in Europe, such as *Casabella, Architecture-Mouvement-Continuité, and Arcquitectura bis* (Eisenman was known to wish to emulate the little magazines of the European avant-garde and continually sought connections with European journals that he felt continued that tradition) and the Institute of Architecture at the University of Venice (an Italophilic bias, largely Eisenman’s own, is noticeable in the pages of *Oppositions*, which introduced many English-speaking readers to Manfredo Tafuri, Massimo Cacciari, and Francesco Dal Co). All of Eisenman’s high-powered intellectual pursuits and consummate networking skills have even made him open to caricature [figs. 10, 11, & 12].

Although *October* was to become no less influential to its art world public in the US, or perhaps more specifically, in New York, its relation to the IAUS has been much less discussed, or even noted. Indeed, there is perhaps little noteworthy in this relation, for the Institute essentially covered the journal’s startup and office costs and acted as its
publisher, leaving all editorial direction to its two founding editors, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson; whereas Oppositions’ editors were also fellows of the IAUS whose educational and exhibition programs were reflected in the pages of the architectural journal. What is more noteworthy, however, is that October owes its beginnings to the connection between Krauss and Eisenman, which was not just a friendship that provided the basis for Eisenman’s promise to divert some of the IAUS’s funds into a new intellectually oriented art journal, but was founded on an exchange of ideas that developed as each charted new paths that diverged from their intellectual formations.

What resulted was a new convergence, as the two established points of common interest in each of their critical projects – Krauss in her assessment of the legacy of minimalism, and Eisenman in his articulation of conceptual architecture.

In order to offer an angle of approach to this relationship, I shall propose a pair of figures. The matter of the figural will be of importance in this episode. It will be called upon, implicitly or not, as a counterpoint to the notion of literalism – a concept that was to have decisive bearing on the art and architecture of the 1960s. The literal will provide a series of related concepts – fact, information, program, machine – that will come to shape the new configuration of institutionality that emerges in the 1970s. The figures I am proposing – the New England Mind and the Republic of Texas – will serve to orient my approach, and they will suggest in the immediate the “American” context of this study.

America is, of course, itself a figurative notion and any history that presumes to speak of America must in some sense be about the figurative. The study I propose, then, is about how certain kinds of figuration have operated on the very forms of social life
that, one might say, are mediated by institutions. For example, in an afterword to a recent republication of the text alluded to in this chapter's title, Leo Marx acknowledges the criticism directed toward the “Myth and Symbol school” of American studies for accepting too readily the generalizations that such symbols tend to make. But at the same time he points to the repeated recourse to figuration in times of political urgency, as when anti-war protesters a few years after the initial publication of his book found a popular slogan in “Stop the Machine!”

The New England Mind and the Republic of Texas, the figures I am proposing, will be useful because they offer modes of approach to the object of this thesis. To begin with, the historical foundations of New England intellectual life are in the divinity schools of the early Puritan settlers. And if America was not precisely understood by them as an edenic garden, the theology they espoused was nonetheless tied to its place in the New World. It is the connection between speculation and that recurring image of America as nature/wilderness/frontier that I wish to stress, and which the Transcendentalists of the succeeding generations (figures like Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson) would epitomize. With the image of the New England Mind, this is to suggest a tradition of intellectual life in America that, perhaps in its disdain for Old World highbrow culture, has been idealized in the form of the pastoral retreat. But where this has been treated, in its confrontation with technology, as a founding metaphor of

1 Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1964, 2000), 381-384. We might note the complexities of figuration in any attempt to write a history that, however provisionally, takes America as its subject. For example, in a preface to his essay, “Errand into the Wilderness,” Marx's colleague, Perry Miller, notes how the recurring figure of America as garden/nature/wilderness was erroneously factualized as a “thesis” by Frederick Jackson Turner. Setting the record straight, Miller offers “errand” and “wilderness” as, precisely, figures around which to construct a history of how such metaphors are deployed. Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 1-2.

America, I would rather suggest that speculation in the garden, in (one might call it) an American sense, does not give to retreat, to the grove of academe. If one traces the New England Mind, as American historian Perry Miller does, to its Puritan roots, one is reminded of that other persistent metaphor for America – that of experiment. This tracing bypasses the usual sense of America as political experiment. Instead, it suggests that one’s experience (in this new world) is the ground for speculation – in other words, speculation, if it finds its place in the garden, is not so much elsewhere, as it is in the America-as-garden around us. This is to point to a certain commensurability between the speculative and the experiential experiment found under the sign of America.

If the New England Mind suggests to us America as experiment, then the Republic of Texas will call up America as model. When American settlers ventured into territory, the claims over which were disputed with Mexico, they followed a pattern of “settlement” that was not unlike others on the frontier. However, out of the ensuing conflict with Mexico the Republic of Texas was founded. The relation of this republic to the republic of the United States was one of emulation and model. It rested on the ways the American republic could be reproduced, the way its institutions could be replicated. In this sense the Republic of Texas is different from the usual history of the frontier. As cultural anthropologists have noted, the frontier is not just a mythical story of America’s development but is a structural feature of its social imaginary. It provides the function of liminality where law is established through recourse to lawlessness. The problem with

---

3 Leo Marx.
4 Perry Miller, Errand.
this account is not just that the frontier becomes an historical inevitability, but that it is
the very image of historical inevitability. The Republic of Texas, on the other hand,
forces one to confront the reproduction of institutions. This is to suggest an identification
of America through its identity as model.

If these figures seem unlikely guides in a study of 1970s art and architecture, it
will be important to note that the New England Mind and the Republic of Texas have
direct sources in the story I am concerned with – that of the exchange between the critical
projects of Rosalind Krauss and Peter Eisenman in the early 1970s. As mentioned, both
Krauss and Eisenman founded an intellectual engagement with one another at a moment
when each was breaking ties with certain aspects of her and his intellectual formation.
And for each of them this involved a break with a kind of “mentor” figure. For Krauss, it
was with her former senior colleague at Harvard and fellow contributor at Artforum,
Michael Fried, whose evaluation of minimalism she began to dispute in the pages of that
magazine in the early 1970s. For Eisenman, it was with his former doctoral advisor at
Cambridge and now professor at Cornell, Colin Rowe, who helped found the IAUS and
whom Eisenman, in his role as director, was expelling from the Institute after a falling
out that resulted from their dispute over the alleged political viability of the formalism
they once shared.

Each of these “breaks” have been noted, often in terms of the alleged political
sensibility broken with – that of the last vestiges of a rearguard modernism – and the
presumed political sensibility taken up – in the ambitious critical projects derived from a
radical extension of the formal gambits of that same modernism. Such narratives rest on
readings of Fried and Rowe as being rooted in a worn-out modernism, however much
each attempted to revise the most recent and notable representatives of that modernism.

The alternate approach taken up here will be to tell how *Oppositions* and *October* became the sites of a specific kind of work performed by the figure “institution.” In order to understand this work, I take as a starting point the alternate pair of figures that have already been supplied for us by Michael Fried and Colin Rowe.

The historian of the New England Mind, Perry Miller, is cited by Fried in the epigraph to his famous essay, “Art and Objecthood.” Fried’s famous concluding formula, that presentness is grace, owes much to Miller’s study of the eighteenth-century Puritan, Jonathan Edwards. (And if it seemed that I have been too insistent in foregrounding America as one of the subjects of this story, it will be worth recalling that Miller himself called Edwards the key to understanding the meaning of America.) On the other hand, Colin Rowe may be given credit for offering the Republic of Texas as a subject of inquiry. In his teaching post at the University of Texas at Austin, from 1954 to 1956, Rowe, along with the rest of what became known to architectural students as the Texas Rangers – Bernhard Hoesli, John Hedjuk, and Robert Slutsky – established a pedagogical experiment in the teaching of architecture that relied heavily on the kinds of formal methods used in Bauhaus-style integrative arts programs, and that more specifically fused painterly concerns with architectural ones. It was here that Rowe and Slutsky wrote their


7 The extent to which the program at Texas resembled that of the Bauhaus must be qualified. It was what one might call the Josef Albers side of the Bauhaus rather than the Walter Gropius side that was emulated. Slutsky was a student of Albers at Yale, where Rowe had also been, studying under Henry Russell-Hitchcock. Colin Rowe, *As I Was Saying*, vol. 1, 25-40. See also, Alexander Caragonne, *The Texas Rangers: Notes from an Architectural Underground* (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1995). Gropius, of course,
well-known pair of essays on transparency, though they were not published until much later. However, so impressed with the architectural environment of Texas was Rowe that he also wrote and published in *Architectural Record* in 1954 his essay “Lockhart, Texas,” which mused on the sources of early Texas town planning. There, Rowe supposed that an Italianate cohesiveness so thoroughly permeated the anonymous architecture of this small town, that one might believe that it was the work of a master builder, an unknown Master of Lockhart [fig. 13]. This essay needs to be seen as the backdrop to the two more famous transparency essays.

Fried and Rowe, each in his own way, provide a project critical of literalism. Through a rereading of these I hope to gain purchase on the relationship between Eisenman and Krauss, and the kinds of concerns that would come to be represented in *Oppositions* and *October*. In order discuss this more fully I shall outline some of the historical details that surround these four people. It will involve a detailed look at the critical and historical projects of each. But first, in order to help orient what is to come something of a recovery of what surely is among the most sustained thought on institutionality is in order — as it will show the themes of experience and model to have historical precedent.

---


8 Part I was written in 1955-56, and Part II in 1956. They were published in 1963 and 1971, respectively (see previous note). A third part was planned but was never written, as the group that became known as the Texas Rangers was forced to leave the University of Texas in 1956. Rowe, *As I Was Saying*, Vol. 1, 74. For this history, see Caragonne.

9 Colin Rowe and John Hejduk, “Lockhart, Texas,” *Architectural Record* 121 (March 1957), 201-6. As Rowe explains in his collected essays, the piece resulted from a trip he and John Hejduk made to Lockhart; he wrote the text and Hejduk supplied the photographs. It is reprinted in Colin Rowe, *As I Was Saying*, Vol. 1, 55-71.
The Republic of Learning

At a time, in the early twentieth century, when many fields, including art history and economics, underwent processes of specialization, Thorstein Veblen represented an older generation of academic who was well versed in a number of areas of study that were to varying degrees in the process of formalization as disciplines. Besides economics, his primary area of study, he kept current on the latest researches in anthropology, sociology, psychology and philosophy, and published in a range of journals just as wide. As a critic of neoclassical economics, Veblen’s thought thus incorporated elements from a range of research interests. The degree to which it formed a comprehensive system has often been neglected, however, owing to the focus of Veblen’s reception often centering solely on his most well known work, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. This and contemporaneous essays formed a critique of the developments in the field of economics and the economic activity that it tended to ignore. Though it is probable that he had large portions of his system worked out at this date (1899), it was not until later publications – *The Instinct of Workmanship* (1914) and *The Higher Learning in America* (written around 1906 but not published until 1918) – that its full extent appeared.

*The Theory of the Leisure Class*, whose critique rests on a study of the habits of competitive consumption of that class, was intimately connected with Veblen’s critique of the latest developments in economic science, which, he argued, not only ignored such habits but tended to legitimate them. Economic institutions such as money and wages or land-ownership develop over long periods of time, and it is the mistake of economists to
treat these as the functions of natural laws. Speaking of classical economists Veblen writes,

The ultimate laws and principles which they formulated were the laws of the normal or the natural, according to a preconception regarding the ends to which, in the nature of things, all things tend. In effect, this preconception imputes to things a tendency to work out what the instructed common sense of the time accepts as the adequate or worthy end of human effort.\(^\text{10}\)

Veblen's broad project, to demonstrate human institutions that develop over long periods and serve particular ends where the functioning of nature is said to exist, took its aim at the way economists conceived of historical process. This, he said, was founded on a notion of cause and effect that had been common to all the natural sciences that had not yet become modern in their methods. These depended on the imputation of a force or field that guaranteed causation in a normative way.

The modern scientist is unwilling to depart from the test of causal relation or quantitative sequence. When he asks the question, Why? he insists on an answer in terms of cause and effect. He wants to reduce his solution of all problems to terms of the conservation of energy or the persistence of quantity.\(^\text{11}\)

Thus, in the manner of the physicist, the economist aimed to state the laws of economics in terms of equilibrium. In this way a normative law could describe sequences causally and could account for any contrary effect as a "disturbing factor."\(^\text{12}\)


\(^{11}\) "Why Is Economics not an Evolutionary Science?" 60.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 61. For all the loquaciousness of his writing, which his critics are quick to disparage, Veblen could when called upon convey the force of his argument in a few carefully placed barbs. Making no effort to hide his sarcasm, he jeered at economists' conjectural history of the "beginnings of barter in the putative hunter, fisherman, and boat builder, or the man with the plane and two planks, or the two men with basket of apples and the basket of nuts." The cost-of-production theory of value of the neoclassicals is "pungently reminiscent of the time when Nature abhorred a vacuum." Ibid., 66-67. And their account of the subject according to the theory of marginal utility Veblen is particular to debunk: "The hedonistic conception of man is that of a lightning calculator of pleasures and pains, who oscillates like a homogeneous globule of
Against the imposition of the physical sciences on to the study of economics, which treated efficiency as governed by a natural law, Veblen proposed an entirely different model of efficiency. This model was built on a relation of instinct, habit and conscious activity. The language of Veblen’s studies belongs to a different period in the history of the biological and social sciences. And it will require some care to sort out the assumptions of those fields from Veblen’s critique of them. Ultimately, what makes Veblen’s work valuable is the way he sets the terms of his study in motion, by making them speak relationally. He demonstrates a certain performativity of discourse. To retrace this will require some unpacking of his often loquacious writing, but it will benefit by suggesting an angle of approach to the art and architectural discourse of the 1970s.

Science failed, according to Veblen, when it considered causation as coming to rest at any moment. It was only on the basis of these false stationary points that it could claim to determine the laws governing causation. The exemplarily modern sciences, on the other hand, were the evolutionary sciences. Any other account of causation can only have recourse to the imputation of some agent or force, as in animism. Evolution, on the other hand, considered causation as an endless cumulative process. Thus, economic activity cannot properly be understood in terms of the segmented parcels of time of marginal analysis. Only the long course of time, with the evolution of habits into institutions, can account for all economic activity. The practices of conspicuous consumption of the leisure class, for example, belongs to the institution of pecuniary culture that is proper to the leisure class itself, and these developed out of earlier practices.

desire of happiness under the impulse of stimuli that shift him about the area, but leave him intact.” Ibid., 73.
and habits of emulation and invidious comparison, which reach far back to primitive societies.

As a matter of selective necessity, man is an agent. He is, in his own apprehension, a center of unfolding impulsive activity—"teleological" activity. He is an agent seeking in every act the accomplishment of some concrete, objective, impersonal end. By force of his being such an agent he is possessed of a taste for effective work, and a distaste for futile effort. He has a sense of the merit of serviceability or efficiency and of the demerit of futility, waste, or incapacity. This aptitude or propensity may be called the instinct of workmanship. Whenever the circumstances or traditions of life lead to an habitual comparison of one person with another in point of efficiency, the instinct of workmanship works out in an emulative or invidious comparison of persons.... In any community where such an invidious comparison of persons is habitually made, visible success becomes an end sought for its own utility as a basis of esteem.\(^\text{13}\)

At work here are the combined effects of instinct and habit, terms that Veblen intends to carry Darwinian connotations.

Veblen's own emulation of evolutionary science does not stop at an analogy between biological and social activity, however. As he would write later, "The fabric of institutions intervenes between the material exigencies of life and the speculative scheme of things."\(^\text{14}\) For Veblen the material exigencies of life are guided by the instincts. In this way, the leisure class habits and institution of invidious comparison, evolved out of the instinct for efficiency. This instinct could be satisfied by comparing one's own efficiency in the accomplishment of some concrete end with that of another's. But as comparison is made habitual, success becomes valued as an end in its own right. The emulative activity takes on less the character of industry and more the character of exploit, as in the acquisition by warriors of booty or trophies and, eventually, in the conspicuous

---

\(^{13}\) \textit{The Theory of the Leisure Class}, 15-16.

\(^{14}\) "The Evolution of the Scientific Point of View," in \textit{The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation}, 44.
consumption of those of late emulating the earlier lifestyle of nobility. These consumption practices are described by Veblen as an institution.\textsuperscript{15}

The institution of the leisure class, then, arises out of the long cumulative development of habits which transform the material instincts of human life. Veblen’s work on instincts appeared after \textit{The Theory of the Leisure Class} and the few references to the concept in that work go undeveloped. But his evolutionary critique of economics did coincide with it, and in this lies the outline of the problems that would come to occupy him. The inclusion of instincts into his work, however, did not follow from a strict adherence to the biologism of his favourite evolutionary model (though his critics would complain of this).\textsuperscript{16} Instead it arose out of the careful elaboration of his critique of economics into a system of thought that would become certainly the most elaborate inquiry into the concept of institutionality of his time, a concept whose difficulty would hinder any direct claims of antecedence when it was taken up by structuralists and Marxian dialecticians in the 1960s and 70s. Indeed, as will be seen, it was with great subtlety and attention to paradox that Veblen’s concept of institutionality may be set against what came later.

In short, what makes many other uses of the concept of institution reductive is the tendency to treat it simply as either a guarantee of liberty (as in a social contract) or as impediment to liberty (where, for example, the interests of one social class or group stand in for the ostensible claims to universality of that institution). Veblen’s inquiry into institutionality eschewed this figurative process whereby freedom and determination are

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Theory of the Leisure Class}, 16-17.

held in opposition through the production of discrete categories of thought. In fact, his entire system is made up of the folding-in on one another of a series of categorical distinctions. And institutionality runs throughout his work as the figure to which all these foldings-in return. Furthermore, as the distinctions that comprise the social expand to include thought on the social, institutionality ceases to be simply a form of social description. It becomes instead a sort of surfeit in the movement of thought. It points to a circuitous path, but rather than re-inscribing the circularity of tautology, that remainder emerges as a trace of the event of institution. The apprehension of that event according to received categories, is the manner in which institutionality is usually conceived – e.g., as the compact of social liberty, or as the entrenchment of specific class or group interests. But the paths of thought that Veblen takes approach and trace the very event of institution – the institution of practical and speculative knowledge, which cuts across the social field. And, as Veblen’s study of institutionality will help us to discover, this event will be had in a new regime of efficiency that will be legible in the study of art architecture in the 1970s.

In order to approach this event, it will be necessary to examine how Veblen’s account of efficiency came to include the production of evolutionary knowledge itself. This emerges in Veblen’s thinking over a series of moves: from the mutual implication of instinct and habit, to their alteration by conscious aims, and then to the mutual implication of practical pursuit and speculative thought.

To start with, Veblen began to work on the relation between instincts and habits in order to draw out the evolutionary implications of The Theory of the Leisure Class.
There, he had considered institutions as the consolidation of particular social aims through habit. According to the customary topology of institutionality, one might be tempted to read this work as a study of the determinations carried out by institutions. But Veblen was not content with the mechanistic model that would result from a consideration of use and wont alone. This would not account for change at all, let alone over a broad cumulative span. By turning to a consideration of instincts, however, Veblen did not aim at placing the origins of the cumulative span of evolution beyond social development back into the immemorial time of the origin of the species. Rather, he makes a distinction between purely physiological impulses, which nonetheless exist in all species, and those specific instincts which are guided by consciousness. Instincts, Veblen says, are teleological – they are the aims for which conscious thought considers the ways and means in order to achieve them.17

By placing conscious activity at the centre of his project, Veblen arrives at much more than an evolutionary model of social process. If the thinking on institutionality as it had come down to him divided institutions into those governing sovereign and

---

17 Instincts, then, are placed squarely within the realm of efficiency, and thus of economy. This essentially universalizes the matter of economy in its basic form, as instincts are treated by Veblen as having only slight variation among the peoples of the world, especially in relation to the much wider variation in institutions. It is precisely the nexus of instinct and habit, however, that Veblen uses to deny any universal law of economy. Such a broad scope places Veblen’s work in contact with contemporaneous research in anthropology. And it has been lasting source of difficulty for sympathetic critics to square Veblen’s sharp critique of economic inequity with his comparative and Darwinian approach to anthropological issues. Indeed, the strong reactions to the concept of social Darwinism in Veblen’s own time spelled the death knell for the reception of his later work, despite his holding to no such concept himself. Geoffrey M. Hodgson, 41-66, 143-75; see also Rick Tilman, 43-4, 74-7, 123-9, 168-74, 190-2. His use of labels like savage, barbarian and civilised to talk about cultural development, however, can hardly spare him of the primitivist ethos of contemporary anthropology. Yet, on other accounts, Veblen sharply rejected the assumptions of primitivism. Taking the Darwinian model in the strictest sense, he held no belief in the concept of progress, only the selective adaptation of habits by way of mutation. The cumulative process of these adaptations does not add up to a higher or advanced culture (where these words do appear in this context, Veblen often supplies scare quotes), for the adaptation of habit always carries with it the redirection or contamination of the instinct it serves. In other words, instinctive activity is teleological, but evolution is not.
determined activity, Veblen would rewrite this in terms of nothing other than the effective life of the instincts. For instincts are comprised of both an inherent propensity for some end and the conscious ability to evaluate the ways and means to achieve that end. But Veblen does not keep the sovereign and the determined as a simple pairing within the concept of instinct. Instincts are varied – some more prone to shaping and alteration by habit, others less so. An example of a significant one that is altered is the parental bent – that instinct of a community to provide for the welfare of the next generation. The fact that it may be altered owes to the different possible ways and means of achieving that end. The efficient discretion when it comes to ways and means Veblen calls workmanship. And, in a distinctly circuitous form of thought typical of Veblen, workmanship is another instinctive trait.

Neither this [the instinct of workmanship] nor any other instinctive disposition works out its functional content in isolation from the instinctive endowment at large. The instincts, all and several, though perhaps in varying degrees, are so intimately engaged in a play of give and take that the work of any one has its consequences for all the rest, though presumably not for all equally. It is this endless complication and contamination of the instinctive elements in human conduct, taken in conjunction with the pervading and cumulative effects of habit in this domain, that makes most of the difficulty and much of the interest attaching to this line of inquiry.

Here begins the circuitous movement of Veblen’s thought.

18 Though it may not be propitious to do so here, a comparison of Veblen with Freud is certainly worthwhile. Where Freud made his noted re-evaluation of instinct in favor of the drives in order to separate the unconscious from simple biology, Veblen maintained a connection with the viscera. Though instinct proper is conscious, there is no clear boundary between physiology or tropism on the one hand and instinctive action on the other. As Veblen explicitly states: “Some such account of the instinctive dispositions and their relation to the physical individual seems necessary as a means of apprehending them without assuming a sheer break between the physical and immaterial phenomena of life.” The Instinct of Workmanship, 13. It is precisely in this continuum that Veblen locates institutionality; whereas it is the legacy of both Freud and Marx to have founded their theories of the unconscious and ideology on the break that Veblen refutes. And the interpretation of these theories in terms of institutionality (of the Symbolic, of Ideology) has been to situate conscious activity in the determinative field of the institutional (repression, false consciousness). In this way, the theories of the unconscious and ideology have often been aligned according to the received topology of institutionality.

19 Instinct of Workmanship, 28-9.
That efficiency in achieving the ends of instinct should be guided by another instinct proceeds from the rather straightforward account of the entanglement of habit and instinct. That is, if instinct determines the ends that motivate human behaviour, and if those ends may by reached by a sufficient range of means, then the discretion involved in instinctive behaviour will be open to habituation. Habituation acts cumulatively to create customs and conventions that will over time run back only indirectly to instinctive predisposition. But just as habit alters instinct, the range of knowledge produced by habituation becomes the source material for the instinct of workmanship. That is, habituated knowledge becomes the ways and means for reaching further instinctive ends — habit can, by way of workmanship, be redirected back toward instinct (other instincts or the same one by different means). This last is not a return to nature, however, as these processes have been building up cumulatively.²⁰

Were Veblen’s system to stop here, we would have simply what he calls the mutual contamination of the instincts — that is, an account of how habit and workmanship act on one another in the cultural evolution of instincts. But Veblen is concerned to explain how some habituated knowledge may become re-employed in technological development and other knowledge remains simply customary. As technology is the intermediary between instinct and habit, a kind of filter that alters how one sees instinct and habit, two kinds of knowledge proceed: that which is matter of fact, open to the discretion of ways and means by the instinct of workmanship, and that of what is said to happen on its own, what in fact has workmanship imputed to it. This latter Veblen calls the self-contamination of workmanship, because it determines what is available to the

²⁰Ibid., 38-42.
efficiency of persons. It is the attribution of an anthropomorphism in the apprehension of things in that they are said to work out means and ends on their own.

The most obstructive derangement that besets workmanship is what may be called the self-contamination of the sense of workmanship itself. This applies in a peculiar degree to the earlier or more elementary phases of a culture, but it holds true only with lessening force throughout the later growth of civilisation. The hindrance to technological efficiency from this source will often rise to large proportions even in advanced communities, particularly where magical, religious or other anthropomorphic habits of thought are prevalent.... The essential trait of anthropomorphic conceptions ... is that conduct, more or less fully after the human fashion of conduct, is imputed to external objects; whether these external objects are facts of observation or creatures of mythological fancy.

Veblen uses the concept of anthropomorphism, the self-contamination of workmanship, to explain how the technologies of certain cultures and eras may remain static according to the strength of cultural institutions that have an interest in the explanation of things according to some supernatural power. In the European tradition, it is with the scholasticism of the Middle Ages that reality begins to be differentiated into matters of fact and matters of imputation. This has the social implication of dividing people into classes according to these two types of knowledge – those of handicraft expertise and those adepts of speculation in the schooling of the church.

This discussion of how knowledge is divided into matters of fact – that which may be acted on practically – and matters of imputation – a scheme of efficiency that operates in things themselves – ultimately comes to bear on the very knowledge that Veblen is setting out. This will lead to something of a conundrum. For what Veblen aims to do in his critique of contemporary economic science is to historicize it as the institutional imputation of an external causal efficiency (namely, the force that ensures

---

21 Ibid., 52.
22 Ibid., 52-62.
23 "Evolution of the Scientific Point of View," in The Place of Science, 49.
optimization in the marginal theory of neoclassical economics). This radical historicization appears to accept no such speculative scheme of things, in which efficiency is externalized. It therefore should accept no concept of modernity, for modernity by this account is the name for the enlightened science which presumes to discover the laws of nature and society. Yet, Veblen is forced to attribute a certain modernity, if not external efficiency, to the very theorization of institutionality he is setting out.

As his historical account continues, then, it comes to include contemporary institutions and knowledge, even the science on which his project rests. In short, modern evolutionary science is the outcome of evolution. Veblen values the Darwinian approach because it is able to recognize the differentiation of reality – into matters of fact and matters of imputation – for precisely what it is: an institutional outcome of cultural evolution. Accordingly, all such differentiation is founded on pre-Darwinian science – whether that of medieval scholastics or contemporary economists. And Veblen is particular to show the efficient causation claimed by neoclassical economists to be part of just such a pre-Darwinian conception of nature (i.e., it owes to a belief in a supernatural force that ensures the laws that guide economic science). But the growth of modern science, even the Darwinian science Veblen practices, is an institutional development. And this occurs alongside the technological development of the industrial revolution. Veblen explains how this happens: as industrial life intrudes into the scheme of the authentic knowledge of the adepts, “the body of matter-of-fact knowledge, in modern times, is more and more drawn into the compass of theoretical inquiry; and theoretical
inquiry takes on more and more of the animus and method of technological generalisation.

24 Though the class divisions that result from the differential reality remain (owing to the hardihood of institutions that have recourse to the earlier preconceptions of natural law), the growth of workmanlike, matter-of-fact knowledge is the cumulative process out of which modern evolutionary science emerges.

Modern science thus has its own scientific explanation. But Veblen is careful to stress that this does not lead to tautology. As he writes at the outset of his essay on "The Evolution of the Scientific Point of View,"

A discussion of the scientific point of view which avowedly proceeds from this point of view itself has necessarily the appearance of an argument in a circle; and such in great part is the character of what here follows. It is in large part an attempt to explain the scientific point of view in terms of itself, but not altogether.25

It is that which is not altogether circular in such an argument that is of particular importance in Veblen's work. And it will require some care to sort out just what this is.

To begin with, one may note that it is only in the context of science that the "modern" is positively valued. But this is strictly a partial view, for it only emerges from an evolutionary process that eschews all progress. Where his contemporaries universalized their fields in terms of the "modern," Veblen showed these notions of the "field" to be part of a differentiated reality. This he did in the name of the "modern" too. And where one finds in this place another "field" – evolutionary science – the "modern" immediately slips from view as it reflects light on the differentiated reality from which it derives. Thus, rather than simply a tautological form of thought, this account attempts to

24 Ibid., 50.
25 Ibid., 32.
trace its circuitous movement in order to identify the new evolutionary developments that emerge in that movement.

Institutionality, then, is ultimately the name for differentiated reality and the cover under which it hides. Veblen's work is not so much an analysis of institutions per se, but a tracing of institutionality's movement in and out of visibility. And, as he would have it, the point of view that supposes it at rest at any one moment is that which imputes to it a false agent or force. But, at the same time, if we grant that the evolution described by Veblen has no end, we must be continually on the lookout for the forms of the new – by habituation or technological generalization.26

What remains to be considered is how Veblen extended his thinking to the study of the educational system in the US. In short, by folding his own position into cumulative evolutionary process, with all its habitual modes of differentiating reality, Veblen claims,

26 This account of the production of the new, though in proximity with Deleuze, differentiates Veblen from the latter. Where Deleuze considers the new in relation to the forms of the unthought, Veblen proposes that habituation may be as productive of the new as scientific innovation. The proximity of Veblen to Deleuze may be had in the performative dimension of Veblen’s thinking: the expansive approach to Darwinian evolution places it outside conventional speculative thought. This outside, may be compared to Deleuze’s unthought, and the tracing of institutionality’s movement I am ascribing to Veblen may be compared with the Deleuze’s thematic of the movement of thought. The Deleuzian unthought has been fruitfully considered as an aspect of the line of modernist criticism under consideration in this thesis by Caroline A. Jones in *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Jones' account of how Greenbergian opticality is less about the expressly visible than about the forms of interiority of discourse has much in common with my project. However, where I differ from her, and where one may say Veblen differs from Deleuze, is in the matter of the institutional. In Jones' account, the positivism of Greenberg's criticism has a productive aspect in that its emphasis on the sensory opens up new forms of thought that were previously outside the bounds of traditional speculative aesthetics. In Greenberg's ascendance, however, the senses are “bureaucratized,” made into an apparatus, and this has the effect of institutionalizing those forms of the new by tying them into a “sensorium” that is commensurate with the machinery of postwar US capitalism. The framework here is that of an innovative form of thought followed by its recuperation or institutionalization, and it is this framework, I would suggest, that is common to the discourse on institutions. The approach provided by Veblen differs from this, if not entirely from the Deleuzian model of the new, by suggesting that habituation (which I am associating with fantasy) is as much a part of the production of the new as "innovation." That is, rather than a model of liberation and recuperation, Veblenian institutionality suggests more a reorientation of efficiency into different nodes. The lines of connection between these nodes are less transparent than political discourse supposes institutions to be.
in *The Higher Learning in America*, that only on the basis of differential reality can one perceive differential reality.

The critical edge in this study of the state of the universities as they underwent professionalism at the turn of the century was to demonstrate that university knowledge is imbricated with a general economy or regime of efficiency. *The Higher Learning in America* may seem still very topical and will ring very sweetly in the ears of anyone reading it today who has a distrust of the incursion of business into what she may regard as the last bastion of independent thinking (the book’s subtitle is: *A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men*). Veblen attacks at length the incursion of vocational and technical training into the realm of the university. Claiming no disregard for the prerogatives of the schoolmaster, whose task it is to induct pupils into citizenship, he holds the businesslike administration of universities at fault for confusing the aims of colleges with those of the university.

What and how much of these extraneous activities the university should allow itself is a matter on which there is no general agreement even among those whose inclinations go far in that direction; but what is taken for granted throughout all this advocacy of outlying detail is the secure premise that the university is in the first place a seminary of higher learning, and that no school can make good its pretensions to university standing except by proving its fitness in this respect.27

The university can only properly be called as such if it sets before it no immediate ends in the practical world. Idle Curiosity should be the sole motivation for research in the university.28

The problem Veblen identifies in the university, then, is that it confuses practical aims with speculative learning. But as we saw, Veblen considered the confusion of the practical and the speculative to be an outcome of evolutionary processes – and this

27 *The Higher Learning in America*, 16.
28 I am here using Veblen’s capitalization of Idle Curiosity.
extended to the evolution of evolutionary science itself. The challenge then is to differentiate between the confusion of practical business aims with speculative learning, on the one hand, and the workmanlike way evolutionary science attends to the study of institutions, on the other.

Veblen addresses this problem by returning to the same circuitous movement of thought. The critique of the universities demanded a return to Idle Curiosity as the guide to research. But where this may seem to recall a position of externality or autonomy, Veblen is quick to return the matter to the historical growth of the universities. The university in Europe emerged from the scholastic differentiation of reality into handicraft knowledge and the speculative knowledge of the theologians. If the former was guided by the instinct of workmanship, the latter was guided by the instinct of Idle Curiosity. Thus Idle Curiosity is that quest for knowledge about the scheme of things, and it was in the habitual order of matters in the period before Darwinian science to impute an anthropomorphic efficiency to the scheme of things. Idle Curiosity only comes to have matter-of-fact knowledge as its object in the post-Darwinian era. In recognizing this, the modern scientist is able to place matter-of-fact knowledge as an end of Idle Curiosity, which thus, in typically Veblenian paradox, takes on the character of workmanship (in other words, non-teleological activity takes on the character of teleological activity).

Matters of fact and matters of imputation, workmanship and Idle Curiosity, are kept in a state of folding in on one another. This is the circularity that continually propels

---

29 Just as Veblen’s thought may be set against later structuralist accounts of institutionality, so too may it be set against dialectical accounts that attempted to render the problem of institutionality in terms of partial or relative autonomy. Unlike these accounts, which rested on some notion of the provisional in relation to autonomy, Veblen asserted continuity. This is mentioned here to prefigure what is to come in the following chapters, which is to deal with the topology of institutionality as it was rendered by critics in *October* and *Oppositions* according to the two main currents of thought in the US in the 1970s, that of structuralism and that of dialectics.
Veblen's thought. It is what he refers to as the appearance of an argument in a circle, as the attempt to explain the scientific point of view in terms of itself, *but not altogether*. It is to Veblen's lasting merit, and undoubtedly the continual source of the misapprehension of his thought, that he never renders this remainder – the not-altogether-circular – in a constative, matter-of-fact statement. Indeed, it resists the constative. Instead it emerges in the figure of institutionality, which is comprised of the back-and-forth movement between these two points of view: 1) institutionality is differential reality, the simple division of things into matters of fact (the object of workmanship) and matters of imputation (the object of Idle Curiosity); 2) institutionality is an imputation of an efficient order in the scheme of things that maintains or propels such a differential reality.

The advantage of Veblen's thought, and what sets it apart from other accounts of institutions, is that it establishes an economy in general, or a regime of efficiency, to be produced *through* discourse. It is produced apart from, or in addition to, the positive statements of that discourse. It is, one might say, *performed by* that discourse. This will prove important as I examine the formation of a discourse on postmodernism. Lastly, however, it is necessary to consider how the circuitous movement of the discourses that comprise institutionality are localized. And for this we need to turn to Veblen's own professional life. It provides a sort of object lesson in institutionality.

The fact that Veblen identified institutionality in a circuit of thought that moved from a straightforward division of fact and speculation, to their "mutual contamination" through habituation (consignment to institutions) and technology, meant that identifying

---

30 I aim to show that Veblen demonstrates the performativity of discourse, and for this I draw on the distinction between the performative and the constative, in J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).
a locus for institutionality could prove a problem. In fact, this very movement might suggest that a kind of locus of institutionality could follow a similar path. In other words, the traditional site of speculative learning was, according Veblen, in the seminaries of higher education. But his study of the modern university demonstrated the confusion of speculative and practical ends. To call for the restoration of the speculative role of the university, however, did not necessarily guarantee that research there might shed light on institutionality. For it was also the mutual contamination of the modes of learning that was at the basis of a properly evolutionary thinking. Thus, the problem was to distinguish between the confusion of speculative and practical business ends in the university, and the proper workmanlike care one ought to devote to Idle Curiosity. More than this problem, however, Veblen’s thought suggests that the university serves as a kind of fixture of the relation between speculative and practical knowledge, but that this relation may be altered when there is pressure from outside, in the form of other sites of learning. Institutionality, then, may be localized in a movement between university and research institute or think tank.

It is a remarkable feature of Veblen’s writing that he should identify in the midst of the professionalization of the university the active role that that process would take in social formation. Although he complained of the incursion of practical purpose into the proper domain of the university, he far from held to a view of autonomous knowledge. The sad history of Veblen’s own professional career was enough to guarantee his sensitivity to this problem. His firing from the University of Chicago in 1904 under dubious conditions that surely appeared as a pretext for dismissing someone of Veblen’s
apparent politics are discussed with careful diplomacy in the preface to *The Higher Learning*. As he explains, Veblen did not want the publication of that book to appear opportunist and vengeful by seeming to have a particular university’s administrators targeted, and so it was delayed by more than ten years. American entry into the war pushed publication back another two years. When it finally appeared in 1918 Veblen had added a few paragraphs to the end of his introduction to explain how the war created an international disturbance in scholarship. The problem of the university remained, but Veblen foresaw a new role for US institutions of knowledge in retrieving the scholarly equipment and personnel dispersed by war.

The progress and the further promise of the war hold in prospect new and untried responsibilities, as well as an unexampled opportunity. So that the outlook now (June 1918) would seem to be that the Americans are to be brought into a central place in the republic of learning; to take a position, not so much of dominance as of trust and guardianship; not so much by virtue of their own superior merit as by the insolvency of the European academic community.

As national proclivities among scholars had impeded disinterested scholarship, the opportunity afforded by the insolvency of the European academic community is, according to Veblen, a new international republic of learning that would be hosted by American educational institutions. The spirit of this republic would not flourish, however, in universities under existing administrations. As Veblen argued, the vocational and technical aims promoted by university administrators merely fostered wasteful competition among universities. Instead, Veblen envisioned a new form of research

---

31 *The Higher Learning in America*, v-viii. Veblen supported the organization of workers, which along with his critique of the economics profession put him at odds with the business interests of most universities’ administrators. He was, however, critical of Marxism as well, which he analyzed with as much detachment as he did neoclassical economics. This served him in attaining his appointment at the University of Missouri after dismissals at the University of Chicago and Stanford. At Missouri he was asked to teach classes on Marxism. The dubious conditions of his dismissals have to do with a failed marriage and the Victorian politics surrounding marriage at the turn of the century. See Elizabeth Watkins Jorgensen and Henry Irvin Jorgensen, *Thorstein Veblen: Victorian Firebrand* (Armonk NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

institution that would become the neutral ground for disinterested scholarship. It would
be a joint enterprise among American and international scholars supported by "one or
another – perhaps ... one and another – of those extra-academic foundations for research
of which there already are several in existence, – as, e.g., the Carnegie Institution." 33

All hopefulness for a new spirit of higher learning aside, Veblen stood at the cusp
of a new relation between philanthropy and education. When he began writing The
Higher Learning in America, philanthropy was in the main an activity of that generation
of Progressives who espoused social reform according to a mostly paternalistic
nineteenth-century liberalism. It was against this sort of reformism that the American
Economic Association guarded itself as it attempted in its early years to be divested of
apparent interests, supporting instead a "scientifically" backed policy of laissez-faire. In
this generation, philanthropists themselves held a direct interest in the reform agendas
that their grants supported. Research at organizations such as the American Social
Science Association (modeling its name after the professional bodies) and the New York
Bureau of Municipal Research helped shape the social sciences in terms of advocacy and
reform. 34 The type of foundation Veblen calls upon, however, was the new style of
philanthropic organization that Andrew Carnegie founded in 1911. Carnegie had
previously taken up the role of reformer himself as he oversaw the dispersal of funds, in
things like libraries, from the fortune he had amassed in the steel industry. But by 1911
he was at an advanced age and the prospect of perpetuating his charity beyond his death
took shape in the form of an endowment that would be managed by administrators who
would oversee grants to separate research institutes. Along with the Rockefeller

33 Ibid., 55.
34 Michael Bernstein, A Perilous Progress: Economists and Public Purpose in Twentieth-Century America
Foundation (chartered in 1913) and the Russell Sage Foundation (in 1907), the Carnegie Foundation was a part of, not only a new form of philanthropy, but also a new attitude within liberalism. The interests that these foundations and their administrators supported were less and less expressed as the advocacy for social reform. Increasingly, social improvement came to be seen as a possibility that could be addressed by value-neutral science, or as James Allen Smith puts it, a shift from the medical model of curing social ills to the economic model of improving social efficiency.

It is no wonder then that Veblen would be excited by the new foundation established by Andrew Carnegie. It seemed possible, finally, that scholars could organize and devote themselves to unencumbered research. In fact, Veblen would be drawn, in the years following WWI, into a philanthropically funded research organization. The New School for Social Research was founded largely at the bequest of Dorothy Straight in 1918. Although its founders were directly influenced by *The Higher Learning in America*, the principles that guided them were mostly those of reform-minded liberalism. It was conceived as a center for adult education with many classes to be held in the evening and late afternoon to accommodate workingmen, which turned out to be attended by many women as well. Although the school catered to the diverse interests that were thought to promote self-improvement in its students, debate arose among its faculty over

---

35 The reasons why the Carnegie and not the Rockefeller Foundation was singled out by Veblen certainly have much to do with the fact that JD Rockefeller had held the purse strings at the University of Chicago when he was fired there. On some of the differences between foundations, see James Allen Smith, *The Idea Brokers: Think Tanks and the Rise of the New Policy Elite* (New York: The Free Press, 1991); and Ellen Condliffe Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy* (Middletown CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989).
36 James Allen Smith, 24-72.
the degree of research independence that could be afforded by the school’s small budget, which had come to rely on student fees.\(^{37}\)

Veblen came to the New School in its first year, and given its founders’ interest in his work he surely would have had high hopes for the time to devote to independent research. It is thus with sad irony that, after disputes with the director Alvin Johnson over the amount of time to be devoted to the classroom, that Veblen, the star academic at the New School, was fired in 1925. Reports of his diffidence in the face of classroom demands would have comic proportions were it not for the grave sense in which he must have felt that the school was betraying its founding principles.\(^{38}\) Although one is reminded of the great “latitude” that Veblen hoped would be afforded scholars in the republic of learning, one must also be aware of the way workmanship, that sense for ways and means, was so closely interconnected with his sense of Idle Curiosity. And the story of Veblen’s professional career confirm how, although the attempt to keep these things separate seemed necessary, this could only, according to Veblen’s writing, be had provisionally – at one moment in the circular movement of thought, a sort of arresting of that movement that Veblen had elsewhere denied. The episode of Veblen’s departure from the New School for Social Research serves to demonstrate the impossibility of unencumbered research and autonomy even in institutes established expressly for that purpose. But it also points to the fact that if institutionality is a name for a kind of regime of efficiency, then, although it is most clearly stated in the speculative learning of the university, it may also find the event of its change in non-academic research institutes.

\(^{37}\) Peter M. Rutkoff and William B. Scott, *New School: A History of the New School for Social Research* (New York: The Free Press, 1986). The founding of the New School provided a place of employment for professors who had been fired from Columbia University for refusing to support American entry into the war, and thus from the start had an anti-establishment politics associated with it. Rutkoff and Scott, 1-18.\(^{38}\) Ibid., 36-37.
Veblen showed, then, that the study of institutions was a study of the movement between practical and speculative knowledge. The theme of these two kinds of knowledge has not been unique to Veblen. In fact, they reoccur as common tropes. Such becomes apparent in Leo Marx's study of the *Machine in the Garden*. But where these tropes became commonplaces in the 1960s, I am suggesting that Colin Rowe and Michael Fried called upon particular versions of those metaphors that suggest the complex movement that Veblen identified. These will be explored in the following two chapters.
Colin Rowe and Peter Eisenman shared a friendship that began in 1960 when the latter arrived in Cambridge, England to do graduate research on Gothic architecture. There, an intellectual affinity with Rowe sparked Eisenman to redirect his research and to embark on a PhD thesis that was to analyze form in modern architecture. Their friendship continued as they both left Cambridge in 1963 to return to the US and lasted until a dispute shortly after the founding of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in 1967. One of the bases for this dispute emerged in the divergent positions taken during closed critiques of the work of architects surrounding the new institute. Just how far Rowe and Eisenman differed became evident when material from those critiques was published in 1972 in the book, *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, for which Rowe had written his now well-known introduction that not only refuted any political content in the work of the book’s modernist proponents, but also argued that the moral ambitions of architecture were always bound to the disastrous results of any utopian thinking. Rowe, who had been an articulate defendant of the

---

1. Much of the chronology of this relationship can be gleaned from Louis Martin’s PhD dissertation, “The Search for a Theory in Architecture: Anglo-American Debates, 1957-1976” (Princeton, 2002), especially chapter eight, which draws on interviews that Martin conducted with former IAUS members and that are housed in the IAUS archives at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal. The following section draws on these interviews and Martin’s thesis.

formal achievements of the historical avant-garde, had, it seems, grown disillusioned with the radical posturing of that movement’s self-proclaimed latter-day heirs.

Eisenman, meanwhile, even by 1972, had never really broken with the humanism that underpinned Rowe’s studies, which had given the impetus to his own formal analysis. Nonetheless, Eisenman did see his own theory and work as having an important political trajectory, however unapparent this may seem to those not familiar with the intellectual formation he attempted to shed. For example, Eisenman’s view that Giuseppe Terragni’s Casa del Fascio constituted one of the most significant works of the historical avant-garde rested on a formal analysis of it alone. It was the formal significance derived from this building that provided the key to his theory of conceptual architecture. Yet, the political claims he made for conceptual architecture were such that the historical program for the Casa del Fascio could be ignored.  

At the same time, the theoretical framework that Eisenman applied to Terragni’s work, as well as his own, came to rely on the linguistics of Noam Chomsky. Yet, Eisenman’s rejection of Rowe’s espousal of de-politicized architecture would have seemingly nothing to do with Chomsky’s own politicization since the mid-1960s.

A closer look at Rowe’s and Eisenman’s activities will help to chart their divergence.

---

3 Throughout his career, Eisenman has held Terragni’s work in high esteem. He has recently published a book on Terragni, a work that had been promised for nearly forty years. Peter Eisenman, *Giuseppe Terragni: Transformations, Decompositions, Critiques* (New York: Monacelli, 2003). His long-standing defense of this architect’s work for the fascist regime in Italy has received criticism. See Diane Ghirardo, “Italian Architects and Fascist Politics: An Evaluation of the Rationalist’s Role in Regime Building,” *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 39 No. 2. (May 1980), 109-127.

4 Chomsky had been a renowned professor of linguistics at MIT when he became a vocal critic of US involvement in Southeast Asia and thus something of an intellectual spokesperson for the New Left. His *American Power and the New Mandarin* (New York: Pantheon, 1967) and *At War With Asia* (New York: Pantheon, 1969) were both widely read.
Colin Rowe’s architectural education was interrupted by WWII, and during military service a spinal injury “rendered leaning over a drafting table the reverse of easy,” and thus, as Rowe has recently recounted, “I became an architect manqué.”

His career as scholar began with his studies under Rudolf Wittkower at the Warburg Institute. In 1947 and 1950 he published two important essays that became notable for their comparative analysis of modern and sixteenth-century architecture. Together, “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa” and “Mannerism and Modern Architecture,” set out a terrain of criticism that was decidedly different from the technological and functionalist priorities of contemporary architectural criticism. In England this was dominated by the voice of Reyner Banham, while in the US the tone was set by the German émigré, Sigfried Giedion.

Rowe’s diagrammatic analysis of proportionality in the villas of Palladio and Le Corbusier owes much to Wittkower’s *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*. This penchant for diagrams would be passed on to Eisenman when the two would meet in 1960.

Rowe would further mark out his terrain as a formalist critic with something of a classical bent in the US. In 1950, he went to Yale to study with Henry Russell Hitchcock and not to Harvard to study with Giedion as Wittkower had advised. Hitchcock had, of course, with Phillip Johnson curated the landmark *International Style* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 1932. And his interest in the crossover between architecture

---

and visual art had been demonstrated in the MoMA exhibit, *Painting Toward Architecture*, which Hitchcock had curated in 1948 and represented an interest shared by Rowe.\(^9\) However, it was with his colleagues at the University of Texas, where Rowe was hired by Harwell Hamilton Harris in 1954, that the younger historian began to establish a sustained formalist method.\(^10\) The two transparency essays written with Robert Slutzky were the major outcome of this. Since they will be revisited by Eisenman and others, a brief account of them is required here.

The first, “Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal,” was written in 1955 and not published until 1963 in *Perspecta* 8 – though it was submitted at the time of completion to *Architectural Design* where it was rejected, presumably by Nikolaus Pevsner, for its attack on the received primacy of Walter Gropius and Siegfried Giedion.\(^11\) The essay aims to clarify what the authors take to be the confusion over the interpretation of cubism and its importance to modern architecture, a confusion that rests on conflicting uses of the term transparency. This term, they note, has inherent ambiguities, but they proceed from a basic definition provided by Gyorgy Kepes: transparency may be said to exist when figures “are able to interpenetrate without an optical destruction of each other.”\(^12\)

Confusion arises over the term because it may be taken, on the one hand, in its common usage as meaning clarity, as in the ability to see without obstruction. In this way the term

---


\(^10\) Rowe’s none too flattering recollection of the director of the school’s architecture program is provided in *As I Was Saying*, Vol. 1, p.25-40, where he claims Harris himself did not make personnel decisions. Harris’s essays on American regionalism would later inform Kenneth Frampton’s theoretical program, which he named “critical regionalism.”


\(^12\) Gyorgy Kepes, *Language of Vision* (Chicago: Theobald, 1944), 77; quoted in Rowe and Slutzky “Transparency” [Part I], 161.
has affinities with the notion of translucency, which, Rowe and Slutzky suggest, implies a literal sense of transparency for it refers to the literal passage of light through something. On the other hand, transparency may, when referring to that which is transparent, imply something approaching the opposite of clarity. In other words, it suggests that what is transparent cannot be seen. By proceeding from Kepes definition, which depends on the notion that two figures are in play with one another, the authors are able to maintain both senses of the word transparency, and indeed on this basis they claim to distinguish "literal" and "phenomenal" transparency.

Beginning with this semantic distinction, Rowe and Slutzky then aim to analyze the real achievements of cubism. The cubist grid, which they perceive in Georges Braque's *The Portuguese* of 1911 but not in Picasso's *Clarinet Player*, also of 1911 (which is said to maintain a figural outline), implies the spatial effects the authors attribute to phenomenal transparency. The effect of the grid, in other words, is to compress the space of the figure, such that it can be read as being activated by the grid as well as being behind it. A few more pairs of paintings – a Delaunay and a Gris, and a Moholy-Nagy and a Léger – are called upon to demonstrate this. Their evaluation of the two kinds of transparency is clear: "When something of the attitude of a Delaunay [whose *Simultaneous Windows* (1911) they discuss] becomes fused with a machine-aesthetic emphasis upon materials and stiffened by a certain enthusiasm for planar structures, then literal transparency becomes complete."\(^{13}\) This examination of the outcome of cubism in painting serves as a pretext for the comparison of different kinds of architecture that presume to draw lessons from the same discoveries in cubism. And the denigration of a "machine-aesthetic emphasis upon materials" is pointed in this regard.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 165.
Noting that, “while painting can only imply the third dimension, architecture cannot suppress it,” Rowe and Slutzky draw a significant conclusion about how the two kinds of transparency relate to architecture. Phenomenal transparency, they say, “will be more difficult to achieve – and is, indeed, so difficult to discuss that generally critics have been entirely willing to associate transparency in architecture exclusively with a transparency of materials.”¹⁴ And here Giedion is singled out for his appraisal of Gropius’s Bauhaus building at Dessau, which he had evaluated with the aid of a citation from Alfred Barr on the transparency of overlapping planes in cubism. Comparing this building with Le Corbusier’s Villa Stein at Garches, our authors contend that Giedion is impressed simply with the glass curtain at the Bauhaus, which merely acts as a translucent screen for the underlying tectonics; whereas, for Le Corbusier, glazing is never used simply for translucent effects – instead he also, and primarily, endows it with planar qualities. Le Corbusier’s achievement is to create a series of planes – real and imaginary projections -whose notional interaction is characterized by phenomenal transparency [figs. 14 & 15].¹⁵

In “Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal: Part II” (written the following year in 1956 but not published until 1971 in Perspecta 13-14), Rowe and Slutzky aim to demonstrate that their object of interest, phenomenal transparency, is not simply a post-cubist achievement. Turning their attention to renaissance architecture, a host of

⁴ Both quotes in this paragraph: ibid., 166.
⁵ Ibid., 166-167. It may be noted that, like “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa,” where plan and elevation are treated as virtually independent elements, the analysis of phenomenal transparency proceeds from a study of elevations, which are read almost as pictures. Even Gropius’s wrapping of the glass curtain at the Bauhaus around corners, which works against such a reading, is merely an achievement of literal transparency. When the Bauhaus is compared with Le Corbusier’s design for the Palace at the League of Nations, an axonometric is provided – but here in order to demonstrate the movement into phenomenal space – of perceived expansion and compression – that one is compelled to take. This movement is along axes at right angles to one another. In the following essay, Rowe and Slutzky return their attention to elevation views.
examples are cited as having the qualities of phenomenal transparency, including the façades of the Villa Farnese and San Lorenzo. The analysis of the latter produces an especially large range of spatial configurations, for which the authors supply a series of diagrams [fig.16].

This leads to an historical dilemma, which Rowe, who elsewhere demonstrates his sensitivity to historical explanation, would be particular to account for: how is it that these mannerist examples of sixteenth-century architecture can demonstrate the same insights supposed to be specific to cubist achievement? Willing neither to attribute a “proto-modernity” to Vignola and Michelangelo, nor a “deutero-Mannerism” that is revived by Picasso, Braque, Gris, Léger, Mondrian, and Le Corbusier, Rowe and Slutzky claim that, “in its narrowest implications the mere existence of the problem at least suggests that phenomenal transparency does have a basis in common vision and does imply, on our part, some kind of archetypal response toward it.”16 Kepes definition of transparency – figures that interpenetrate without the optical destruction of one another – will lend itself to further discussion by way of gestalt theory. (Slutzky, who, it will be recalled, studied with Albers at Yale, had produced a thesis on the relationship between gestalt theory and the visual arts.)17 The compression of space in phenomenal transparency, which relies on two figures, each being alternately transparent to the other, seemed to have substantial theorization in the gestalt psychology that made so much of figure-ground reversals, and which had had endless diagrams illustrating this in all the major texts on gestalt theory.

---

17 Louis Martin, 534.
Yet, ever the historian, Rowe (and I presume it is Rowe’s voice here) recognizes the recentness of gestalt theory, which seemed to coincide with the developments in Cubism:

But supposing the senses are endowed with ‘intelligence’, with powers of discrimination, with organizing capacity; and supposing physical processes to be governed by the same rule. In themselves these hypotheses really seem to have very little to do with what appears to be the inordinate Gestalt interest in phenomenal transparency, which it recognizes under a variety of names as “phenomenal identity,” “double representation,” and “duo formation.”

And:

Although the preliminary Gestalt researches do date to the years during which Analytic Cubism made of phenomenal transparency a principal method of composition, it must be recognized that something of the Gestalt ‘taste’ for figural ambiguities is related to its emphasis upon field.

The notion of field, then, shall provide a more adequate historical account of the phenomena in question.

Maintaining all of the consciousness-formation properties that the notion holds for gestalt theory – “genetically prior” to “the sum total of elements it embraces” – the field may at the same time be responsive to contingencies. “[I]n history a given epoch may endow with ‘field properties’ the idiosyncrasies of the various figures which it supports.” Thus, the equivocal figure-ground relationships of phenomenal transparency may be more than just an offshoot of the main aesthetic developments of the period, but may in fact bring “the supporting matrix, the field, into high prominence.”

This digression by Rowe and Slutzky into gestalt theory, more than simply an involved explanation for the apparent ahistoricism of their own formal analysis (which also ends rather abruptly their second essay), will prove significant as we examine other

---

19 Ibid., 104.
20 Ibid., 104.
formulations of, and responses to, the literal. For now, I shall resume the narrative of events.

Rowe returned to England in 1958 and had been at Cambridge for two years before Eisenman arrived. Eisenman himself had done some design work (even receiving recognition for it) and had been contemplating entering an architectural practice before embarking on his studies in England. During the summers of 1961 and 1962 Rowe and Eisenman made Grand Tours of the major monuments of modern architecture in Europe, devoting the second trip entirely to Italy, where Eisenman became well acquainted with Italian rationalism and collected avant-garde magazines. Eisenman’s thesis, titled “The Formal Basis of Modern Architecture,” was completed in 1963, a short excerpt of which was published in *Architectural Design* in October of the same year.

Although rejecting the primacy of function and program as the bases for modern architecture, as had been expressed in the recent publication of Reyner Banham’s *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1960), Eisenman’s thesis nevertheless did not advocate an unqualified formalism. For the other historian’s position he took pains to refute was John Summerson’s in his RIBA lecture of 1961, which argued for the possibility of geometric absolutes providing the basis for modern architecture. In some

---

21 Eisenman had taken an architectural degree at Cornell from 1951 to 1955, served in Korea from 1955 to 1957, and then completed a graduate degree in architecture at Columbia in 1959-1960. Eisenman designed, with Gerald Howes, a project for the competition for Liverpool Cathedral in 1960, which placed eighth out of 450 submissions, Louis Martin, 528-529.

22 He collected editions of *Casabella* from the 1930s and the entire run of *Spazio*, which was published in the 1950s, Louis Martin, 531. Eisenman later exhibited his collection of magazines, which grew considerably, in 1968 at the Princeton University Library. See Peter Eisenman *Modern Architecture 1919-1939: Polemics: Books, Periodicals and Ephemera from the Collection of Peter D. Eisenman* (Princeton NJ: [Princeton University Library], 1968).

ways, Eisenman's thesis may be seen as an extension of the formal investigation begun by Rowe, but in others it may be noted for already outlining some of the key themes Eisenman would gather under the heading of conceptual architecture. Significant in this regard is the way this would be expressed by reference, however obliquely at this stage, to communication theory. This, Eisenman notes, is in fact what gestalt is all about.

Initially the essence of any creative act can be thought of as the communication of an original idea from its author, through a means of expression, to a receiver. The means of expression must be such as to transmit the original intention as clearly and as fully as possible to the receiving mind. This need for clarity and comprehensibility so much stressed by the Gestalt psychologists is critical to the development of any means of communication.24

Although, "[t]he Gestalt psychologists have conclusively demonstrated that comprehensibility depends on essentially simple configurations, of which the square, the rectangle, and the circle are examples," these in and of themselves do not communicate anything.25 At the same time, no function, if one takes it as an idea to be expressed, has a natural form suited to it.

These, then, are the problems of form and function as perceived by Eisenman in the terms of communication theory he used. The premise that Eisenman follows here, and would continue to follow as he developed the notion of conceptual architecture, is that architecture is essentially an act of communication that requires the rational use of its own "elements" in order to convey its author's intentions. Although intentionality would become a contentious term of art historical analysis (Eisenman would eventually revise his own use of it), it should also be recalled that in the context of Rowe and his student, it was wedded to that other difficult concept that has also been highly scrutinized, that of a Zeitgeist. As Eisenman saw it, and no doubt he was influenced by Rowe here, modern

---

24 Peter Eisenman, "Towards an Understanding of Form," 3.
25 Ibid., 9.
architecture, or the Modern Movement in particular, had a distinct spirit or main current, which it was the architect's task to systematize and articulate.26

Thus, Eisenman dissected and categorized architecture into five “elements”: “intent,” “function,” “structure,” “technics,” and “form.” Of these, he gave form primacy (only by creating a hierarchical order could one arrive at rational system of their relations). In addition to this, “form” could be divided into two types: the “generic” and the “specific.” This would facilitate a discussion of historical and context-specific uses of form. The notion of the generic, however, would enable a further distinction that would serve to maintain the coherence of a generalizable system. All of the historically specific uses of form Eisenman gathers under the heading of percept. Whether it is the symbolic content of, say, the form of the dome of a temple, or the presumed fit between that form and the building’s function, these, according to Eisenman, communicate percepts. Concepts, on the other hand, are a content of communication that has some specificity in the mode of communication itself – architecture.

Just as Rowe had qualified his use of gestalt in the second transparency essay in order to introduce its own historical basis, Eisenman, working from the other direction, so to speak, relegates almost the entirety of what to that point had been considered formal analysis of architecture to the perceptual, the historically specific, in order to articulate what is proper to architecture itself – the conceptual. The generic aspect of the conceptual would be historical only in the sense that architecture itself – apart from its uses – has a

26 Ibid., 3. It is over the use of the concept of a Zeitgeist that much of the intellectual fallout between student and mentor would ensue. Rowe would begin to sympathize with the arguments of Karl Popper's Poverty of Historicism (New York: Basic Books, 1960) and see the notion as belonging to the ideologically corrupt uses of historical determinism. By his 1976 essay, “Post-Functionalism,” Eisenman would drop the Chomskian-based uses of intentionality, but would maintain, through a somewhat fanciful reading of Foucault, the concept of a Zeitgeist as the unifying force in modernism, Peter Eisenman, “Post-Functionalism,” Oppositions 6 (Fall 1976), i-iii. See chapter 8.
history – a history that, it should be evident, culminates in the Modern Movement.

Evoking “the standard definition of a ‘Gestalt’ as proposed by the theorists of that school of psychological thought; namely, ‘that which at any given moment is seen as a separate whole in the total perceptual field,’” Eisenman argues,

it is precisely the visual or pictorial concept of form which I am anxious to avoid, which indeed I am arguing against. To understand architectural form we must introduce the notion of movement and postulate that an experience of architecture is the sum of a large number of experiences, each one of them apprehended visually (as well as through other senses), but accumulated over a much longer time span than is required for the initial appreciation of a pictorial work, and building up into a conceptual, not a perceptual, whole.27

Following this distinction, Eisenman reads works of the major protagonists of the Modern movement. His thesis culminates in a study of Terragni’s Casa del Fascio, which Eisenman claims to be the most significant achievement in outlining the conceptual basis of architecture. This lies in the double reading the Casa itself offers – namely, that it may be read either as a carved out solid or as an addition of planes. The pair of readings is, according to Eisenman, a sign of the conceptual workings of architecture – an architecture for which, in the ensuing years, Eisenman would attempt to provide a grammar.28

Both Rowe and Eisenman left Cambridge in 1963 to return to the US. Rowe took up a position at Cornell, where he had been a visiting critic in 1957. Once there, he immediately set up an urban design studio. Eisenman was offered a position at Princeton’s school of architecture, which at that time was headed by the Beaux-Arts-oriented Jean Labatut. There he met up with Michael Graves, who had been hired the year earlier. Together, they taught junior studio courses and began work on an urban

28 For an extended consideration of Eisenman’s thesis, see Louis Martin, 536-49.
design project of their own called, the New Jersey Corridor project, a sort of linear city connecting different urban centers. In an effort to create a forum for critical discourse, Eisenman and Graves, along with Emilio Ambasz, then a graduate student at Princeton, organized the first Conference of Architects for the Study of the Environment, which was held in the spring of 1964. The conference was broadly conceived, but for its organizers it represented an opportunity for a younger generation of architectural educators to interact. It included many of Eisenman’s friends, like Stanford Anderson, Henry Millon, Richard Meier, Jacquelin Robertson, and Colin Rowe. Kenneth Frampton, then editor at Architectural Design in London, was flown in with the idea of working with him on a new CASE magazine. The conference was also attended by Robert Venturi, who had been Labatut’s student, and Vincent Scully, who by that time had already been recognized as a leading historian of American regionalist architecture.

Some sense of the larger shifts in attitudes of US architects can be read in this meeting. For it occurred as a certain groundswell of revolt had directed itself toward the shortcomings of the Modern Movement and its political and social aspirations. What was at issue was whether the proposed alternatives, in the new forms of vernacular and regional architecture, were any better off. American regionalism had long been considered a homegrown alternative to European modernism, which had always been perceived by some as tainted by the utopian socialism of many of its proponents. By the 1960s, a corporate version of modernism was seen as much a failure as social engineering in addressing the problems of urban “decay.”

30 Louis Martin, 550-1.
Vincent Scully's thesis of 1949 had been concerned with the nineteenth-century development of an American vernacular. It was partly reproduced in 1955 as *The Shingle Style*. His short book, *Modern Architecture*, was based on a 1957 lecture titled, “Modern Architecture: Toward a Redefinition of Style.” And in 1962 he published a monograph on Louis Kahn.31 Together, these works established a kind of pedigree for American regionalism, which was meant to serve as the basis for any evaluation of modern architecture. The detailed history of nineteenth-century domestic architecture in *The Shingle Style* served as prelude to the major achievements of regionalists like Frank Lloyd Wright, Greene and Greene, and Harwell Hamilton Harris. Of latter-day architects this sensibility was best represented by Kahn.

On the opening day of the first CASE meeting something of a showdown ensued between Rowe and Scully, the two senior historian-critics at the conference. What resulted was the division of the meeting into camps, with Rowe and Scully each being supported by younger attendees to the conference. Rowe’s espousal of the “European” strain of modernism, not only earned him the support of the likes of Meier, Graves, and Eisenman, but was directly antagonistic toward any regionalism that took Wright as its apogee. On his first trip to the US in the early 1950s, Rowe had made a point of touring the mid-west in order to see Wright’s houses, and concluded that Wright had little merit apart from his pictorial ability to set buildings in the landscape. After the antagonistic first day of the conference, Scully and Venturi walked out.32 Thus, the division between European modernism and American regionalism, an issue of debate going back as far as

32 L Martin, 551.
Hitchcock and Johnson’s 1932 *International Style* exhibition, was reconfirmed as a sort of rite of initiation for the new generation of architects.

Following the first meeting, CASE became a loose organization of architects and historians devoted to the “white architecture” of European modernism, which, considering the group of friends that organized it, is hardly surprising. Eisenman and Rowe continued, with Kenneth Frampton, Stanford Anderson, and Henry Millon, to plan a CASE magazine, which came close to fruition but ultimately never appeared. Instead a series of events led to the beginning of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and the collapse of CASE.

While visiting Princeton, Arthur Drexler, head of the Architecture Department at the Museum of Modern Art, met Eisenman and Graves and became interested in their New Jersey Corridor project. Eisenman and Drexler became good friends and when Drexler proposed an exhibition to feature new work on urban design, it was most certainly conceived with the input of Eisenman. *The New City: Architecture and Urban Renewal* showed at MoMA from January to March 1967.\(^3^3\) The exhibition featured “renewal” projects for different areas of Manhattan designed by teams from the four East coast schools that now represented the major universities that taught the modernist approach. From Princeton, Eisenman and Graves headed a team. From Cornell, a team was led by Rowe, along with Thomas Schumacher, Jerry Wells and Fred Koetter. Jacquelin Robertson represented Columbia along with Richard Weinstein, Giovanni Pasanella, Johnathan Barnett and Myles Weintraub. And a team from MIT was comprised of Stanford Anderson, Robert Goodman, and Henry Millon.

In the year prior to the exhibition, Princeton had acquired a new director at its school of architecture, Robert Geddes. Soon after this appointment, Eisenman and Geddes had a falling out, despite the fact that together Eisenman and Graves, both untenured, had nominated him. When tenure appointments were made the following year, in 1967, Graves was given one and Eisenman was not. With this discouragement from academia, Eisenman called on his friend, Arthur Drexler, who with the approval of MoMA director, René d’Harnoncourt, offered the Museum’s support in establishing a new institute for the study of architecture. Eisenman and Drexler, in the midst of preparation for the “New City” exhibition, quickly managed to secure a board of trustees that would help guarantee the institute’s legal and financial operation.34

In January of 1968, the newly founded IAUS hosted a meeting of CASE, which was thereafter reorganized as two regional groups: CASE/Princeton-New York (which generally convened members from Princeton, Cornell, and Columbia) and CASE/Boston (which served primarily MIT).35 The IAUS was planned from the start as an educational institute that would bridge “the gap between the theoretical world of the university and the pragmatic world of the planning agencies,”36 and it drew its faculty from CASE members, the majority of whom taught there part time while maintaining their own university posts, while Eisenman as full-time IAUS member served as its director.

In early 1969 Eisenman became familiar with the work of Noam Chomsky, marking an apparent shift in Eisenman’s theoretical orientation, which will be discussed in chapter six. It was enough to be the source of tension between him and Rowe, a

34 Louis Martin, 553-4.
35 Ibid., 565.
friction that manifested itself in the managing of the IAUS. As a part of the teaching arrangements at the Institute, Rowe sent some of his students there from Cornell for further instruction and the use of studio facilities. Apparently dissatisfied with the organization and level of involvement from the IAUS faculty, the Cornell students complained. (The degree of organization at the Institute would be a contentious issue for IAUS students throughout much of its existence.) Rowe sided with his students, and Eisenman reacted strongly. Literally expelling Rowe from the IAUS, Eisenman changed the locks on the building, while Rowe, for his part, supported his students until the end of term and then submitted his resignation at the end of March 1969.\(^{37}\)

Thus, in the midst of political agitation and administrative crackdowns occurring on campuses across the US, the young IAUS experienced its own turmoil. Although Eisenman would consider himself to the political left of Rowe, the way political protests elsewhere were galvanized in opposition to institutional authority may have made it difficult for Eisenman to articulate his position while acting as administrator. To some, of course, this was not simply a problem of appearance – Eisenman’s politics, along with those of the Institute, would often be called into question. It will be my task in what follows to not only sort out these politics, but to identify some of their effects beyond expressly stated positions.

A few weeks after Rowe’s departure, in May 1969, CASE/Princeton-New York convened a closed meeting that served as a critique session for the work of Eisenman,

Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier, and William Ellis. The proceedings of this meeting, known as CASE 7, would become the basis for the book, *Five Architects*, which would be published in 1972. In the meantime, Eisenman, still intent on starting a new publication in the spirit of the old European avant-garde magazines, decided it was not going to be produced by CASE but by the IAUS. The first issue of *Oppositions* would not appear until September 1973, but the IAUS would be given an earlier opportunity in the exercise of publishing, when it was invited to guest edit the December 1971 issue of *Casabella.*

For this, Eisenman made the first of many efforts to shape the field of architectural debate, calling upon his willing opponents, the most ready of which were about to become widely seen, in their defense of the new vernacular, as resounding with the recent developments in pop art.

In 1966, Robert Venturi had published *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, for which Scully had written an introduction that demonstrated their intellectual alliance. (And in the preface to the 1971 republication of his *Shingle Style*, Scully singles out Venturi as heir to the regionalist tradition in the US.) Eisenman had taken an interest in Venturi's work, finding in it some degree of usefulness as he formulated his own version of conceptual architecture in the years 1969-1971. But in 1968 Venturi with Denise Scott Brown published the first results of their study of Las Vegas, which came to the defense of a whole new vernacular architecture to be found in the most everyday sites of popular culture.

---

Taking this study of the Las Vegas strip as a polemic – a polemic that was to be amply demonstrated when the second half of their study was published in 1972 in the book, *Learning from Las Vegas* – Eisenman invited an exchange for the pages of the *Casabella* issue that he, as IAUS director, was editing. There Denise Scott Brown submitted, “Hop on Pop,” which was followed by Kenneth Frampton’s critical response, and a final rejoinder by Scott Brown.\(^41\)

When *Oppositions* came to be published, it was clear that its editors aimed to stake out a position that was, as the journal’s name suggested, opposed to the architectural accommodation of existing social process. This was, they saw, to be found in the kind of populism espoused by Venturi and Scott Brown, but also in what was coming to be recognized in architectural discourse as postmodernism, a concept that owed to discussions of architectural “semiology” and “adhocism.”\(^42\) Not that the editors, Eisenman, Frampton, Mario Gandelsonas, and, joining later, Anthony Vidler, were united in their own positions, but their arguments did spring from a rejection of architecture’s role of appeasement to the forces of developers and others.

Thus, Colin Rowe’s place in all this, given his earlier role in leading the charge for the CASE modernists, would be significant. At the end of 1972, the culmination of CASE 7 was published as *Five Architects*. Rowe’s response to the work, which was

---


written in the months following CASE 7 in 1969 and had been the source of contention between him and Eisenman, was made public as the book’s introduction. On the one hand, it served as an apologia against the charge that the architecture the book represented was merely derivative Corbusianism masking itself under the litany of the revolutionary heroics of an avant-garde long past. But on the other, this defense would be in the name of the repetition of forms not the repetition of heroics.

If the steady incantation of, now, very old ‘revolutionary’ themes will encourage the further joys of rhetorical excursion into areas of assumed social and technological relevance, the recapitulation of the themes of building offers no present career so blissful and free from trouble; and thus, while the derivative argument continues to thrive, its exponents, conceiving themselves to be the legitimate and sole heirs of the modern movement, display very little tolerance for what ought to be recognized as the absolutely parallel phenomenon of the derivative building.

“Which,” Rowe continues,

is again to establish that the physique and the morale of modern architecture, its flesh and its word, were (and could) never be coincident; and it is when we recognize that neither word nor flesh was ever coincident with itself, let alone with each other, that, without undue partiality, we can approach the present day. For under the circumstances what to do? If we believe that modern architecture did establish one of the great hopes of the world – always, in detail, ridiculous, but never, in toto, to be rejected – then do we adhere to physique-flesh or to morale-word?

Rowe’s answer is an argument that (more or less simply),

concerns the plastic and spatial inventions of Cubism and the proposition that, whatever may be said about these, they possess an eloquence and a flexibility which continues now to be as overwhelming as it was then. It is an argument largely about the physique of building and only indirectly about its morale.\[43\]

Although Rowe had not switched camps, so to speak – he was still critical of populism – this was, as a defense of the work in Five Architects, essentially a backhanded

---

gesture to Eisenman, who maintained an ambitious rhetoric in his own account of conceptual architecture. And the incantation of morale-word, as Rowe liked to put it, would be everywhere present in the editorial that opened the first issue of Oppositions.

Thus it may have come as something of a surprise to find essays by Rowe in the first two issues of the IAUS’s new journal. The nearness of these articles’ appearance to Five Architects owes to the delay in publication of the latter. Sometime during 1970-1972, however, Eisenman had managed to patch things up with Rowe, and this may have partly had to do with his redirecting his energies to the old division that had appeared at the first CASE meeting.

Moreover, the Rowe essays appearing in Oppositions were not recent compositions, but were written during his first stay in the US as educator and had never been published. They thus would have been known to Eisenman from his study under Rowe in Cambridge. That they were resurrected for publication in Oppositions is a sign that Eisenman saw them as marking out some the terrain that the journal was attempting to clear for itself in terms of its own historical pedigree. The first to be published, in Oppositions 1, is “Neoclassicism and Modern Architecture,” another look at Palladian sources in modern architecture, this time through a study of Mies van der Rohe. The second, appearing in Oppositions 2, is “Character and Composition; or Some Vicissitudes of Architectural Vocabulary in the Nineteenth Century.” This was written just prior to Texas and the transparency articles, and though it seems to barely anticipate the formal

---

44 Rowe’s stance against populism would be reiterated in 1975, when, in the second edition of Five Architects, he included an addendum to his essay that supposed his original arguments, and the work represented, should be acceptable to his opponents who claim to follow a theory of pluralism. That they do not, Rowe suggests, is a sign that their pluralism is more a “determinist, technocratic, and historicist establishment.” Ibid., 8.

45 Eisenmen et al., Editorial Statement, Oppositions 1.
analysis undertaken with Robert Slutzky, it does claim to identify principles of composition in an architecture that otherwise had been known for eclecticism and mere pictorialism. Clearly, its inclusion in *Oppositions* was meant as a riposte to those rallying around the banners of pop, "the decorated shed," and "adhocism."^46^

One final appearance of Rowe’s writing in *Oppositions* marks the last formal connection between Rowe and Eisenman. In issues 4-7, each of the editors, with Vidler joining on the seventh, published an editorial statement. In *Oppositions* 6, Eisenman submitted "Post-Functionalism," an essay that marked the end of his use of the Chomskian notion of deep structure in his theoretical writing. It also marked the end of his project on conceptual architecture, which had resulted in a series of houses that Eisenman numbered I-X. As I will show in a later chapter, the essay and the turn it represented were the outcome of a dialogue with Rosalind Krauss. In particular, it was critical of the grand narratives of modernism that posited a historically inevitable progression, in much the same sense that Krauss had become critical of the Greenbergian modernism that she once espoused. There were two results of these narratives, Eisenman argued, both of which were based on the recognition of the failures of functionalism. One was to turn to the past to recover historical images, and the other was to turn to "pure architecture" and an inquiry into the discipline itself. Eisenman, of course, had always expressed himself in terms of the latter, but here he disavows his old project. The differences he had attempted to establish between himself and Rowe no longer seem tenable. Now he casts off all that he had done in terms of deep structure and the

^46^ Colin Rowe, "Neoclassicism and Modern Architecture," *Oppositions* 1 (September 1973), 1-26; idem, "Character and Composition; or Some Vicissitudes of Architectural Vocabulary in the Nineteenth Century," *Oppositions* 2 (January 1974), 41-60. On pop and the decorated shed, see Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour; on adhocism, see Jencks and Silver.
articulation of architectural concepts in themselves as an effort wholly aligned with the
diagnosis offered by Rowe in Five Architects. Indeed, Rowe was right, as Eisenman now
saw it, pure architecture was at best a politically neutral contribution to pluralist society.
It relied on a narrative of humanism just as the historicist camp did in its counter claim
that nineteenth-century eclecticicism offered the only repertoire of universally meaningful
images.47

A properly post-functionalist architecture, then, is a post-humanist architecture.
And as if to make clear that he was not just departing from a previously held position but
instead from a debate that preoccupied the entire field of architecture (the Foucauldian
episteme is invoked), in the sixth issue of Oppositions, which opened with his essay,
Eisenman staged an updated version of the exchange between Colin Rowe and Vincent
Scully that had set the tone of that debate at the first CASE meeting in 1964.

In 1970 Yale University had held a competition for the design of its new
mathematics building, which was won by the office of Venturi and Rauch. In 1971, a
book was planned by Yale University Press that was to deal with the entire competition
as well as the winning design. Eisenman was invited to be a reader for the project, which
was to include, apart from the various design entries, essays by Scully, Venturi, Robert
Stern, Charles Moore, Donlyn Lyndon, and Colin Rowe. The inclusion of Rowe was
meant as an effort to give representation to points of view “opposing ... the Venturi and
Scott Brown philosophy.”48 The essay Rowe wrote, “Robert Venturi and the Yale
Mathematics Building,” was not, in fact, hostile to their views – Rowe had found much in
common with Venturi’s account of mannerism in Complexity and Contradiction in

47 Eisenman, “Post-Functionalism.”
48 Charles Moore, “Conclusion,” Oppositions 6 (Fall 1976), 20.
Architecture – instead, it was more critical of the historicist bent that had come to champion him – in particular, that of Scully.⁴⁹

In the course of preparation for the book, Rowe’s essay was pulled, causing a minor furor that reached the university’s newspaper and prompted Eisenman to write to the publisher in protest.⁵⁰ In *Oppositions* 6, Eisenman published the nixed essay, which he introduced with the letter he had sent to the editors at Yale. He also included responses from Moore and Scully. Moore’s contribution was a revised version of the short entry that appeared in the final version of the book and defended Venturi’s position. The short essay Scully submitted to Eisenman was written for this issue of *Oppositions*, but it entirely avoided any reference to the controversy and instead discussed the siting of the Mathematics Building in light of its recent completion.⁵¹

In one sense, then, *Oppositions* 6 offered a public airing of grievances held against the editors at Yale (or, those at Yale that held influence over the project), which had clearly sought to praise the decision made by the competition’s jury,⁵² and through this Eisenman was able to offer a restatement of his position against the historicist position now becoming popularized as post-modernism. At the same time, however, any sort of conciliatory gesture toward Rowe is qualified by the “Post-Functionalism” essay, which aimed to situate the entire Scully-Rowe confrontation in terms of the outmoded

---

⁵² The jury was comprised of Edward Larrabee Barnes, John Christiansen, Edward Dunn, Romaldo Giurgola, Charles E. Rickart, Kevin Roche, and Vincent Scully. Moore, 21.
discourses of humanism.\textsuperscript{53} As I mentioned, Eisenman developed this position through his dialogue with Rosalind Krauss, which I will discuss shortly. But first it is necessary to outline the departure Krauss made with her Greenbergian roots through her break with Michael Fried.

\textsuperscript{53} Eisenman’s ability to advance his position while conducting a forum that at least appeared inclusive allowed him to maintain important connections for the journal. Both Rowe and Scully continued to be among the sponsors to \textit{Oppositions}. 
4. Fried-Krauss

I have used the term mentor – with the hesitation implied by scare quotes, a hesitation over the precise attribution of influence, originality, etc. – to describe the relationships between Rowe and Eisenman, and Fried and Krauss. In the case of Rowe and Eisenman, an actual student-advisor relationship began when they met. Although Fried and Krauss were colleagues, fellow graduate students at Harvard, when they met, Fried had already established his vocation as art critic, and it was to his published writings that Krauss often turned as she, with the help of Fried, became a published critic herself. I will continue to use the term mentor, in a qualified sense, precisely because in the field of art criticism, the voice and vision of the critic loomed so large, as so famously evident in the US art scene by the 1960s. The presence of Clement Greenberg’s authority not only held sway over so much of the art of the 1960s, whether one defended or attacked his criticism, but it also loomed large over the relationship between Fried and Krauss. (By contrast, one may note that the divisions in architectural criticism of the same period were entrenched in scholarly institutions, as the modernist-regionalist debate led to the alignment of Ivy League universities accordingly – i.e., the modernist Princeton, Cornell, Columbia, MIT and the regionalist Yale, Pennsylvania.)

Judging by the subsequent history (and the historiography on this period, which I aim to critique), a history that takes the landmark “Art and Objecthood” as entrenching Greenbergian opticality (even as that essay establishes a position independent of Greenberg) while marking off minimalism as its opposite, it is possible to believe that
Fried's essay, with its sweeping dichotomy, caused Krauss to rethink Greenberg's and Fried's assessment of minimalism, and that her break with Fried was completed with her critical support for artists like Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris and Richard Serra. While it is true that from 1969 to 1972 Krauss published a series of essays that increasingly questioned the bases of both Fried's and Greenberg's criticism, culminating, one might say, in the definitive "A View of Modernism" (which rejected the historical trajectory offered by both critics), the personal break between Fried and Krauss occurred much earlier.

It may be entering the realm of biography more than what is required here, but the recent recollections of Krauss and Phillip Leider, then editor at *Artforum*, both suggest that Fried had become hostile toward Krauss some time before she published any polemical stance toward his own writing, to the point of blocking the addition of Krauss's name to the masthead of *Artforum*. This rift took place as Krauss was working fully within a Greenbergian framework, and at about the same time as Fried was defining his

---

1 Krauss's self-positioning has been the lens through which most have seen her break with Fried. See her "A View of Modernism," *Artforum* 11 no. 1 (September 1972), 48-51; and The Optical Unconscious (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1993), 6-8. Benjamin Buchloh's framing of Krauss's break is typical in reaffirming her own version of events: "If Stella was the historical figure with whom Fried's critical interests in contemporary art came to a halt - apparently since he could not redeem the Greenbergian legacy through his work – Stella was also the figure who, along with Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, provided the point from which Rosalind Krauss would embark on her critique of the Greenbergian and Friedian legacy. This would make her the central critic of the generation of minimalist and postminimalist artists (her work on Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris and Richard Serra attests to this); and in the course of this development she would reintroduce the unnameable 'other' tradition descending from Marcel Duchamp that had been banished from history by Greenberg and Fried." Benjamin Buchloh in Hal Foster ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 65-6.

2 Krauss and Leider in Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum, 1962-1974* (New York: SoHo Press, 2000), 223-6. Fried was able to block Krauss's addition to the masthead because of the influence he held over his friend Leider, who considered Fried the magazine's most important contributor. Both the recollections of Krauss and Leider suggest the almost flippancy of Fried's turn against Krauss – a point that invites all kinds of speculation in light of the kinds of authority of the critic just mentioned, but I will try to limit my remarks to what is directly pertinent. Krauss, who had written numerous articles and reviews for the magazine since April 1966, was not added to the masthead of *Artforum* until December 1969. Other writers for *Artforum*, like Barbara Rose and Annette Michelson, had been named contributing editors after shorter periods of time.
own position independent of Greenberg. One may be forgiven, then, for imagining the slightly senior critic (Fried, one year older than Krauss, entered the PhD program at Harvard exactly one and a half years earlier than Krauss), having just been made a junior fellow in the Harvard Society of Fellows and given the opportunity to conduct a seminar in a topic of his choice, and having befriended and begun an intellectual dialogue with Stanley Cavell, newly given a chair in the department of philosophy, setting out his own intellectual project really for the first time, and becoming irritated at the junior colleague whose own criticism continually and almost obsequiously cited his and continued to yoke it to that authority figure who stood over them both.

I offer such an account here simply to highlight the depth, from Fried’s perspective, of his departure from Greenberg’s criticism. Much has been made of how this departure from Greenberg’s notion of the modernist reduction was also, it is alleged, an entrenchment of Greenbergian opticality. However, I will be concerned to resituate Fried’s new position, first appearing in the November, 1966 essay, “Shape as Form, Frank Stella’s New Paintings,” against the Greenbergian remainder that persisted in Krauss’s criticism even after her disavowal of the Friedian and Greenbergian trajectories of modernism in the 1972 essay, “A View of Modernism.”

A second reason for pointing to the proper chronology of the break between Fried and Krauss is to recall that the rift had taken place already by the spring of 1969 when Krauss met Eisenman, but that she

---

3 The biographical information here is taken from Michael Fried, “An Introduction to My Art Criticism,” *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1-74. Philip Leider’s recollection of the Krauss of these years: “The Rosalind I knew is not the Rosalind that now is this dominatrix of the cultural world. No, the Rosalind I knew was modest, humble, unassuming, and quite lacking in confidence. And she saw herself as the adoring student of Michael Fried. All she wanted to be was a girl who got an ‘A’ from Michael Fried.” Philip Leider in Newman, 187.

4 See especially Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” which I will take up in chapter 7.

was still working with the Greenbergian principles that she would drop in the next few years. This is to highlight the fact that, as much as Krauss' realignment was a taking issue with Fried, it was at the same time a “working through” of Greenberg that took place concurrently with her dialogue with Eisenman.

In order to discuss this more fully I shall retrace in some detail the events that led up to this. The detail called upon will serve to recover a “forgotten history” of the turn away from high (optical) modernist art criticism. This will be to identify more precisely the pivot of this shift, which, for the protagonists of this story, lies in the alternate readings of the Merleau-Pontyan institution.

*

It has been well noted that Fried's beginnings as an art critic owe much to his encounter with Frank Stella, whom he met, along with Darby Bannard, in his first year of study at Princeton while taking a BA in English (1955-59). The young Stella, keenly following all the developments in the New York art scene armed with Greenberg’s criticism as a guide, was about to produce the work that would place him in the orbit of Leo Castelli and in the landmark MoMA exhibition Sixteen Americans of 1959. Having been absorbed in discussion with his painter friends, Fried introduced himself to Greenberg and attended the Christian Gauss lectures he gave at Princeton. This connection served him well – for, with the aid, of it he was taken on by Hilton Kramer to write reviews for Arts Magazine while in England, where Fried lived from 1959 to 1962, spending the first two fitful years at Oxford and the third in London studying philosophy part-time at the University College.⁶

The criticism Fried wrote as correspondent for *Arts* does not have the precise terminology and logical rigor that he admired in Greenberg and was himself soon to develop (Fried has recently dismissed it as immature, noting the habitual use of the term sentimental for all things disagreeable). If clarity as a critic was yet to come, his taste was already established by his experience in the US, however. Greenberg's judgments on *informel* and pop, though not cited, were reflected in his own reviews. Though the preeminence of Greenberg may have been crowned with the appearance in 1961 of his collection, *Art and Culture*, his role as embattled defender against the newer art was already taking shape. Thus Fried must have seen himself as taking up Greenberg's criticism with the certain commitment required in a moment of shifting currents. In light of this, one particular reaction of Fried's to his English experience is especially notable. During his short stint as correspondent for *Arts*, Fried managed to find four separate occasions to attack the criticism of John Berger, which he evidently loathed.

Berger had become the most well-known art critic representing the New Left in England, finding his audience among the readers of the Sunday *Observer* and the viewers of his weekly television program. Mentioning these venues, Fried took particular objection to his popularity: "Let him use both these platforms to promote a single painter and the effect is predictable." For a critic convinced of the importance of criticism to the development of art, the popularity of a wrong-headed critic was all the more difficult to

---


take. Fried’s objections to Berger point to a problem that would return as he sorted out his own criticism’s relation to Greenberg. The problem with Berger, predictably, was that his audience was comprised of people of certain political commitments and not of artistic commitments. Thus, apart from the “slovenly” assessment of Pollock as “the pathologically alienated artist who flings paint at the canvas in a despairing, perversely willed refusal to communicate” (Fried’s paraphrase of Berger), the art that Berger does endorse is that of “the small town art show” which he evokes with “brilliantly disgusting sentimentality.” Leaving aside (as Fried does) the drastically different tradition of arts programs and working class culture in Britain, the issue that appears here is essentially the same old one that Greenberg dealt with at the beginning of his career as a critic. That is, I do not believe it is too much of a stretch to hear in each of Fried’s invocations of sentimentality an echo of Greenberg’s pronouncements on kitsch.

When we hear Fried recalling recently that in his years in London he read heavily in Marxism and philosophy, there is a sense that he may have been searching for an answer to a problem that confronted Greenberg in those same years as well – namely, that if kitsch, according to the early Greenberg, had been having a degrading effect on society and that it was to have been combated by an avant-garde whose function was “to find a path along which it would be possible to keep culture moving in the midst of ideological confusion and violence,” the problem now was not the abatement of such confusion and violence (though, some would find such violence explained by ideological “certainties”), but that that movement resulted in an accumulation of “moves” that comprised a history.
of modern art. Greenberg, as is well known, did not care to position his work as art history, something that he felt ignored the judgment of the critic and the evaluative process in favor of mere "social explanation" — and perhaps for this reason he would be one that others would criticize for taking up ideological certainties. For the changes in his criticism by the beginning of the sixties have been well described in terms of his abandoning the language of the avant-garde and replacing it with the language of modernism, a language that was more amenable to a Cold War agenda. If the series of "moves" that Greenberg had charted over the course of his criticism in the 1940s and 1950s had resulted in certain generalizations about what this process entailed, and if this may have been expressed in terms of a specialization in the arts which was also present in other aspects of democratic society, this was not an issue Fried found problematic at this point. (By 1966, however, it would become the basis of Fried's critique of Greenberg, even if that critique is never formulated as a critique of Greenberg's ideology. Although Fried never identifies an ideology in Greenberg's criticism, he does characterize literalism, the alleged outcome of Greenberg's generalization, as ideological — much to the disbelief of many literalist or minimalist proponents, who felt that it was Fried's defense of opticality that had the definite ring of ideology.) The issue for Fried in his London years was to account for the historical process of modernism, while maintaining the priority of critical judgment.

Thus, of the people he engaged with and of what he read, the most notable in terms of its later appearance in his essays is his encounter with the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and to a lesser extent, that of Gyorgy Lukács, whom, it seems, he read at least partly through Merleau-Ponty’s *Adventures of the Dialectic*. It was the accounts of dialectics according to these two philosophers that Fried found useful in describing the historical process of modernism that was at least latently present in Greenberg’s criticism. That process positively incorporated each new move as a statement on the nature of modern painting or sculpture as such. In this way, Fried came to adopt the language of modernism rather than that of the avant-garde, much as Greenberg had. The latter had come to use “avant-gardism” along with “Novelty art” as a term of abuse for art that exploited newness for the sake of newness, and in particular this referred at first to pop and later to minimalism. These were sentiments shared by Fried, but for him an historical theory of modernism had to be worked out that gave account of the accumulation of positive statements on the nature of modern painting and sculpture, but that did not at the same time lead to a teleology. The dialectics of Lukács and Merleau-Ponty provided this, and they, at first, sat alongside Greenberg’s version of modernism, however uneasily, until finally they could no longer be reconciled.

One final encounter Fried had in London that would prove to be as significant as the embrace of Merleau-Ponty was with the sculpture of Anthony Caro. He first met the artist in the fall of 1961, visited his studio, and, as he likes to relate, Fried became

---

immediately convinced of the major achievement Caro’s work represented to twentieth-century art.\footnote{Fried relates this encounter in his introduction to \textit{Art and Objecthood}, 6-7. See also his comments in \textit{Discussions in Contemporary Culture}, ed. Hal Foster: “I had this instant access of conviction that Caro was a great artist,” 72.} During the remainder of his stay in London Fried wrote the catalogue essay for Caro’s exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, which finally opened in the fall of 1963.\footnote{The text of this catalogue essay was reproduced for \textit{Art International}. Michael Fried, “Anthony Caro,” \textit{Art International} 7 (September 25, 1963), 68-72, reprinted in \textit{Art and Objecthood}, 269-76.}

In this essay Fried sets out for the first time ideas drawn from Merleau-Ponty alongside those of Greenberg. Citing Greenberg’s essay on “The New Sculpture,” as it had recently appeared in \textit{Art and Culture}, Fried invokes the drive of the visual arts toward that which in itself is immediate, concrete and irreducible, the drive toward “purity” (Greenberg’s own quotes) that Greenberg had termed the “modernist ‘reduction’.” Fried accepts this description provisionally, noting that,

I am not at all convinced that this explanation is right or that it goes deep enough; but again, in the context of the present essay, this hardly matters. It remains undeniable, I think, that the visual arts have, over the past century, performed upon themselves the “modernist ‘reduction’” summarized in barest outline [in “The New Sculpture”], and that Greenberg’s writings dealing with it are by far the finest and most intelligent we have.\footnote{“Caro,” 272 (where Fried’s work is reprinted in \textit{Art and Objecthood}, page references are to that text). “The New Sculpture” was first published in \textit{Partisan Review} in 1949. It was revised as “Sculpture in Our Time” for \textit{Arts Magazine} in 1958, which was the form it took when it appeared under the original title in \textit{Art and Culture} (Boston, Beacon Press, 1961), 139-45. Since the latter version is the one Fried consulted, my references will be to it.}

However, in the rest of Fried’s essay a difference from Greenberg, however subtle at this point, is apparent.

What Fried had found useful in Greenberg’s account of the “reduction” in painting was that it had “entailed renouncing all illusion of the third dimension and
throwing emphasis instead on the flatness and the shape of the canvas."\(^\text{18}\) But sculpture, lacking such \textit{delimiting} essential characteristics, meant something else:

Space is there to be shaped, divided, enclosed, but not to be filled.... The distinction between carving and modeling becomes irrelevant: a work or its parts can be cast, wrought, cut or simply put together; it is not so much sculptured as constructed, built, assembled, arranged.\(^\text{19}\)

These lines are cited by Fried, but elsewhere in "The New Sculpture," Greenberg had outlined what this meant in terms of illusionism:

Under the modernist "reduction," sculpture has turned out to be almost exclusively visual in its essence as painting itself. It has been "liberated" from the monolithic as much because of the latter's tactile associations, which now partake of illusion, as because of the hampering conventions that cling to it. But sculpture is still permitted a greater latitude of figurative allusiveness than painting because it remains tied, inexorably, to the third dimension and is therefore inherently less illusionistic. The literalness that was once its handicap has now become its advantage.\(^\text{20}\)

As it "has turned out" the modernist "reduction" has led to the defeat of illusionism through the defeat of the tactile, and the resulting opticality ("The human body is no longer postulated as the agent of space in either pictorial or sculptural art; now it is eyesight alone") stands over and above the necessity of delimiting characteristics in either painting or sculpture.\(^\text{21}\)

Opticality, in a passage alluded to by Fried, is now achieved through the "illusion of modalities." Greenberg writes:

\(^{19}\) Greenberg, \textit{Art and Culture}, 139; cited by Fried, “Caro,” 272.
\(^{20}\) \textit{Art and Culture}, 142-143.
\(^{21}\) Though, notoriously, Greenberg would return to delimiting characteristics in the 1962 essay, "After Abstract Expressionism," \textit{Art International} 6 (October 25, 1962), reprinted in \textit{The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol.4}, 121-34. Notorious not only because Fried would deal with it in a footnote to "Art and Objecthood," \textit{Artforum} 5 no. 10 (Summer 1967), 12-23, reprinted in \textit{Art and Objecthood}, 148-72, but because that footnote would, for Hal Foster, become the "Crux of Minimalism" in a now dominant historical interpretation of minimalism with which I will take issue in chapter 7. The parenthetical passage is from "The New Sculpture," \textit{Art and Culture}, 143.
To render substance entirely optical, and form, whether pictorial, sculptural or architectural, as an integral part of ambient space – this brings anti-illusionism full circle. Instead of the illusion of things, we are now offered the illusion of modalities: namely, that matter is incorporeal, weightless and exists only optically like a mirage.  

However, referring to the monochrome color of Caro’s sculpture [fig. 17], Fried writes, it is the natural concomitant of his aspirations toward openness and weightlessness – modalities which are of no special value in their own right, but which alone make possible the construction of expressive gestures that are not simply ‘abstracted from’ those of figurative art.

Thus, rather than taking opticality and its attendant illusioned modalities as ends in themselves, Fried attempts to stake his claims for the greatness of Caro, and much of the claims for his own ensuing critical project (to begin with at least), on a theory of the gesture. And for this he turns to the work of, among others, Merleau-Ponty.

In the Caro essay, Fried strikes an analogy between the viewer of the artist’s sculptures and the infant who has not yet acquired language, but who is nonetheless able to understand the gestures of its parents.

As for the gestures bodied forth in Caro’s sculptures, it is impossible to say whether they precede language and its related social institutions or whether they crown them. In one sense (the sense of our analogy) their trajectories have their place of origin in a realm of experience that is both primitive and prelingual; but there is another, no less important sense in which they presuppose all the conventions we have, all the civilization of which we are increasingly uneasy masters. This is true in regard to those of language itself: it was the labor of the late French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty to show how the institution of language arises out of primitive gesture....

The nearness with which this representation of Merleau-Ponty as theorist of the primitive gesture fits tropes of expressionism, undoubtedly something Fried did not intend, would

---

22 Greenberg, Art and Culture, 144 (my emphasis).
24 Fried also draws on the work his mentor in poetry at Princeton, RP Blackmur, and, in essays appearing after this, the writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein.
25 The quoted passage continues to relate the study of language to RP Blackmur who demonstrated “in masterpieces of sympathetic analysis, how language that has been wrought to its uttermost in great poetry may reach the condition of consummate gesture.” “Caro,” 270.
eventually be revised. Caro’s work would come to be understood by Fried in terms of how it marked its difference from not just the institution of language but from embodied conventions in general. This sense of institutionality is a running theme in Merleau-Ponty’s work, but it would only be latently present in the references to it by both Fried and Krauss. For Merleau-Ponty, however, institutionality is theorized as an event that is the pivot of subject-object co-production — to institute, and to be instituted.²⁶ The crucial issue in my story will be to determine to what extent Fried’s eventual notion of presentness bears the bivalence of Merleau-Ponty’s concept, and the extent to which Krauss would deny the apartness of the “gesture” from the embodied conventions (and thus deny the bivalence of that concept). In order to determine this I shall return to the narrative of events.

Fried returned to the US in the summer of 1962 to enter the PhD program at Harvard that fall. Almost immediately he was taken on by James Fitzsimmons, editor of *Art International*, to write reviews in a monthly “New York Letter,” which Fried did from October 1962 until June 1964 (involving a monthly trip from Cambridge to New York for that time). In these reviews, Fried sharpened his critical vocabulary, and came to find the language to appraise the handful of artists that he singled out for major achievement. Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski were among the artists reviewed, and

they along with Fried’s friend Frank Stella comprised the Three American Painters Fried chose to show at the Fogg Art Museum in the exhibition of that name in 1965.

This curatorial opportunity arose during Fried’s second year at Harvard when Fogg director, John Coolidge, invited him to organize an exhibition of contemporary art. During the winter of 1964-65, Fried wrote the ambitious catalogue essay to that exhibition, which was divided into five parts. The final three sections deal separately with each of the three artists in the show. The first section offers an historical account of modernism that built on Greenberg’s, and the second discusses the achievement of Jackson Pollock as the basis for the work in the exhibition.

Fried’s elaboration on Greenberg in the first section is notable for its attempt to maintain the historical coherence that he had established earlier. Against the charge by Hilton Kramer that Greenberg’s criticism was yoked to the New York school and tended toward a teleology, Fried maintained that the fundamental nature of evaluative judgment meant that there was no historical end or goal in sight – criticism was not, and could not be, predictive. It was true that an “inner artistic logic” seemed to guide the historical development of modernism. But this was only apparent when viewed in retrospect.

Kramer’s claim, sensing perhaps Greenberg’s past political proclivities (highlighted recently by the inclusion of “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” in Art and Culture), was that the historical logic involved was derived precisely from Marx. This intuition is redeemed by Fried, however, for it does recognize a latent dialectical process in Greenberg’s account of modernism. Stylistic analysis since Wölfflin had generally

---

27 Fried, Three American Painters.
29 Kramer, 61. A suggestion of Greenberg’s somewhat altered point of view of a few years after “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” is offered in “The Plight of Our Culture” (1953), also in Art and Culture, 22-33.
involved some form of Hegelianism, Fried notes. Where, in the art of the past, the internal logic that this implied excluded social factors, this was no longer a problem for historical explanation for the art of modernism. Since the nineteenth century the alienation of the artist from the other concerns of culture was a social fact. It was possible since then for art to seemingly have an internal logic. Thus, according to Fried,

the fundamentally Hegelian conception of art history at work in the writings of Wölfflin and Greenberg, whatever its limitations when applied to the art of the more distant past, seems particularly well suited to the actual development of modernism in the visual arts, painting especially.

The Hegelian conception that Fried is particularly concerned with is that related by Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* and the general work of Merleau-Ponty (though, in his footnote Fried singles out *Adventures of the Dialectic* as most important among the latter's writing). What these works suggest to Fried is that the continual self-

---

30 *Three American Painters*, 217.

31 That Lukács is cited here may strike one as odd, given his later defense of realism in the dispute with Adorno over the value of modernism. In light of Adorno's emphasis on negative dialectics, however, it is clear why Fried never turns to his work. See Fried's response to the issue of negation in modernism in "How Modernism Works: A Response to TJ Clark," *Critical Inquiry* 9 no.1 (Sept. 1982), 217-234. In this regard it is notable that *Adventures of the Dialectic* is also cited. This is the book Merleau-Ponty wrote to set out his position against Sartre with whom he broke in the early 1950s over the latter's avowed support for the French Communist Party. Essentially a work of political philosophy, *Adventures of the Dialectic* does draw some aesthetic conclusions. Merleau-Ponty critiques Sartre for both the position in "What is Literature?" and for the one he subsequently takes up: the first position claimed literature as the consciousness of a society in permanent revolution, whereas latterly Sartre advanced an ideal of pure action, the oppressed's appeals to which are recognized by the Party as the truth of society. "Sartre's permanent revolution [evidently not what Fried intended by his use of the phrase 'perpetual revolution'], whether effected by the Party or by literature, is always a relationship of consciousness to consciousness, and it always excludes that minimum of relaxation that guarantees the Marxist claim to truth and to historical politics." *Adventures of the Dialectic*, 157. The relaxation meant by Merleau-Ponty refers to "the mediation of personal relationships through the world of human symbols," ibid. 200, the world on which his philosophy of the event is centered. Merleau-Ponty's critique of an art that is engagé in a Sartrean sense may have served Fried in his rejection of similar art, or of avant-gardism in general. The full political sense of the dialectics being cited, however, is nowhere present in the *Three American Painters* essay. Which is not to say that a politics is not put forward by Fried – in the response to TJ Clark cited above, he argues against such interpretations of his work. James Meyer has claimed that in "Art and Objecthood" Fried articulates, through the aid of Stanley Cavell and Ludwig Wittgenstein, an "ethics of communication." James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). Meyer, however, ultimately interprets this ethics as being trumped by the politics of critical postmodernism historicized by Foster in his "Crux of Minimalism." (See my interpretation of these in chapter 7.) In order to provide a gloss on the aesthetic politics that Fried cites but does not make explicit in his essay here (nor
criticism of the arts is tantamount to a “perpetual revolution.” The artist attempts to acquire as objective an understanding of the historical situation (of that art’s development), and, through that, offers “action as the radical criticism of itself.” In this way painting is able to transform and renew itself while perpetuating intact “those of its traditional values that do not directly pertain to representation.”

This Hegelian reading of Greenberg would be the last attempt by Fried to reconcile Greenberg’s historical account of modernism with his own.

Rosalind Krauss, meanwhile, had entered graduate school at Harvard in January 1963 and there met Fried along with Kermit Champa and Kenworth Moffett, and among them held shared interests in modern art, despite Harvard’s lack of a modern faculty. However, both Fried and Krauss have noted the direction given by the historical studies of Sydney Freedberg in a department that, unusually, was more formalist than iconological in its methods. With Fried’s arrangement, Krauss was given a few opportunities to write in Art International. In 1964 and 1965, she published two “Boston

---

in the rest of his criticism of the 1960s and 1970s for that matter) I offer a passage from the conclusion to the central chapter of Adventures of the Dialectic: “If ... one agrees that no action assumes as its own all that happens, that it does not reach the event itself, that all actions, even war, are always symbolic actions and count as much upon the effect they will have as a meaningful gesture and as the mark of an intention as upon the direct results of the event – if one thus renounces “pure action,” which is a myth (and a myth of spectator consciousness), perhaps it is then that one has the best chance of changing the world. We do not say that this margin we give ourselves serves only our personal comfort, by endowing knowledge and literature with a good conscience that pure action refuses them. If truly all action is symbolic, then books are in their fashion actions and deserve to be written in accordance with the standards of the craft, without in any way neglecting the duty of unveiling. If politics is not immediate and total responsibility, if it consists in tracing a line in the obscurity of historical symbolism, then it too is a craft and has its technique. Politics and culture are reunited, not because they are completely congruent or because they both adhere to the event, but because the symbols of each order have echoes, correspondences, and effects of induction in the other.” Adventures of the Dialectic, 200-201.

32 This and the quotation in the previous sentence: Three American Painters, 218.
Letters” and a feature article that reviewed the exhibition of op art, “The Responsive Eye,” held at the Museum of Modern Art.\textsuperscript{34}

These first reviews demonstrate a young critic who has read Greenberg well and who is in close dialogue with the assessments of the new art in Fried’s reviews. Her review of the work of John Chamberlain, for instance, follows Fried’s own opinion of this sculptor’s work (which itself was an unusual divergence from Greenberg’s) and rehearses Greenberg’s arguments in “The New Sculpture,” adding a discussion of line that draws on the latter’s account of de Kooning. In a review of recent work by Robert Rauschenberg (focusing on \textit{Tideline} and \textit{Persimmon}), she arrives at conclusions similar to Fried’s in a piece he had written on Jasper Johns. She acknowledges Rauschenberg’s recognition of the formal impasse reached by abstract expressionism, but suggests his introduction of conceptual devices in response to this merely results in confusion over the source of meaning in the otherwise pictorial inquiry he stages. Her suggestion is that the supposed vacuity of meaning invoked by Rauschenberg’s collaged images ignores the potential meaning available by probing pictorial conventions. Fried’s earlier review of Johns, which had praised the artist’s choice of already two-dimensional imagery (flags, maps), an explicit disavowal of cubist space, in order to pay ironic homage to abstract expressionist brushwork, also claimed that the conceptual devices in Johns’s painting were heavy-handed and redundant.\textsuperscript{35}

In her essay-length review of “The Responsive Eye,” Krauss draws on Greenberg’s account of opticality in order to refute the claims made by op artists. The


\textsuperscript{35} Fried, “New York Letter,” \textit{Art International} 7 (February 1963), 60-4.
exhibition, curated by William Seitz, confuses the objectives and achievements of modernist art with the supposed opticality of op art. Citing Fried's reading of Greenberg, she notes that modernist art is offered to eyesight alone. Op art, however, despite its claims, is really tactile. Through its attempt to simulate known forms it is illusionistic of a kind of haptic experience, and is therefore an example of what modernism aims to defeat. Not only does the essay rehearse Greenberg's and Fried's arguments, but it also critiques the exhibition for including the work of Noland and Olitski, artists that, given Fried's account recently offered in *Three American Painters*, clearly, according to Krauss, did not belong in an exhibition of op artists (though, of course, the represented artists might have had something else to say).36

In the fall of 1965 Fried began writing for *Artforum*, which was then still based in California.37 He had met its editor, Philip Leider, through Frank Stella and Barbara Rose. Leider would for a number of years maintain that Fried was the most important contributor to the magazine. It was again through the recommendation of Fried that Krauss was taken on in 1966.38 Fried and Krauss would be a significant part of *Artforum*'s shift to New York, which it increasingly gave greater representation to until finally the magazine moved its offices there in 1967. *Artforum*, famously, would be the venue for many of the debates that were at the center of the major shifts in the 1960s art scene. Although Fried would be given preference by Leider for a long time, the magazine would also publish important counter-positions to what was perceived as the dominance

of Greenbergian-style formalism, including a number of significant articles by Robert Smithson, Max Kozloff, Dan Flavin, Mel Bochner, and Lawrence Alloway.\(^{39}\)

Krauss’s first article for *Artforum*, “Darby Bannard’s New Work,” discusses that artist’s paintings in terms that were familiar from Fried’s discussion of shape in the Fogg catalogue.\(^{40}\) Her second article, also drawing on earlier arguments of Fried’s, deserves particular attention, however. “Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd” (May 1966), was originally written as a review of work on view at the Leo Castelli in February 1966, but Leider had Krauss extend it into a full-length article.\(^{41}\)

Krauss has recently claimed that she went to view Judd’s work without really knowing “anything much about minimalism, though it was clear to me that there were certain relations in Judd’s work to Stella as well as to Kelly.”\(^{42}\) This imputation of a lack of knowledge may of course be seen as a retrospective effort to disavow an earlier position and differentiate it from the critical understanding of minimalism she was going to go on to articulate. However, Krauss’s essay does rather faithfully outline Judd’s own position (though it cites a review Judd had written of a “fellow-sculptor’s” work and not the now-famous “Specific Objects,” which had been published in the 1965 *Arts Yearbook*). What gives her understanding of Judd, at least, a dimension not present in Judd’s own writings is the interpretation offered by Barbara Rose’s “ABC Art”

---


The associative meanings Rose supplies for what she calls object-art (the mysticism of Malevich, for example) are basically Rose’s own. And though Krauss disputes these, she is ultimately concerned to repudiate the lack of meaning in Judd’s work alleged by Judd himself.

The illusionism that Judd aimed to do away with – and along with it the allusion “to experiences or ideas beyond the work’s brute physical presence” – is read by Krauss in Greenbergian terms. In Greenberg’s criticism, illusionism, or the simulation of a space imagined to receive real bodies, was rejected in favor of opticality, which Greenberg also called a kind of illusion (of weightlessness and other kinds of purely optical experiences). For Judd, of course, both kinds of illusion were rejected (which earned him the disfavor of Greenberg). But Krauss attempts to see Judd’s objects as productive of the kind of illusioned “modality” that Greenberg had written about in “The New Sculpture.” What is most notable about this reading, however, is that it attends to just one work of Judd’s: an untitled aluminum piece of 1965 consisting of one long unpainted aluminum bar atop a series of evenly spaced violet-painted bars that were attached to the wall [fig. 18]. Two particular illusions are evoked by this piece according to Krauss. The first is that, when viewed frontally, the series of painted bars appear to be suspended from the long unpainted one, recalling an a priori knowledge of architectural construction. The second is that the piece cannot easily be taken in as a whole and demands a kind of assumed knowledge that one intuitively has about objects viewed in perspective. Thus, the illusions that Krauss evokes are ones that are understood by way of

43 Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” Arts Yearbook 8 (1965), 74-82; Barbara Rose, “ABC Art,” Art in America 53 no.5 (October/November 1965), 57-69.
45 Greenberg, Art and Culture, 144.
conventionalized knowledge – a notion that she backs up with references to Merleau-Ponty.\textsuperscript{46}

The kinds of illusions Krauss recalls for this one piece, however, are a modification of the "modalities" Greenberg had referred to. The sense that the Judd object cannot be grasped in its entirety implies that it is to be experienced visually (or optically) in the first instance. However, the imagined space required to comprehend it does not meet Greenberg’s requirement that it not be illusionistic of the (tactile) space of lived experience. Krauss returns, here, to the arguments Fried had put forth about Kenneth Noland in the Fogg catalogue. There he had argued that Noland’s chevrons acknowledged the shape of the support by making the "seam" between two of the "v"s meet up with the upper corners of the canvas. This non-compositional method of Noland’s resulted from the attempt to isolate what Fried called the "deductive structure" of the painting.\textsuperscript{47} In the case of sculpture, Krauss shows that it was David Smith who, in his \textit{Cubi} pieces, “embraced the modality of illusionism within pictorial space from painting.”\textsuperscript{48} The compositional method by which Smith framed space, through the balancing of parts along two dimensions, “must have appeared to have clouded over the experience of the object with a kind of artiness which to Judd’s eyes, at least, was

\textsuperscript{46} Krauss, "Allusion and Illusion," 25.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Three American Painters}, 239-43. Krauss also cites Fried’s "Anthony Caro and Kenneth Noland: Some Notes on Not Composing," \textit{Lugano Review} 3-4 (1965), 198-206, but does not mention his sculptural analogy for the method of arriving at a deductive structure. “Instead of Noland’s positive, formal alternative to not composing, Caro is armed with nothing more than the negative injunction ‘Don’t compose’ (along with the related injunctions ‘Don’t step back,’ ‘Don’t let the grip of sculpture get diffused,’ ‘Don’t worry about its balance,’ etc.) and his own awareness of what he is doing.” “Anthony Caro and Kenneth Noland,” 204. Krauss seems to accept this argument for sculptural non-composition, but Fried would soon abandon the notion of deductive structure and its equation with such “negative injunctions.”
irrelevant." What Krauss claims for Smith, through the reference to Greenberg, is
superceded by Judd, whose departure from traditional compositional methods works, in a
manner similar to Noland, to arrive at “meaningful” illusiveness.

The claim that Judd’s three dimensional objects operate as non-compositionally as
Noland’s paintings makes a move in the analysis of Noland that Fried had not made in
the *Three American Painters* catalogue. In the essay to that catalogue Fried had broken
off his discussion of Noland by merely mentioning that the then-most-recent diamond-
shaped canvases ended Noland’s investigation of deductive structure. Fried’s discussion
of Noland had excluded consideration of his use of color, which, it seemed, held even
more significance with the diamond-shaped canvases. Krauss notes the claims made by
Fried about the chevron paintings, and suggests that the now (Krauss was writing nearly
two years later) most recent, elongated rectangular Noland canvases in fact break from
the logic of the deductive structure, for the way they enforce an experience of color
without bounds, precisely because the long canvases are so difficult to take in at once
(and are therefore closer in spirit to Barnett Newman) [fig. 19]. In this way, Krauss at
once validates Fried’s argument (by maintaining that all of Noland’s painting, like Judd’s
objects, are non-compositional) and marks off a difference from it (a difference between
the space of the painting that follows a deductive structure and the space of embodied
conventions) that is at the same time, for her, negligible (for precisely the same reason:
all of Noland’s paintings are non-compositional and serve the same optical ends, the
same modalities).

---

49 Ibid., 26.
However, recall that, for Fried, Caro was also exemplary of non-compositional method, but, as he argued in the Whitechapel catalogue, the illusioned modalities of, say, weightlessness merely served the "gesture" which evoked (whether in a differential manner or not, we are not yet sure) embodied conventions. Krauss's reading of Judd's piece employed similar embodied conventions as the sort of a priori knowledge for grasping it. However, here, she finds an analogy in paintings by Noland that seem to repudiate the process of "deductive structure," but she does not find an analogy in what Fried describes as the "gesture" in Caro. In other words, she makes no distinction between the modalities Greenberg had written about in "The New Sculpture" and the optical experience Fried had ascribed to the gestural aspect of Caro's sculpture. As I mentioned, it is not at all clear that Fried thought the difference significant at the time of writing the early Caro essay, but within a few months of the appearance of Krauss's essay, Fried would elaborate in a significant way on that difference.

To summarize the crucial differences that emerged in this 1966 essay, then, Krauss thought the embodied conventions that Judd's work evoked were themselves part of an illusioned modality that was valued within the Greenbergian system; whereas Fried called upon embodied conventions as a means of understanding the "gestural" significance of the work of Caro. In retrospect this difference appears to hold all the weight it would come to bear following Fried's polarization of "art and objecthood," with the only exception being that here Krauss claims Merleau-Ponty for minimalism on

52 It is suggested by Fried that the not discussed color in the work of Noland, who had not yet produced the 20 foot-long canvases, functions in a way similar to the gesture in Caro, the gesture being the most difficult to discuss: "Anthony Caro and Kenneth Noland." Eventually, Krauss would take issue with Fried's avoidance of color in the chevron paintings.
behalf of Greenbergian opticality.\textsuperscript{53} At the time it might not have seemed such a large divide. It is ironic, of course, that Krauss cites Fried to make a case for Judd (his objects, if not his arguments) when only a year later Fried would produce his polemic against Judd and other “literalists.” However, while it is true that Fried had referred to Judd’s work in two earlier reviews (in the February 1963 and February 1964 issues of *Art International*) and had some complaints about it, his opinion in these was by no means as decisive as it would be in “Art and Objecthood.” (Fried finds fault with the fact that Judd’s criticism appears to provide no rationale for discriminating between the objects he admires and those he does not. Likewise, in Judd’s objects a preference for rectilinearity is evident, but not an “internal rationale” for such a choice. Still, Fried finds the Judd show at the Green Gallery to be “one of the best on show in New York this month.”)\textsuperscript{54}

For Krauss’s part, the apparent ease with which she claims Judd for Greenbergian opticality is made possible in large part because of the particular example of Judd she chooses to discuss. In her three-page article, there are reproductions of four Judd pieces (along with two Smith Cubi sculptures and one diamond-shaped canvas by Noland) [fig. 20]. The largest reproduction, on the first page of the article, is of an untitled Judd object of 1965 – a large metal box, slightly longer that its width and slightly wider than its height, with its top plane recessed a few inches below the top edge of the four “walls.” This piece, in some senses more “minimal” than the multi-part bar object she discusses,

\textsuperscript{53} This exception is underplayed by the perceived correctness of one reading of Merleau-Ponty over another, such as was apparently self-evident to Benjamin Buchloh in 1987 when he quite flatly asked Fried: “How can you claim Merleau-Ponty for Caro when Merleau-Ponty is the central philosopher of minimalist art?” *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Hal Foster, 72. The assumptions of this question are, of course, being interrogated in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{54} The paraphrase and quotations in this parenthesis are from the February 1964 review of his first one-person exhibition. Fried, “New York Letter,” *Art International* 8 (February 1964), 25-6. The reference to Judd a year earlier was very brief, mentioning only that the strength of the pieces on show (again at the Green Gallery, this time with George Segal) “make one want to see more of his work.” Fried, “New York Letter,” *Art International* 7 (February 1963), 60-4.
receives no mention by Krauss. In fact it only qualifies for one of the two illusions she attributes to the other object. That is, it can hardly be said to dissimulate preconceived architectural knowledge — indeed, the box’s construction is downplayed, but it in no way defies received ideas of what makes a box. At the same time, it is true, the object does play with scale in a way that may evoke the kind of intuitive knowledge about objects perceived in perspective. But because it is, for the most part, a regular geometric form, such knowledge (of what, say, the non-visible sides of box are like), though describable in Merleau-Pontyan terms, would eventually be even more amenable to gestalt theory, of the sort Robert Morris referred to.55

In short, what will happen is Krauss will come to see the congruence or non-differential relationship between the embodied conventions that she described by way of Merleau-Ponty and the Greenbergian modalities of opticality in entirely different terms. There will still be a congruent or non-differential relationship between those embodied conventions and the “modalities” of the work she praises. But now that work will be such that defeats opticality, or, more precisely, defeats the viewer-object copresence of Greenbergian and, especially, Friedian opticality. This new target, so to speak, will come

55 Morris’s first part of Notes on Sculpture had recently appeared in Artforum in February 1966: “Notes on Sculpture,” Artforum 4 no.6 (February 1966), 42-4. Krauss would eventually draw on this and the rest of Morris’s “Notes.” Though neither Krauss nor Fried ever cite it, Merleau-Ponty’s first book, The Structure of Behavior [1942], trans. Alden L. Fisher (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), was a critique and extension of gestalt theory. Merleau-Ponty critiques the gestaltists’ attempts to locate the synthesizing process of cognition in a perceptual apparatus – a structure in nature comprised of sensory experience and a learned response to it (through the reflex arc), which emerges as a whole or form (gestalt). Against this notion that the perceptual structure is located in nature or the natural world, Merleau-Ponty argues that the structure exists in the subject (or, the world of the subject). This position would inform his later phenomenological work, where both language and perception converge in a subject that is both instituted and instituting. When Krauss eventually takes up gestalt, as I will argue in the next chapter, it will be at the expense of Merleau-Ponty’s critique. Although, she will oppose readings of gestalt theory that take it to affirm a cognitive or Cartesian construction of the subject, she will, in this opposition, turn to a version of gestalt that has perceptual embodiedness linked up with a material world in the gestalt theorists’ notion of the field. This version of gestalt theory will effectively bring Krauss closer to the theory that Merleau-Ponty had set out to critique in The Structure of Behavior.
about as Fried makes his well-known case for presentness in “Art and Objecthood.” But at the same time, Fried’s claims for presentness will emerge as he defines the previously ambiguous relationship between gesture and Merleau-Pontyan embodied conventions. It will come to be seen in differential terms (to the precise degree that Krauss will use non-differential terms), and these, notoriously, will be those of presentness and the literal.

What follows in the rest of this section is a brief summary of how all this comes about.

A few months after Krauss’s essay on Judd, Fried’s next essay appeared in *Artforum:* “Shape as Form: Frank Stella’s New Paintings” – the new paintings referred to are the shaped, irregular polygon canvases that Stella began producing in 1965 [fig. 21].

A few preambular remarks about the essay are in order. First, the essay contains the only instance in Fried’s criticism of a reference to Krauss, in particular to Krauss’ observations about the elongated Noland canvases in the Judd essay. It is a reference almost buried away in a long argument about the painter’s acknowledgement, and the viewer’s perception, of the shape of the painting’s support. Fried agrees with Krauss’s observation, but draws very different conclusions. In a way, the entire essay may be seen as a response to Krauss’s article on Judd. But, secondly, it is also in this essay that Fried makes his first overt departure from Greenberg. This is how Fried has recently positioned the article (he does not acknowledge it as a response to Krauss – instead he claims that he came to see the limitations in his own arguments about deductive structure as pointing to the

---

It is, further, a more extensive account of the supporting logic of the argument that would appear in "Art and Objecthood." And to the extent that Fried, in the latter essay, would develop a polemic against Judd and others whom he would gather under the heading "literalists" based on a further point of contention with Greenberg (spelled out in the famous footnote about Greenberg's hypothetical tacked up piece of canvas) – in other words, Fried's claim that the minimalists took Greenberg's arguments to their seemingly logical conclusion – the present essay on Stella may demonstrate that it was Krauss's Greenbergian reading of minimalism (or, at least, of Judd) that spurred Fried on in his own departure from Greenberg.

The argument that Fried had made in the Fogg catalogue about Noland's paintings was that their non-composed character resulted from an acknowledgement of the shape of their support. The structure of the paintings was deduced, and this left Noland with greater freedom to exploit his gifts as a colorist. As I mentioned, Fried considered Noland's use of color to be the most important aspect of his work, but it remained, like Caro's "gesture," unanalyzed as such. Undoubtedly, Fried considered the colored bands in Noland's paintings to create the kind of optical experience he admired in the work of Pollock, Louis, Stella and Olitski – in particular, they would have effected a space "addressed to eyesight alone," according to the Greenberg-inspired phrase he was wont to use.

In "Shape as Form," Fried now finds his earlier argument unsatisfactory. What Noland had gained by acknowledging the shape of the canvas – by aligning his

---

57 Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 11. Though, as I have shown, even beginning with the Caro Whitechapel catalogue of 1963, Fried had had certain unresolved differences with Greenberg. Fried himself has noted some of these in his introduction to *Art and Objecthood*, 29-30.
concentric circles with the center of the canvas, and by suspending his chevrons from the upper corners — was the freedom to deal with color. But this attempt to minimize the role of the painting’s support (to have it operate merely deductively) in effect only acknowledged the flatness of the literal support, and not the flatness of the picture surface (a distinction, Fried argues, that was the achievement of Jules Olitski’s sprayed canvases, and Morris Louis’s stained canvases to demonstrate).^58

Thus, Fried now develops what will become an important distinction. Shape must be understood both in terms of “literal shape,” the actual shape or silhouette of the support, and “depicted shape,” the outlines of elements in a given picture. But more importantly, by “shape as such,” Fried also means “shape as a medium within which choices about both literal and depicted shapes are made, and made mutually responsive.”^59

The problem Noland’s paintings present, as it now seems to Fried, is that they make no effort to make literal and depicted shape mutually responsive. The acknowledgement of the literal shape is given no depicted response that “compels conviction” (another favorite turn of phrase that makes its first appearance in this essay) of the painting’s “presence as visual illusion.”^60 Instead it merely points to the literal character of the support, of the painted surface as object. It need not be demonstrated here how Fried finds Stella’s irregular polygons to successfully respond to this challenge (though they rather obviously attempt to confound literal and depicted shape) — let it

---

^58 Fried, “Shape as Form,” 81-4; In distancing himself from his earlier reading of Noland, Fried cites approvingly Greenberg’s review, “Noland and Louis,” Art International (May 1960), reprinted in The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol. 4, 94-100, which also informed Fried’s reading of Louis’s stained canvases. See Fried, “The Achievement of Morris Louis,” Artforum 5 no.6 (February 1967), 34-40, which is also the text for the catalogue introduction to the exhibition, Morris Louis 1912-1962, which opened at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in February 1967.

^59 Fried, “Shape as Form,” 77.

^60 Ibid., 82.
suffice to say, however, that literalness and objecthood are clearly given the valence here that will be the focus in "Art and Objecthood."

As much as “Shape as Form” is a response to Greenberg’s delimiting characteristics of painting, it is also a response to observations Krauss had made in her essay on Judd. Krauss had argued that Noland’s long horizontal rectangular canvases were difficult to grasp as a whole and thereby diminished their presence as a shape [fig. 22]. Fried agrees with this observation, but sees in this a sign of Noland’s own recognition of the dilemma that Fried outlines. The solution Noland offers, however, of reducing any acknowledgement of the picture’s edge, is a weak one according to Fried. For, without this acknowledgement, without a mutually responsive interplay between the picture’s edge and depicted shape (in this case, horizontal bands that run the length of the canvas), one is led, by default of the painting’s size, to approach the picture, as Krauss says, obliquely, perspectivally. As a result, one is left with merely the literal objecthood of the picture’s support.61 (Whereas, Krauss, as I showed, saw this oblique approach as conditioned by the embodied conventions that she aligned with the modalities of Greebergian opticality, or, at least, those he had set out in “The New Sculpture.”)

At this point the supporting logic for “Art and Objecthood” is firmly established. (In the seven months that intervened before its appearance Fried published two other essays that operated within the same framework.)62 Much has been said about the

---

61 Ibid., 83.
62 Fried, “Olitski and Shape,” *Artforum* 5 no.5 (January 1967), 20-1; “The Achievement of Morris Louis.” In this period Fried also published two other short essays: “New Work by Anthony Caro,” *Artforum* 5 no.6 (February 1967), 46-7, reprinted in *Art and Objecthood*, 173-5; “Ronald Davis: Surface and Illusion,” *Artforum* 5 no.8 (April 1967), 37-41, reprinted in *Art and Objecthood*, 176-9. The latter essay marks a moment between the “Shape as Form” essay and the polemic that would appear in “Art and Objecthood.” As Fried notes in the reprint of the Davis article, he had not arrived at the argument of the “Art and Objecthood” and includes terms there that would not sit well in the later essay. Davis’s work is worth
Manichean tone of that essay, and I will hold off on discussing this commentary until chapter seven. What should be noted at this point, however, is that the sweeping dichotomy held up in “Art in Objecthood,” though present in “Shape as Form,” is given a more nuanced account in the earlier essay. I refer to the way Fried insists on a “mutually responsive” relation between literal and depicted shape, and how through this one’s conviction of the painting’s presence as visual illusion is compelled.

What in the polemical version of the argument is an intractable difference between presentness and the literal, is in the earlier essay a differential relation whose comprehension requires precisely that both terms of that relation be held in view, held almost as a perceptual difference that on point of dissipation seems to expand into a conceptual difference that is wholly convincing as an experience. As Fried argued, a painting that compels conviction of the presence of illusion does so despite, and because of, the acknowledgement of its literal support. Speaking of some of Olitski’s sprayed paintings that contain loosely adumbrated bands that echo the paintings’ frame [fig. 23], a successful example of such an acknowledgement, Fried writes,

To be sure, the internal “frame” — more accurately, the boundary between the “framing” bands and the rest of the painting — relates structurally to the shape of the support. But it also establishes an extraordinary, indeed unprecedented, continuity across that boundary…. the fact that the long vertical component of the internal “frame” — or the vertical boundary between that “frame” and the rest of the picture — is sometimes inflected away from the perpendicular further reduces the perspicuousness of literal shape’s primacy at the same time that it acknowledges, or is made possible by, that primacy. That is, in these paintings the primacy of literal shape is such that even a slight departure from verticality within the painting makes itself felt with an intensity of expression that I for one find astonishing. But it is precisely the strength of that primacy that enables the paintings in question to both tolerate the departure and to move us by it. The very acuteness, even poignancy, of our experience of what is, after all, an extremely slight inflection acknowledges the strength, and more than that, the depth, of the

Further consideration in this regard, as both Fried and Krauss pay particular attention to it at moments when their own criticism underwent change. For Krauss’s treatment of Davis’s work, see the next chapter.
norm from which that inflection departed – in this case, the rectangular shape of
the support. But the fact remains that what we actually feel, and are inexplicably
moved by, is the inflection from the norm rather than the norm itself.63

I have drawn the reader’s attention to what is ultimately the character of the viewer’s
experience – that it cannot be explained – in order to point to the fact that it is the
difference between the literal and the depicted as such that counts. Yet, something
seemingly so straightforward, the fact of difference itself, requires a fair bit of finesse to
achieve. This finesse, which Fried, surely with some sense of accomplishment, is at pains
to describe here and in much of his subsequent criticism, is superceded in “Art and
Objecthood” by the bluster with which he attacks literalism. And in light of that famous
attack, it is almost forgotten (did Fried allow himself to forget this?) that at bottom
Fried’s aesthetics (and politics) is founded on nothing short of the fact of difference itself
experienced as an event.

Excursus

Intervening between the thematics set out in the opening two chapters and these
lines is a by-now lengthy summary of developments (to which I shall return shortly), so I
offer here this way station as a means of recollecting said thematics and expanding on
their significance in what is to come.

It will be recalled that Colin Rowe, along with Robert Slutzky, had taken up
Kepes’ definition of transparency as the interpenetration of figures without the optical
destruction of either. Interpreted against Fried, it may be said that what he holds up in
esteem is the presence of sameness as such – that is, what is ultimately described by way

63 Fried, “Shape as Form,” 86 (the first italics are Fried’s, the second mine).
of gestalt theory as figure-ground reversals, reversals that show the perceived difference of figures to collapse into a sameness that, like Fried’s difference, is grasped ultimately as a conceptual certainty. The permutations of perceptions of the façade of San Lorenzo, for example, each return to the fact of the sameness of the façade itself.

In pointing to a relation between these aesthetic projects that reduce to, separately, difference in itself and sameness in itself, a Deleuzian theme is recalled—namely that the event of difference and the event of repetition are linked, founded together, in a single ontology (or, as Badiou puts it, an ontology of the One). Insofar as such an ontology may be considered as the fount of historical dispersion, my line of inquiry is to ask what faces of history return to it. In this sense I ask whether we may confront the relation between the fact of difference in itself and that of sameness in itself in the cognitive and embodied terms common to the theories of institutionality of Veblen and Merleau-Ponty.

We may note, in this regard, that, although Fried and Rowe are linked in the primacy each accorded to the phenomenal over the literal, only Fried has made of phenomenal experience an event of immediacy. The perceptual awareness of sameness according to the gestaltist program of Rowe is one that is emphatically not immediate, but rather is acquired through a prolonged engagement with the phenomenon. This difference is found again in the images I have taken as emblems of Fried and Rowe—namely, it is a difference between experience and model. These emblems, I was claiming, are suggestive of Veblen’s parsing of institutionality into matters of fact and matters of

---

imputation, into practical knowledge and speculative knowledge – separate categories 
that fold in on one another in the event of institutionality.

For Fried, the distinction between presentness (the phenomenal) and the literal, 
despite the apparent primacy accorded to presentness, is ultimately a distinction aimed to 
recover the literal, the matter of fact, that which is practical in experience. In truth, what 
Fried disparages of the literalists is their ideology of the literal, their speculative account 
of the scheme of things, which places them on the side of history. For Fried, history was 
to be fought for (despite Krauss’s eventual claims about Fried to the contrary). 
Presentness was the sign that one was not being fooled by the literal, that one had 
grasped it as it gave up any ties to embodied conventions, to received schemes of 
knowledge. It was experiential and experimental in a way that linked it with a tradition of 
pragmatic thought.

(In offering the New England Mind and the Republic of Texas as figures to orient 
this study, I aimed to recall not only America as sign of both experience and model, but 
also a tradition of American thought rooted in New England. Thus, of course, Fried’s 
invocation of Jonathan Edwards through Perry Miller. But it may also be recognized that 
the philosophical dialogue Fried shared with Stanley Cavell since 1963 informed much of 
Fried’s criticism. Cavell’s writings, first collected in Must We Mean What We Say?, 
were, in turn, informed by his advisor, the Oxford scholar, J.L. Austin – in particular, his 
How to Do Things With Words, an exposition, it might be said, of practical knowledge if 
there ever was one.65 What Fried and Cavell have held in common is a critical project in 
which meaning, as in intending to mean, is a kind of practical action with aesthetic and

---

65 Stanley Cavell, Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays (New York: Scribner’s, 1969); J.L. 
reproduces the William James Lectures he delivered at Harvard University in 1955.
political consequences. Cavell, it may be noted by the bye, has since claimed Emerson and Thoreau as forebears of this project, confirming, perhaps, that its source is the experiential America of a certain line of New England thinkers.)

Earlier I intimated that Rowe’s work on transparency ought to be seen in relation to his essay on Lockhart, Texas, and in this way to be seen to recall the problematics of repetition and sameness under the sign of America as model. It was to suggest a relation to speculative knowledge in the Veblenian sense. For it is in the work on transparency that a key to Rowe’s understanding of history may be found. If the Rowe of the transparency essays called upon a concept of the Zeitgeist, it was in the sense that, in gestaltist terms, the apparent universality of the gestaltist field was in fact historically endowed with field-properties by the figures of each epoch. In short, this gave a certain historical logic to the Modern Movement. It was an effort to recover an historical logic that necessarily gave up any ties to practical pursuits. Indeed, the literal, technological proponents of practical building were merely being fooled into thinking that they had the Modern Movement on their side.

The break between Eisenman and Rowe centered, in many ways, on the use of the Zeitgeist concept. As Rowe became suspicious of its use by the avant-garde’s self-proclaimed latter-day heirs, Eisenman continued to use it, claiming modernism’s conceptual deep structure to be guided by it. As Rowe came to see things, one could not make political claims based on the necessity of the Zeitgeist. This did not mean that Rowe gave up on his historical project to understand history in terms of an apparent inner logic to the scheme of things. On the contrary, to claim to be a handmaiden of history, as Eisenman did and as the literal builders before him did, is to be fooled by the apparent
logic of history into believing that one could act on its side and guide it. Under the influence of Karl Popper, Rowe came to believe that the practical results of this kind of thinking always resulted, contrary to efforts to guide it otherwise, in the disasters of authoritarianism. The truth of speculative knowledge, according to Rowe, is that, in stylistic terms, it frees one to build as one pleases – for the scheme of things in a pluralist society is indifferent to style. But to build in any terms other than style is to claim for one's practical efforts an ability to intervene in the way things always turn out, a claim that is always proved false.

Is it not, one may ask, that, together, Rowe and Fried provide perfect images of American politics – on the one hand, a commitment to freedom that, in “the bigger scheme of things,” is a brute insistence on the status quo, and on the other a conviction that the world, if only one is reminded of its givenness to be fashioned, may be fashioned “from the ground up”? To suppose so, and certainly it has been supposed, is to find in America an institution – or, perhaps better, to find in those politics a construal of the scheme of things which may be figuralized as institution. This is what happens in the subsequent history of Oppositions and October and the “oppositional” politics they espoused. And to provide the basis of this history is what I aim for here. It will be founded on the critiques of Fried's and Rowe's respective claims to presentness and phenomenal transparency.

Again, this is NOT to say that the critiques of presentness and phenomenal transparency offered by Krauss and Eisenman are acceptable as the truth of institutionality as though Fried and Rowe had worked to merely entrench the institutions of art and architecture. On the contrary the critiques made by Krauss and Eisenman will

---

themselves be founded on an entrenchment – not of those institutions but of a regime of
efficiency founded on the figural deployment of “institution.”

Although Krauss’s critique of Friedian presentness will come to stand as the truth
of that historical moment, as the unveiling of the ideology of presence (and no doubt this
will later be bolstered by others who see it, through a received post-structuralism,
confirmed by the Derridean critique of presence), this critique (Krauss’s as well as
Eisenman’s) is, in the immediate, founded on a return to a concept of field, which, I shall
suggest (in chapter six), carries with it all the falsifying powers that Veblen aimed to
dispel. It will serve as the basis for the common project of Krauss and Eisenman, until its
contradictions can no longer hold it together. Upon the dissolution of Krauss and
Eisenman’s dialogue, the critique of modernism will be understood as the critique of
institutions, which, again, is founded on the making of institution a figure.

But if the critiques of presentness and phenomenal transparency are not the
truthful unveiling of the event of institutionality, how is their figural use of institution
nonetheless tied to such an event? If one were to read institutional critique
retrospectively, one might be tempted to find the articulation of difference as such and
sameness as such as, themselves, the events of institutionality. The subsequent histories of
Oppositions and October do, indeed, take these moments, when read as presentness and
phenomenal transparency, as, separately, signs of an institutional entrenchment. But the
events of difference as such and sameness as such, as articulated by Fried and Rowe, are
tied to their respective attempts to recover the practical and the speculative. Veblen
showed the event of institutionality to be the convergence of the practical and the
speculative. Or, more precisely, he showed that that event is to be found in the
simultaneous making available of new matters of fact (of practical know-how) out of once accepted matters of imputation (that part of the world that operates according to an external causal efficiency) and consigning of previously held matters of fact, through use and wont, to “actual institutions” that bestow upon them an explanation of how such things happen in themselves (according to their own causal efficiency). This cumbersome paraphrase of Veblen (himself nearly as cumbersome) belies the simplicity at its core. On both sides of the event is the cognitive separation of matters of fact and matters of imputation, NOT through the stark efficiency of human agents BUT through a human efficiency that cannot be reduced to either brute positivism or efflorescent creativity precisely because of the gaps that accrue through the externalization of efficiency into things themselves. The event of institutionality, then, is a matter of economy – a matter of the organization of things into those that can be explained according to their own efficiency, into “the” economy, that is, and those that can be received by the efficiency of persons.

Merleau-Ponty, in his reading of Max Weber, gives us an account of, one might say, the first event of institutionality that brought together the University and America by just such an organization. When Weber studies the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, he takes not Protestantism and capitalism in general as his objects. Rather, his study focuses on a mature Calvinism (having not that much to do with the precepts laid down by Calvin) and an immature capitalism (having little to do with speculative and venture capitalism). The study is not a claim to have found an ideology in one that masks the interests of the other. Instead, Merleau-Ponty argues that Weber shows that a Calvinist ethic of efficiency developed on its own and thereby set down the possibility of

---

67 Merleau-Ponty, Adventures of the Dialectic, 9-29
its use by capitalist interests. "One would miss the essential point if one thought Franklin attempts to disguise interest here as virtue. On the contrary, he goes so far as to say that God uses interest to bring him back to faith. If he writes time is money, it is first of all because he has learned from the Puritan tradition that time is spiritually precious and that we are in the world to bear witness to the glory of God at each moment. The useful could become a value only after having been sanctified." From this a religious efficacy and an economic efficacy come to co-exist in a manner that is interwoven - one may lead to the other and back again.

What Merleau-Ponty shows through Weber is that a model of efficiency (the separation of things into those that may by acted on practically and those that are governed by an external efficiency) is neither received as the dictates of an "economy" nor as the ideology that masks the interests of that economy. It must instead be seen as a point of connection between historical elements (fields of knowledge such as religion and economy) acting together. Moreover, it cannot be said to have established once and for all the model of efficiency for capitalism. Thus, if institutionality is to be understood as an event, it is in the way a new model of efficiency is effected across seemingly discrete fields of knowledge. In this way economy will be, one might say, a product of the criticism of Krauss and Eisenman, and should not be considered as isolated from that of "economics." But insofar as the event in question is suggested by the correspondences between Fried and Rowe, what one will also have to read for is the way the aporia of that event, described by Veblen through a logical circuit, is approached in the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman, who read the efforts of Fried and Rowe together.

68 Ibid., 13.
It now remains to show how Rosalind Krauss developed a criticism that embraced the minimalism that Fried attacked, and took issue with the Greenbergian precepts that were integral to her intellectual formation.

In May 1968, nearly one year after *Artforum*’s special issue on “American Sculpture” (which included Fried’s “Art and Objecthood,” as well as the third part of Robert Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture,” Robert Smithson’s “Towards the Development of an Air Terminal Site,” and Sol LeWitt’s “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art” among other contributions), Krauss published “On Frontality,” an essay that serves as a kind of position paper argued through painting as much as (though perhaps not as forcefully as) Fried’s had been through sculpture [fig. 24]. It is a curious essay that clearly is a riposte to Fried (the two had fallen out by this point) but that at the same time draws heavily on observations he had made in essays on Noland, Stella, and Olitski. It is almost as if Krauss attempts to outdo Fried by taking in all his observations and showing that he has been led to the wrong conclusions, that Greenberg had, in principle, had it right all along and that Fried’s departure from Greenberg had been a mistake.

At issue is the interpretation of Greenberg’s opticality, which by now had been an issue that had gone back and forth between Fried and Krauss. Fried had read it in terms of a space addressed to eyesight alone that permitted no illusions of any kind of bodily

---

70 Here, for what it is worth, is the retrospective gloss recently offered by Krauss: “Sometimes I was writing for Phil [Leider]. Sometimes, I saw myself in an argument with a few people. Or, in the case of “On Frontality,” I was in a sense performing for Sydney Freedberg. Although I was performing for Clem [Greenberg] as well, I suppose, sort of showing how this system could fire off even more jet engines, do even better.... In “On Frontality” it was a big struggle to say something about Olitski’s work that wouldn’t just be a repetition of what Michael [Fried] had said about it. And I suppose I was up in the air, in a place where the atmosphere was exceedingly thin, although I didn’t realize how thin it was when I wrote it.” Newman, 222-223.
inhabitable space (Fried’s taking issue with Greenberg had to do with, in effect, the ways in which the rest of Greenberg’s program compromised this principle). Krauss had seen embodied conventions as the modality of illusion of that opticality. Krauss aims to win the point back by returning to the moment that, as she sees it, Fried departed from Greenberg – a moment that is fully apparent in the Stella essay.

In the Fogg catalogue, Fried had read in Pollock the opening up of that particular space addressed exclusively to eyesight. “In Greenberg’s words,” Krauss writes, recalling a point that had been drawn on in the more recent Fried essays, “Pollock reached for ‘a kind of corporeality by which he could wrest the picture surface, as surface, away from itself,’ instead of permitting that surface to run like water between his fingers, dissolving into an infinitely permeable zone of color.” Fried’s distinction, in “Shape as Form,” between literal shape and depicted shape was, as we saw, used to describe what it means to wrest the picture surface away from itself. But what Krauss notes is that those paintings that Fried saw as first acknowledging the shape of the canvas, Stella’s early stripe paintings on “notched” canvases, made that acknowledgement by aligning the perspectival aspects of what Fried had called the literal shape and the depicted shape. “With this alignment the picture’s surface was fixed in the vise of frontality.” And from this observation, Krauss makes an argument that cleverly points out an apparent paradox in Fried’s that flies in the face of his judgment of literalism:

Now, if flatness is an aspect of painting that demands that one identify the picture in terms of a sculptural object [an argument, it will be recalled, that Fried had made – i.e., flatness had to be suspended by the illusionism that nonetheless alluded to it through shape], frontality is even more importunate in this respect. The very word “frontal” implies a three-dimensional object: The only things we ever characterize as frontal are things which, like buildings or sculptures,

71 “On Frontality,” 42; the quotation of Greenberg is from the “Art Chronicle” originally appearing in Partisan Review in 1952 and reprinted in Art and Culture, 152.
necessarily have backs and sides. Frontal is used to distinguish between one of their several possible aspects.\textsuperscript{72}

Thus, all that Fried had written about the acknowledgement of literal shape had assumed a frontal point of view, which in turn assumed, or relied on, the three-dimensional objecthood of the painting – not in the "mutually responsive" way Fried had called for (or so Krauss implies), but in the very modality of the illusion that Fried had seen in the best of painting that addressed itself to eyesight alone.

The rest of Krauss's article is devoted to assessing painting in terms of the distinction between frontal and oblique points of view, which, like Fried's art and objecthood, are articulated by paintings (or sculptures) themselves. Indeed, Krauss's distinction is easily as sweeping a dichotomy as Fried's. But, again, as in her earlier defense of obliqueness, the distinction is used to reject advances made by anti-illusionist art, thus preserving Fried's judgment against literalism.

However, the nature of the illusionism, still seen in Greenbergian terms as the embodied modality of obliqueness, is against literalism in way that is decidedly different from Fried's position. As if to say Fried's turn away from Greenberg led him to the false path of frontality, Krauss ends her essay by returning again to Greenberg.

If Pollock's painting could (to use Michael Fried's term) address itself to eyesight alone, it was because line created a kind of placelessness in which sculptural objects were unimaginable. But Pollock's loss of place depended on the extinction of all differences within the optical field; and it gave rise to the kind of all-over composition, in which small units are repeated equally over the face of a canvas, that has led painters who have imitated it into a kind of pat academicism.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{72} "On Frontality," 43.
\textsuperscript{73} "On Frontality" p.46.
This last point, Krauss notes, was made by Greenberg in his “Post Painterly Abstraction” and his “Recentness of Sculpture.” The extinction of differences within the optical field is, Krauss implies, the result of the emphasis on frontality, and this has led to the deleterious effects espied by Greenberg. Moreover, Krauss makes another implicit suggestion through her reference to “The Recentness of Sculpture.” There, Greenberg had commented on his experience of “presence” in an early (1963) exhibition of Anne Truitt’s work, an “extraneous” effect he then recognized but had since come to see as something that later “Minimal works of art” (“Judd’s, Morris’s, Andre’s, Steiner’s, some but not all of Smithson’s, some but not all of LeWitt’s”) could “hide behind.” In light of Greenberg’s association of it with minimalism, “presence” does not seem at all to have the same valence as Fried’s “presentness,” suggesting almost the opposite – object-presence or objecthood (a point Fried makes in “Art and Objecthood”). But in light of her arguments about frontality – especially that a frontal view may be said to “hide” the object-presence that an oblique view might grasp – Krauss seems to insinuate that, again, Fried’s recent arguments in fact support the literalist point of view that he had attempted to undercut.

The final lines of her essay appear as something of a defense of the “Kantianism” in Greenberg. But where Fried had found, and critiqued, in Greenberg an avowedly Kantian motive to the “modernist ‘reduction’,” Krauss recovers a perhaps latent Kantian

---

74 Greenberg, “Post Painterly Abstraction,” Art International 8 (Summer 1964), first appeared as the catalogue text to the exhibition of the same name at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (April-June 1964) and is reprinted in The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol.4, 192-7. “The Recentness of Sculpture” was commissioned by Maurice Tuchman for American Sculpture of the Sixties (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967), and is also in The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol.4, 250-6.

75 Greenberg, The Collected Essays and Criticism, 256.

76 Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 152. Fried uses the term “stage presence” further on in connection with his concept of theatricality, 155.
theme present in the illusioned modalities of vision that she had read in Greenberg through her own version of the embodied conventions that informed them.

What is so moving about Noland's latest pictures is that while they still center on eyesight itself as their subject, it is a purposive vision – vision as it moves towards things to possess them. In these paintings Noland isolates the role of eyesight as the making of decisions, and maintains it, as Olitski had, outside the logic of place.77

Kant’s formula of “purposiveness without purpose” is here the spin on the Merleau-Pontyan embodiedness that Fried and Krauss had so often referred to, but with it the latter is given a distinction that, seemingly, sets the two critics further apart. If the oblique view is one that grasps object-presence, in successful painting it only offers itself purposively, marking itself off, in apparently the only way possible, from objecthood or the logic of place.

Up until the last paragraph, Krauss has followed through with a fairly rigorous critique of Fried on his own terms, ultimately denying the differential relation to embodied conventions that Fried had attempted to base his project on. Her argument is to insist on the lack of an outside to embodied conventions until she finally smuggles it back in by way of the Kantian gloss at the end in order to recover the judgment on literalism. It is fair to say, I think, that her putting of this face to that judgment will help to do in her commitments to the critique of literalism.

The "intrinsic" history I have been following, that of the path of developments within this strain of criticism, has led to the point where Krauss makes her departure from her Greenbergian formation. If anywhere in this history the need for an "extrinsic" explanation, an account of the social bases of criticism, is required, this might be just such a point. Undoubtedly the criticism of Fried and Rowe are each equally connected to extrinsic factors, but here the transformations or breaks represented by the turns in the critical approaches of Eisenman and Krauss seem to especially warrant attention to such an external history. Indeed, the pressures of such a history have often been called upon in order to interpret the breakdown of high modernist criticism. It seems prudent, however, in light of our historical "object" – institutionality – and the fact of its apparent interface between different forms of institutional knowledge, to approach this external history through the moments when the internal history of one institutional knowledge converges on another. Thus, rather than breaking off the account developed thus far into a discussion of the momentous social and political events of the late 1960s, I shall continue this story by examining the next phase in Krauss's criticism as it encounters the Chomskian phase of Eisenman's work, which I largely passed over in my account of his relation to Colin Rowe. It is through this encounter of two different critical histories that I shall approach in the following chapter the "extrinsic" matters that bear on them.
To begin with, however, I wish to note other intra-critical relations that bear especially on Krauss and Eisenman, and which will become more evident as this account develops. In particular, Krauss’s break with many of the Greenbergian precepts will come about as she begins to dialogue with Annette Michelson, who had been writing for *Artforum* since 1965 and for ten years prior to that had been in Paris as a corresponding critic for *Art International* and for the *International Herald-Tribune*. Michelson’s interest in an entirely different history of modernism, largely the result of her Paris experience, will open up new avenues for Krauss. At the same time, Eisenman will be exposed to the work of other fellows at the IAUS, whose education is markedly different from the Anglo-American one Eisenman received. In this regard, the arrival of Mario Gandelsonas and Diana Agrest to the IAUS will be significant. The two Argentinian architects had studied semiology in Paris under Roland Barthes and had moved in the circle of the Tel Quel group. It is largely through them that Eisenman becomes acquainted with French structuralism.

Having noted these other critical exchanges, we may turn to the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman in order to pay attention to the encounter between two different critical histories. The exchange between Krauss and Eisenman appears more than the mutual influence of each other’s interests but as a crisscrossing of critical histories. That is, Krauss takes up, in part, the gestalt theory that Eisenman was coming to find a problem in Rowe, and Eisenman becomes interested in the sort of intrinsic history of modernism that Fried had been constructing.

However, a reciprocal exchange of methods alone was not possible. In the dialogue that follows, Krauss and Eisenman each make moves toward the other’s position
in an effort to find support for their respective critiques of the modernisms they had each disavowed. But these moves could not be completed, so to speak. Since they mirrored each other, the criticisms directed toward Fried and Rowe were also redirected back at the two in this dialogue. What resulted was an intricate series of moves and countermoves. Since the modernisms they critiqued were based on both a distinction between art and architecture (Fried) and an effective lack of such a distinction (Rowe), it is not surprising that Krauss and Eisenman each tried to reverse those discriminations. Thus the difference, or lack thereof, between art and architecture becomes a key issue, over which this dialogue will vacillate. That Krauss and Eisenman will ultimately never agree on what that relation is will demonstrate a faultline in their dialogue. As I will argue in the chapter that follows this one, it will point to a difference much larger than that supposed between art and architecture. But before I demonstrate that, it is first necessary to retrace the at times convoluted dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman.

* 

In the spring of 1969 Rosalind Krauss completed her PhD dissertation at Harvard titled, “The Sculpture of David Smith.” This work formed the basis for a two-part essay on Smith that appeared in the February and April 1969 issues of Artforum.¹ It was also sometime in early 1969 that Eisenman became acquainted with the work of Noam

¹ Krauss, “The Essential David Smith, Part I,” Artforum 7 no.6 (February 1969), 43-9; “The Essential David Smith, Part II,” Artforum 7 no.8 (April 1969), 34-41. Fried also completed his dissertation in 1969. In the March issue of Artforum (i.e., the one between those containing Krauss’s two Smith articles), Philip Leider reproduced the entirety of Fried’s thesis, an historical study, as a special issue devoted entirely to it, an unprecedented move for the magazine which surely must have enraged the majority of the magazine’s readers who now largely read Artforum for its coverage of minimalist and conceptual art. Though, the magazine’s publisher, Charles Cowles, notes that the issue provided a breakthrough in ad sales. See the comments by Leider, Fried, and Cowles in Newman, 245-6, 283-4. Fried, “Manet’s Sources: Aspects of His Art, 1859-65,” Artforum 7 (Mar. 1969), 28-82.
Chomsky. With the aid of Chomsky's work, in particular his *Syntactic Structures* of 1957, Eisenman began to articulate the relationship between the perceptual and conceptual aspects of architecture, which he had first pointed to in his own thesis.3

In early March 1969, a little more than a year after CASE had organized itself into two regional groups, CASE/Boston hosted a symposium at MIT prepared by Stanford Anderson. Eisenman attended the symposium and presented a paper that drew on Chomskian theory.4 At this meeting, Eisenman met Krauss through Anderson (Krauss was teaching at MIT at the time). A few weeks later, CASE/Princeton-New York hosted the meeting held on May 9 and 10 at the Museum of Modern Art that was to become known as CASE 7 and the basis for the book, *Five Architects*. This meeting, as I mentioned earlier, was a closed session that served as an opportunity for participants to critique the work of Eisenman, Graves, Meier, Hejduk, Gwathmey and William Ellis (though the latter was not included in the eventual publication). Through Krauss, Eisenman was now becoming familiar with the debates in *Artforum*. Finding her criticism to be particularly insightful, he invited her to the closed CASE 7 meeting.

In the following months Eisenman wrote the essays that were to supplement the work he eventually presented in *Five Architects* – namely, House I, or the Barenholtz Pavillion, and House II, or the Falk house.5 The name he supplied to his overall project

---

2 Louis Martin suggests that it was probably Eisenman’s client for his House II, Richard Falk, a friend and fellow professor of Chomsky’s at MIT, who introduced Eisenman to Chomsky’s work in linguistics. Martin, 561.
5 Eisenman’s designs of this period were deliberately called “houses” as a kind of generic referent – the Barenholtz Pavillion was actually a small museum used to house the client’s toy collection. The houses are numbered sequentially from I – X. The design for the tenth house, which was not built, was completed in 1976. House I was completed in 1967 and House II in 1969. The essays that appeared in print were shortened versions of what Eisenman wrote in 1969 and 1970. Eisenman, “House I, 1967,” *Five Architects*
was "cardboard architecture," a term whose derogatory connotations he purposefully aimed to pre-empt. That is, rather than taking a building’s components as strictly functional elements, Eisenman aimed to draw attention to the notational qualities of the various elements that might make up a structure. Indeed, Eisenman used conventionally functional elements like columns in sometimes non-functional ways.

Of the two houses, House II is clearly the more ambitious, as witnessed by the series of analytic diagrams Eisenman supplies. The diagrams, transparent axonometrics, are meant not only as an aid in the design process, but also as a supplement to the building itself, as a means of drawing out the conceptual aspect of the work [fig. 25]. Although Eisenman also supplies plans, elevations, a section and a final axonometric of House II, the text operates almost narratively as it describes the "transformational" process depicted in the twenty-four analytic diagrams, which are arranged in a sequential manner. 7

As noted earlier, Eisenman's concern from his thesis was to make architecture communicate in a meaningful way according to a language that was intrinsic to architecture, and that did not depend on metaphorical or associative aspects of architectural signs. With Chomsky's theory, he now conceives of the possibility of a language intrinsic to architecture to be arrived at by understanding what may comprise its "deep structure." In the text to House I (written in November 1969, though the building was completed in 1967), Eisenman explains that he aims to make the deep structure of the environment explicit by "forc[ing] an individual to experience the 'environment' as a

---

6 Ibid., 15.
notational system which has a recognizable relationship to a deep structure.”

In House I, he begins with a basic cubic space and superimposes two separate divisions of that space, which he assigns the following notations: ABABA and ABAA, “one read as incomplete, the other as asymmetrical” [fig. 26]. These regularities may be read separately but when overlaid one is required to separate them out in order to become aware of that which is not immediately perceptible.

Although one may perceive these two structures in the actual environment, one is unable to perceive the deep structure because of its existence in the environment as an irregular gestalt. These actual structures thus have a common relationship in a deep structure which is not perceptible but which can be understood after both structures have been perceived.

This basis for House I appears to have only a superficial resemblance to Chomskian linguistics, which at any rate Eisenman will be forced to adapt to the unlike circumstances of architecture.

In House II, however, Eisenman takes up the “transformational” aspect of deep structure that Chomsky had written about. Here, he begins again with a basic cubic space and shifts it slightly on a diagonal axis in order to have essentially two superimposed cubic spaces slightly askew from one another. A series of divisions, some symmetrical and some asymmetrical (or “stepped”) then follow and are applied alternately to the two initial cubic spaces [fig. 27]. Not only are the results more complex, but Eisenman here has found a means of translating the “generative grammar” of Chomsky, though the accuracy of that translation will still be questionable [figs. 28 & 29].

As Eisenman worked out the applicability of Chomskian deep structure to his own designs, he also attempted to employ the concept to the historical work that had most

---

9 Ibid., 17.
preoccupied him. “From Object to Relationship: Terragni’s Casa del Fascio” was published in *Casabella* in January 1970. Here Eisenman incorporates the distinction between frontality and obliqueness that Krauss had made so much of. As Eisenman argues, Terragni’s deliberate alternation between frontality and obliqueness worked as a conceptual means of arriving at a deep structure. He did this by exploiting a tangential axis off the duomo situated on the side of the piazza opposite the Casa del Fascio [fig. 30]. The Casa’s oblique aspect in relation to the piazza is recalled for the viewer who conceptually moves through the layered “facades” on alternate sides of the building by way of an imposed rotational pivot [fig. 31].

Eisenman’s reading of frontality and obliqueness clearly owes to Krauss, but where the latter had held obliqueness as the desired modality against frontality, Eisenman maintains that the two need to be read together (in a differential manner that is perhaps reminiscent of Fried’s in terms of the objecthood signaled by obliqueness and the illusioned modality dependant on frontality – a relational reading that, however implicit in Fried’s criticism of 1966-67, was assumed by Krauss in “On Frontality” not to be present in those texts). Eisenman’s position is apparently necessitated by the three dimensionality of architecture (or, better, by the axial *partis* and cubic forms he tended to prefer). And the very distinction between the problems of architecture and those of art will become the subject of his next essay.

“Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Toward a Definition” appeared in the special IAUS issue of *Casabella* and is heavily informed by Eisenman’s reading of the debates in *Artforum*. Indeed, the essay’s title is a nod to Sol LeWitt’s “Paragraphs on Conceptual

---

10 Eisenman, “Dall’oggetto alla Relazionalità: La Casa del Fascio di Terragni,” *Casabella* 344 (January 1970), 38-41. The article was published in Italian with an English abstract.
11 Ibid., 39.
Art” and to Robert Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture.”

It is a sustained attempt to sort out the relation, and difference, between art and architecture, and in this light is especially important in terms of how both Krauss and Eisenman came to shed certain aspects of each of their formations.

The question of the difference between art and architecture had been an underlying theme in the work of both Rowe and Fried. In the transparency essays and elsewhere, Rowe had subsumed almost all specifically architectural questions under pictorial ones. Indeed, his preference for frontality as the aspect from which to read a building, and the way he read plans and elevations almost as cubist canvases demonstrated his debt to a pictorial mode of analysis. This mode served the crucial distinction between the literal and the phenomenal, which was another means of expressing the old distinction between “mere building” and “architecture” (and was set against the reversal of that valuation by Bauhaus-inspired functionalists who preferred Baukunst over Architektur).

As for Fried, that same trope was implicit in his account of art and objecthood. It is not clear whether he ever considered the “art” of architecture as distinct from mere building, but when he does refer to architecture in his criticism, it is clearly understood in the way Rowe had seen literal transparency. Theatricality was another way of expressing the architectural – it called upon an object presence that merely enthralled the viewer by reconfirming her habitual modes of being in the world (“we are all literalists most or all

---

of our lives”). (The difference between Rowe and Fried in this regard is, as pointed out, whether the phenomenal mode of defeating the literal is immediate or of sustained conceptual engagement).

Thus, the manner in which Eisenman approaches the issue, especially in light of his recent break with Rowe, will be of interest. Not surprisingly Eisenman maintains the valuation of architecture “in itself” over what he will refer to as its merely semantic aspects, with which he is always quick to identify functionalism. But the developments of minimalism and conceptual art throw up a challenge to the previously straightforward distinction between the conceptual and perceptual aspects of architecture. And although this challenge does cause Eisenman to revise his theoretical model, in the end what one might call the critical thrust of the conceptual art he considers does not really register with the problems at Eisenman’s hand.

In other words, Eisenman maintains the cognitive framework of Chomskian linguistics, which supposes the possibility of communication through the sign of intentionality. That this intentionality depends, according to Eisenman, on a deep structure is something that falls within the general tradition that claimed an intrinsic aspect to the modernist arts. Taking issue most often with Sol LeWitt’s grids (one can only presume because of the apparent similarity to his own work), Eisenman does not see the work as opposed to a kind of intrinsic or deductive process that he himself valued, and instead considers the work itself as a failed attempt at conceptual art, or at least as a failure in terms of the kind of conceptualism Eisenman proposed. That is, he argues that LeWitt’s grids do not call upon a deep structure, but merely extrinsic semantic

---

knowledge; he does not see this as potentially a point of LeWitt’s, nor does he see the general point made by some that art can only ever call upon extrinsic knowledge.

That Eisenman missed this was not helped by Krauss’s review of LeWitt’s work, which she had written in 1968 and which Eisenman cites. There, Krauss had come to a similar conclusion: that LeWitt was not meaningfully dealing with form.14 It is not clear whether by the time of Eisenman’s article she would have reconsidered that position, but in essays published later in 1971 she would not yet give up the negative judgment of “literalism” though she would come to overtly critique the positions of Fried and Greenberg.

As for Eisenman, however, despite his “misreading” of LeWitt and other attempts at “conceptual art,” he is forced to confront certain problems in the framework to his own project. In order to see how this comes about, I will quote in full a footnote used to expand on the problems in LeWitt. It begins with a line from the latter’s “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art.”

“The physicality of a three-dimensional object then becomes a contradiction to its non-emotive intent.” Visual appearance is only a contradiction in its surface aspect. To avoid this in his serial grids, LeWitt reduces the sensual experience by making the physical structure and the conceptual structure the same, i.e., the physical image is merely a literal notation – a one-to-one correspondence with the conceptual structure. The percept and the concept are the same information because no distinction is made between surface and deep structure in the physical object. However, if it is accepted that there is a dual aspect to “physicality” – visual and non-visual – then there can be a relationship which is not necessarily literal [note the word choice] between the two. For example, the surface aspect of a LeWitt grid need not be similar to, nor resemble, the deep aspect. However, if the conceptual structure is not acknowledged [note again] in the perceptual structure, then how does one determine the nature of any physical form? Equally, if the visual aspect has no relationship to the deep aspect, then is it free to provide any information? If the visual aspect is regulated by the deep aspect, then it is difficult to see it as either incidental or a contradiction. But to assume therefore

that the perceptual structure should look like a conceptual structure would seem to limit the nature of what might be considered conceptual.

It would seem that the idea of conceptual art would be to reveal something new in the mind, through the physical form, rather than to explicitly reveal the concept, not through the form, but "as" the form. This idea would present a problem for the work of Judd and Morris which again does not try to distinguish between a surface and a deep structure within the object.\(^{15}\)

This footnote is given by Eisenman to explain why not all concepts are expressive of a deep or syntactic aspect – a point he is forced to emphasize after conceding that indeed conceptual art is "conceptual" (the term conceptual had up until this point been reserved for the syntactic or deep aspect of architecture). The point of expressing a concept as form emphasizes his commitment to an intrinsic architectural language.

But conceptual art, it has become clear, does not always depend on such an intrinsic relation to form, and can equally be the sign of intentionality. Citing Duchamp's *Fountain* Eisenman notes that intentionality can be denoted by the changing of an object's context. This relational definition of concept holds for Eisenman, but he insists that there is only a syntactic concept when there is a relation of surface structure to surface structure that reveals a deep aspect. In other words, when the relational aspect points to something contextual or semantic the concept is not syntactic.\(^{16}\) In short, Eisenman has doubled the syntactic-semantic distinction in the conceptual-perceptual distinction. Whereas the two pairs of terms had previously corresponded to one another, there is now a semantic conceptual and a syntactic conceptual (just as there is a syntactic perceptual and a semantic perceptual).

A reading of another "version" of Eisenman's "Notes on Conceptual Architecture" bears out his critique of conceptual art like Le Witt's. In 1970, Eisenman

---


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 15-7.
was invited by John Margolies to submit a project for an upcoming issue of *Design Quarterly*, which was published by the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and which had asked Margolies to edit a special issue on conceptual architecture. The issue included projects from “conceptual architects” like the teams Archigram, Archizoom, and Superstudio, as well as projects from the artists Les Levine, Ed Ruscha, and Tony Smith. Eisenman’s submission punned on the title of the essay he evidently was then working on. It is a printed version of his essay that has all of the text excised except for the footnotes which appear at the bottom of each page and the corresponding note numbers set amidst the missing text [fig. 32]. By being literal about reproducing just the “notes” of his title, Eisenman has apparently turned the tables on conceptual artists who had drawn much of their critical ballast from the literalism that informed much of the new art of the 1960s. The meaningless results of Eisenman’s “essay” serve as a pointed commentary on the form of conceptualism that he saw artists employing. The version of “Notes on Conceptual Architecture” that Eisenman used to “generate” the project for *Design Quarterly*, however, did not include the footnote cited above. So, the thrust of that critique would not be explicit, as the “full” version of the essay was yet to appear in *Casabella*. Given this difference and the obvious lack of text to read, it cannot be certain that Eisenman had entirely worked out the argument that was eventually to appear. What is certain is that Eisenman’s thinking was beginning to take on more of the forms of Fried’s earlier criticism.

As is noticeable in the passage above, there are some similarities between what Eisenman claims for the syntactic conceptual and what Fried had argued for in the *Three American Painters* catalogue. Indeed, Eisenman cites Fried’s reading of deductive

---

structure in Noland’s chevron paintings as an example of a syntactic-conceptual aspect in art. It is notable, however, that the argument cited is one, as we saw, that Fried had since abandoned though he did continue to use the terms “literal” and “acknowledgement,” as Eisenman does here. But insofar as Eisenman proposes a differential relationship that is to be grasped conceptually (ultimately, as he says, between a surface aspect and a deep aspect, which is arrived at or made apparent through the relationship between more than one surface structure that have such a deep relationship), what Eisenman relies on (like Rowe before him) is an prolonged conceptual engagement with the object. Fried on the other hand had, of course, made the conceptual distinction in question a matter of the immediacy of experience. What Eisenman admires in Fried’s argument about deductive structure, effectively its “conceptual” aspect, is what Fried wished to abandon, in favor of what he called the mutually responsive relation between literal and depicted shape, which was grasped (instantaneously) in experience.

What is interesting about Eisenman’s turn to an early moment in the Fried-Krauss exchange is that, in “recovering” an argument that Fried had subsequently abandoned, Eisenman opened up a rationale that could be of potential use to Krauss. And indeed this appears to be what happened. Eisenman’s emphasis on the conceptual aspect of what Fried described in Noland is congruent with the argument Krauss put forward in two consecutive essays in November and December 1971 titled, “Pictorial Space and the Question of Documentary” and “Stella’s New Work and the Problem of Series.”

There, Krauss critiques Fried’s notion of presentness, or what she calls object-viewer “copresence.” But what is also notable about Krauss’s initial critique of Fried is

---

that it does not abandon her (and his) judgment of literalism. That is, the problem of
copresence is equally an issue for literalist works of art. This judgment is in accord with
Eisenman’s – though he did not express it as a matter of defeating copresence. However,
what he calls the conceptual aspect of, say, LeWitt – i.e., its semantic-conceptual aspect –
relies on the recall of extrinsic information. And it is the dependence of Fried’s and
Greenberg’s versions of modernism on extrinsic information that becomes the issue of
criticism for Krauss. That is, she comes to see the narrative aspect of the history of
modernism as bearing on any experience of an object that claims to have been arrived at
immediately – an issue that becomes fully apparent when one views work done in series
as most of the work Fried and Krauss had previously written about had been [fig. 33].

In the case of serialized painting, what seems to happen – and happen with an
increased force the more obviously permutable the image is – is a lessening of
one’s sense that one is copresent with the painting in question or that one is
copresent, which is to say, sharing the same space, with all of it.19

But if, given serialization, we feel that we are not copresent with the “picture,”
that indeed the idea of it and the multiple serial developments which support the
burgeoning of that idea, are somewhere else (and my own experience of serial
painting is what I rely on to claim that this is the case), then the haecceity [the
sheer that-ness] of the work of art is not maintained. And then what is being
acknowledged is not one’s own and the painting’s position in space and time, but
a metaphysicalizing of the situation which is indeed beyond painting.20

Minimalism, then, is for Krauss at this moment still an issue that fits within, as
Fried had claimed, the Greenbergian framework, only that now she reverses her argument
about it – indeed, the distinction between frontality and obliqueness does not matter any
more (or, at least not for the moment, as it turns out). For if obliqueness was what

20 Krauss’s emphasis: “Stella’s New Work and the Problem of Series,” 44. Krauss draws the concept
haecceity from Stanley Cavell’s “Excursus on Some Modernist Painting,” in The World Viewed:
minimalism was best at, it was, as Krauss saw it, still in a Greenbergian sense though now negatively valued, a matter of copresence.

[T]he literalist object seems to want to secure copresence on the most basic possible level. For the extreme simplicity of the object’s shape moves toward making the viewer’s perception of it coextensive with the sculptor’s act in its conception.\(^{21}\)

Thus I say Krauss reversed her position – for what turns out to be the difference is that before she had seen opticality in a non-differential relation to Merleau-Pontyan embodied conventions, whereas now a differential relation is emphasized, not in the immediate sense that Fried proposed, but in the conceptual sense that Eisenman argued for. (An implication of embodied conventions is present in Eisenman’s understanding of conceptual architecture when he notes that the necessarily material aspect of architecture – its object presence – also means standard forms of reference like gravity, doors or entrances, windows, etc. These aspects are not ignored in conceptual architecture, but on the contrary are necessary to the surface structure, which it is the task of the architect to make speak syntactically, or relationally.)\(^{22}\)

A curious thing results from this move of Krauss’s, and it points to the desire for, and the difficulty in, bridging the two projects in dialogue here. When Eisenman conceded the difference between the syntactic conceptual and the semantic conceptual, he did so in order to acknowledge that art like LeWitt’s could indeed be considered conceptual but in an inferior sense. And in Duchamp’s *Fountain* an intention may be present, but again only in a *semantic*-conceptual sense. These cases of non-intrinsic or non-syntactical concepts suggest their, or art’s, lack of dependence on a material object.

Eisenman notes that the efforts of Art & Language had shown that that conclusion had

\(^{21}\) Krauss, “Pictorial Space and the Question of Documentary,” 70.

already been drawn and demonstrated.\textsuperscript{23} Thus the defining feature Eisenman comes to supply for architecture is that it requires an object-presence; whereas art did not require it. However, as his assessment of recent instances of conceptual art show, a successful example of conceptual art – conceptual in the syntactic, Chomskian sense, that is – will necessarily have an object presence too. (We are here reminded of the conundrum Greenberg raised about what qualified as the minimal conditions for painting, and his subsequent comment that such conditions did not mean a successful painting – that very conundrum that Fried seized on, and which in turn Hal Foster later did as well.) Thus, if Eisenman defines architecture itself in terms of its success in the communication of the sign of intentionality by way of a deep or syntactic structure, then there is for him no distinction between art and architecture except that between bad art and good architecture. As Eisenman revised his position on the relation between art and architecture based on a reading of the debates over conceptual art (largely through Krauss), Krauss adjusted her own position on “literalist” art by taking in Eisenman’s account of the perceptual and conceptual aspects of architecture.

The two essays by Krauss that appeared in late 1971 took aim at the idealism that had subtended Fried’s (and Greenberg’s) analysis through the concept of presentness. Her move toward Eisenman’s position was toward the conceptual as he had defined it. This meant abandoning her own use of immediacy, which had taken the form of embodied obliqueness. She came to see this as an aspect of copresence in minimalism as much as in the work Fried had admired. Her continued critique of literalism is significant. The minimalists’ main preoccupation, she argues, was to question what knowledge could be gained by the senses. Citing Wittgenstein now, rather than Merleau-Ponty, she argues

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 14-5.
that this inquiry tended toward solipsism. That is, rather than relying on embodied
conventions (obliqueness, perspective) for grasping the gestalts of minimalist objects –
which anyway are not true gestalts for they depend on the idealism of the abstract space
of the grid – she argues that the partiality of perspective requires the mental
reconstruction of the object.

And this [literalist] tactic seems to assert that nothing of the esthetic experience
exists outside the actual situation in which one confronts the work. However, the
moves that Morris and Judd make are still located on grounds of illusionism, if
only because it is that issue that they want to overcome. ...The feeling I have in
front of a work like this [Morris’ mirrored boxes] is that there is the implicit
suggestion that the recognition of the single cube depends on grasping the way the
six sides are internally transparent to one another – much the way exterior
surfaces of solid geometrical forms are rendered mutually transparent in a
diagram. ...Morris may talk about gestalts, but his sculpture from this period
comes across with a kind of hard-edged idealism. In Judd’s case as well, the
works seem to be probing the way in which sense data could possibly open up
onto a perceptual experience which is fully cognitive, and therefore to be
examining the grounds for certainty. My own reaction to such an endeavor is to
feel the kind of impatience that Wittgenstein expresses in his Essay on Certainty
when he says, “If you tried to doubt everything you would not get far as doubting
anything. The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty.”

Through this critique of literalism, Krauss arrives at a conceptualism similar to
Eisenman’s and now takes up a differential relation to embodied conventions.

All this had come about as Krauss recognized that the presentness posited by
Fried depended on the narrative aspect embedded in the object, which was compounded
by those objects made in series. This problem may have been illuminated by Eisenman’s
work. For, if the primary motive for working in series is to explore aspects of
permutablity, Eisenman showed how this depended on a temporal and conceptual aspect
(as in the sequence of diagrams he supplied to illustrate House I and House II in Five
Architects [figs. 26-28]). Thus Krauss came to value that work which explored this

24 Krauss, “Pictorial Space and the Question of Documentary,” 70.
conceptual aspect rather than dissimulate an historical narrative by feigning objective and immediate conditions – and this was exemplified for her by the always partial aspect of documentary, to which she also aligned Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty* (its relation to the Great Salt Lake produces a “documentary crust of its contents”).

In her adoption of Eisenman’s description of the differential relation between the conceptual and the perceptual, Krauss abandons an account of embodiedness that had previously been crucial to her critique of Fried. This adopted view, as we will see, will be only temporary, but it will demonstrate some of the difficulties Krauss and Eisenman encountered as they each worked out the relation between art and architecture.

In her 1968 essay, “On Frontality,” Krauss had advanced a notion of art that identified embodiedness as a means of illusiveness. Her critique of Fried had centered on his notion of medium (on the provisionally frontal perspective that subtended his account of presentness as the outcome of an artist’s successful communication through the medium of painting). If Fried’s argument depended on an experience of the difference between objecthood (experienced as embodied convention) and the suspension of (and heightening of?) those conventions that inform the recognition of objecthood, Krauss argued that such a difference was impossible. As she was still committed to a Greenbergian notion of opticality, this had not precluded the projection of illusiveness in painting or sculpture. It was only that embodiedness served as something like the *means* of illusiveness. I have suggested that this was given an ultimately untenable (for Krauss) description at the end of “On Frontality” when it was put in the Kantian terms of purposiveness without purpose (illusiveness was that embodied experience without the logic of place, without the practicality of objects). As a means of illusiveness, Krauss’s
notion of embodiedness was nonetheless set against Fried's apparent preoccupation with medium. Her position attempted to undercut any attempt to define medium in material terms, and as such placed it in congruence with anti-functionalist arguments in architectural criticism. (Recall that Krauss's reading of Judd's 1965 multi-part bar object praised its dissimulation of architectural construction.) Krauss's account of embodiedness as a means of illusiveness had thus served a general criticism of the arts that made no distinction between art and architecture (or between the different plastic arts for that matter). Instead, it took issue with material accounts of medium specificity, and (implicitly, at least) this included functionalist accounts of architecture.

Krauss's turn in 1971 was toward the differential relation to embodiedness that Eisenman had advanced in texts roughly contemporaneous with "On Frontality": the supplements to Houses I and II which were written in 1969/1970. This adopted view served Krauss's account of medium in the late-1971 essays. That is, the conceptual aspect that had been the goal of permutability in Eisenman's designs now came to inform Krauss's notion of media, a partial aspect which she set against the presumptions of totality (read as presentness) that she saw in Fried's account of medium. This turn to a differential relation to embodiedness, as Eisenman had described the conceptual-perceptual distinction, did not, however, undo her attack on the material accounts of medium and therefore held to the lack of distinction, or congruence, between art and architecture. Instead, it gave a different explanation to that lack of distinction.

Eisenman's turn at the same time (roughly 1971) was not to abandon the distinction between the perceptual and the conceptual, but to give up on the distinction between art and architecture. As I said the only important distinction in this regard at this
point was for him a matter of whether the sign of intentionality was successfully communicated. Just as Krauss attempted to provide a new explanation for the congruence between art and architecture by reversing her position on the relation to embodiedness (moving from a non-differential to a differential relation), Eisenman aimed in his “Notes on Conceptual Architecture” to provide a new explanation for the distinction between the perceptual and the conceptual (that is, for a differential account of embodiedness) by reversing his position on the relation between art and architecture (at first there was a difference between the plastic arts and architecture and then there was none).

These partial reversals that Krauss and Eisenman each performed in relation to one another suggest that at the core of their dialogue is a certain symmetry between two relations: on the one hand, the relation between embodiedness and cognition, and on the other, the relation between art and architecture. In the positions they each set out in 1968-69, a difference or lack of difference in one relation meant the same in the other relation. The partial reversals in 1971 suggest the inverse: for Krauss, the congruence between art and architecture means a differential relation between embodiedness and cognition, and for Eisenman the differential relation between embodiedness and cognition now means a congruence between art and architecture. But these partial reversals did not complete the dialogue. The respective positions taken up by each in 1971 posed new problems for the other.

The important distinction for Eisenman, the one that remained consistent, was that between the perceptual and the conceptual. The position that he adopted in 1971 was one that made material dimensions of percepts necessary to the development of concepts (syntactic structures). Whether in direct response to Eisenman’s “Notes” or not, Krauss’s
turn in 1973 was to account for materiality. Meanwhile Krauss's consistent position, which was the critique of the medium-directed accounts of art, had in 1971 come to adopt a perceptual-conceptual distinction, which informed her notion of the partiality of media (medium as series). To Eisenman, this necessitated an account of such partiality, which he came to describe with the term “virtual.” A closer look at the positions Krauss and Eisenman each took up in 1973 will help to chart these changes and will show that they effectively undid the partial reversals of 1971, but could only manage this by summoning a set of ancillary arguments that clouded over the core problem that propelled their dialogue.

If the conceptual aspect that Eisenman defined in “Notes on Conceptual Architecture” required a material dimension (in the relation between one “surface structure” and another), the nature of that dimension is already given by the minimal, or basic, conventions of architecture. Thus Krauss’s adoption of Eisenman’s description of the relation between percept and concept still required an account of what the material conditions of art are. For this, she approaches the problem in a manner similar to the way Rowe had. She explains in “Pictorial Space and the Question of Documentary” that the narrative of modernism that subtended one’s experience of copresence with the object was in effect like the gestaltist ground. The issue with the work of Frank Stella, for example, was that serialization itself (rather than shape as Fried had argued) became the medium. But precisely as series, the traditional preoccupation with medium now became an issue of media. (In this way Krauss introduces the always partial aspect of

---

25 This was a point made by Stanley Cavell in *The World Viewed*, but Krauss draws a very different conclusion from it.
documentary.) Thus, without the idealizations of medium as the basis for meaning-making, Krauss returns to the issue as it had been set out by Rowe and Slutzky in the terms of gestalt theory.

In this way, Krauss holds out for gestaltist reversals, like the ones Rowe and Slutzky had described in their transparency articles. Specifically, she means the figural ambiguity that results from the either/or reversals of frontal and oblique perspectives, as exampled by the fiberglass/polyester resin painting-objects of Ronald Davis [fig. 34].

The gestaltist ambiguity that Rowe and Slutzky had written about had, of course, been important to the development of Eisenman’s theoretical framework. But ultimately he rejected the merely “perceptual” aspect of that ambiguity, and called for the conceptual deep aspect that might itself result from perceptual ambiguity. Insofar as Krauss does at this point endorse a conceptual aspect — that is, a temporal aspect rather than the experience of immediacy — she returns it to the conceptualism implied by the version of gestalt theory that was taken up by Rowe and Slutzky (i.e., that the perception of gestalts is the basis for cognition). Eisenman, however, employs the distinction between frontality and obliqueness as two perceptual aspects that, when viewed in relation to one another, or syntactically, may result in a deep conceptual aspect. But as Eisenman will reiterate in a paper delivered in April 1973, to achieve this aspect requires not only a material object presence, but also certain architectural conventions that act as regularities against which an individual can conceptually project transformations.

---

Krauss, for her part, continues to use a gestaltist position in essays appearing in *Artforum* in 1972. An article on Léger and Le Corbusier repeats her judgment of Synthetic Cubism as academicism as well as Eisenman's negative judgment of Corbusier (as against his preference for Terragni) – both Léger and Le Corbusier rely exclusively on frontality.²⁹ Krauss's first article on Richard Serra appeared in May 1972. Again, frontal and oblique perspectives are contrasted, and the lack of complete information provided by both points to a ground, as it had in the example of Davis's work that she reviewed in 1968 – there the ground was the wall of the gallery and in Serra's work it is literally the landscape [figs. 35 & 36].³⁰

In this way Krauss moved to a gestaltist understanding of the conceptual basis of art, but in so doing she downplayed the cognitive dimension advanced by many gestalt theorists as she implicitly referred to the work's environment as its material basis.

Eisenman's interpretation of this new approach in Krauss's criticism appears to have led him to revise his Chomskian framework. For a symposium on environmental design in 1973, in which as I said he reasserted the material object presence of architecture *and* its basis in architectural conventions, Eisenman also felt it necessary to *redefine* architecture's difference from the other plastic arts. He claimed that the experience of the other plastic arts was always virtual (regardless of their material presence). But architecture on the other hand had a virtual aspect and always a real or actual aspect that was unavoidable as a perception, owing, again, to the conventions of architecture, like

---

²⁹ Krauss, "Léger, Le Corbusier, and Purism," *Artforum* 10 no.8 (April 1972), 50-3. Although, Krauss is using a gestaltist model, it is one, as noted, that includes frontal-oblique reversals; Rowe's gestaltist reversals, which were evident in Le Corbusier, were perceived from the frontal perspective alone.

gravity and the experience of height, etc. But whereas Eisenman had previously spoken about a deep structure that was made apparent by the relationship between more than one surface structure, he now argues that there are two deep structures. What he apparently has come to realize is that the ability to recognize those “surface structures,” as in his essays for Houses I and II, depended on their reference to certain geometric regularities. While Krauss had argued in 1971 that Morris’s gestalts were really a kind of idealism, Eisenman effectively returns such forms to a structural a priori status. In this paper he is now calling the existence of an a priori regularity one kind of deep structure. And the recognition of a relation between an actual condition and an a priori regularity results in the other kind of deep structure. What this means is that those architectural conventions Eisenman had called on before as the necessity of materiality are now in fact referred to in order to point to architecture’s necessary actuality as feature that is read against its virtuality.

This distinction between actuality and materiality, it appears, was required by Eisenman to meet the critique Krauss had posed to the Friedian and Greenbergian conceptions of medium. As I argued, the implied conclusion to the first “Notes on Conceptual Architecture” was that a successful painting was going to necessarily be material anyway, leaving material object presence as an unhelpful identifying characteristic of architecture. This premise, however, assumed that art could speak by way of a syntactic deep structure, as Fried had suggested in Noland’s chevron paintings. Now, it seems that Eisenman has taken in Krauss’s critique of Fried, and of the idealism of medium expressed by object-viewer copresence. In other words, Krauss’s emphasis on partiality of perspective meant that one’s experience of art was always virtual. If

materiality itself could not be the ground from which one might recognize a deep syntactic aspect, then an art that is always virtual could never speak through a deep conceptual structure. It is as if Eisenman accepts that art’s highest ambition is to critique the idealism of any attempt to set up material conditions as its medium – an ambition that was coming to be embraced by Krauss. For if the alternation of partial aspects – frontal and oblique – as in the work of Serra, for example, when read in gestaltist terms, leads to the “ground,” this will not be a deep or conceptual aspect, but simply the environment, the landscape in Serra’s case.

Actuality, then, is called upon in much the same way Fried had called upon the literal, when he referred to a mutually responsive relation between literal and depicted shape – only that for Eisenman it registers entirely conceptually. By now invoking a dual deep structure, Eisenman has not only manipulated Chomskian theory to serve his particular ends (he now says in the 1973 paper that such linguistic theory should serve merely as an “heuristic” device), but he has also reiterated that the syntactic aspect of architecture will provide the sign of intentionality. One might compare the degree to which intentionality as a recognizable sign informs Fried’s notion of acknowledgment. This surely would have been apparent to Krauss, who would have seen such a sign as being subtended by an unacknowledged narrative aspect to modernism.

Thus, if Eisenman’s conceptualism initially offered itself to Krauss as a means of critiquing Friedian immediacy, it now appeared as a limitation because of its dependence on intentionality – a notion that comes in for critique in her “Sense and Sensibility: Reflections on Post ‘60s Sculpture,” which appeared in Artforum in November 1973 and

\[32\] Ibid., 319.
was partly reproduced as “The Fountainhead” in *Oppositions* 2 in January 1974.\(^{33}\) In the same way that the intentions of, say, Stella (in painting done explicitly in series or in the implied “series” of modernism) are usually read as the private intentions of immediate interaction with his medium but are in fact subtended by an unacknowledged narrative, Krauss’s argument implies that the conceptual intentions in Eisenman’s sense are equally beholden to a “ground.” Thus, the differential/conceptual relationship to embodied conventions that Krauss had recently taken up is now abandoned in favor of, once again, a non-differential relationship. But now rather than reading this in Greenbergian terms as she had before, she reads it in gestaltist terms.

Not only does Krauss’ new criticism approve of the work of Smithson and Serra, but it also accepts the “minimalism” of Judd, Morris, Andre, and Flavin. Merleau-Ponty is once again called upon, but the embodied conventions that she had previously referred to in Greenbergian terms now point instead to the gestaltist field, which she identifies with the aid of Morris’s “Notes on Sculpture.”

Previously Krauss had drawn on Merleau-Ponty to describe the embodied conventions that allowed one to experience Greenberg’s illusion of modalities, like weightlessness, the incorporeality of matter, etc. The illusion of those modalities was still set against embodied conventions, as in Krauss’s reading of the 1965 multi-part bar object by Judd, where conventionalized embodied experience served in this reading not so much as ground to, but medium of, those illusions. As Krauss became suspicious of illusiveness, this kind of projection of illusion no longer seemed an accurate reading of Merleau-Pontyan embodiedness. As I noted in the previous chapter, it did not seem to  

hold for the more or less regular geometric form that appeared on the first page of
Krauss’s article on Judd, or it would have treated that object as a failure. In any case,
Krauss chose not to discuss that object.

Krauss’s reading of Merleau-Ponty in 1973 now takes in objects with such regular
geometric forms. But embodiedness is no longer a kind of medium of projection. Instead
it is wholly connected to the world. With illusion now under suspicion for being a
projection of intention, private cognitive space is treated as a fiction – and for the same
reason Krauss reads a sort of solipsism in the intention-based conceptual work of artists
like Robert Barry, Douglas Heubler, and Joseph Kosuth. In this way, when Krauss turns
to gestalt theory, she opposes readings of that theory that take it to affirm a cognitive or
Cartesian theory of consciousness, a charge that Robert Morris, in the fourth part of his
“Notes on Sculpture,” had leveled against common uses of gestalt theory, which at the
same modified his earlier use of that theory. Krauss writes,

Morris has persistently written about the conceptual context of his own work and
that of fellow-artists. In one of the earliest of these essays, “Notes on Sculpture,”
Morris speaks of his preoccupation with strong three-dimensional gestalts.
“Characteristic of a gestalt,” he wrote, “is that once it is established all the
information about it, qua gestalt, is exhausted. (One does not, for example, seek
the gestalt of a gestalt.)” The body of criticism that has grown up around Minimal
art over the past five or six years has, strangely enough, understood the meaning
of that statement, and indeed the meaning of the gestalt itself, to be a bout a latent
kind of Cartesianism. The gestalt seems to be interpreted as an immutable, ideal
unit that persists beyond the particularities of experience, becoming through its
very persistence the ground for all experience. Yet this is to ignore the most
rudimentary notions of gestalt theory, in which the properties of the “good
gestalt” are demonstrated to be entirely context dependent. The meaning of a
trapezoid, for example, and therefore its gestalt-formations, changes depending on
whether it must be seen as a two-dimensional figure or as a square oriented in
depth – a meaning that can in no way precede experience. Morris himself pointed
to this when he said, “it is those aspects of apprehension that are not coexistent with the visual field but rather the result of the experience of the visual field.”

Through this rejection of “Cartesian” readings of gestalt theory, Krauss arrives at what is its “most rudimentary” notion, the primacy of experience and its dependence on context. Using Morris’ words, Krauss says that apprehension is not coexistent with, but is the result of, this experience. Krauss’s use of Merleau-Ponty to this end in “Sense and Sensibility” overturns her earlier reading of the phenomenologist, which served as a basis for the projection of illusion. Now, however, the context dependence of the “good gestalt” has embodiedness tied to the world not as a means of projection but as a means by which the world “makes sense.” That Krauss cites Merleau-Ponty to support this (she refers to his description of the experience of perspective, in which one does not sense a universal Euclidean space, but rather a space “for me” just as the other experiences a space “for himself”) aligns the latter to a version of gestalt theory that he had aimed to critique in The Structure of Behavior: namely, one that united perceptual experience with the world, without accounting for the conventional ways embodied experience is shaped. It is as though Krauss, wishing to circumvent all the conventionalizing projections of “consciousness,” wished to locate a pure world of the unconventional in the field that unites the perceiving subject with the material world of things. This natural-mechanistic field structure is what Merleau-Ponty aimed to replace when he spoke of the ways language and perception converge in a subject that is both instituted and instituting.

---

34 Krauss, “Sense and Sensibility,” 50. The cognitive reading of Gestalt in the art criticism Krauss identifies is not without precedent in the field of psychology. See, for example, Max Wertheimer, Productive Thinking second ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959).
35 In “Sense and Sensibility,” Krauss’s critique of conceptual artists’ “private language” draws on the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Her reading of Wittgenstein into this framework, however, is effectively an inversion of the solipsism of private language. Her claim is simply that “the model of meaning that Wittgenstein implores us to accept is a model severed from the legitimizing claims of a private self,” “Sense and Sensibility,” 48. She does not describe the ways Wittgenstein shows that communication does
That a version of “Sense and Sensibility” appeared in *Oppositions* is undoubtedly a sign that Eisenman had absorbed much of its criticism of conceptual projection. And indeed in 1974 Eisenman makes his last reference to Chomsky. (One might surmise as well that the stretching of Chomskian theory to cover two deep structures had become unwieldy.) Over approximately the next two years he will be preoccupied with his House designs, culminating in House X, the commission for which he would lose because of his other preoccupation – the preparation for the American architectural entry to the Venice biennale of 1976, an exhibition Eisenman would curate. His own contribution to this exhibition, called *Five Easy Pieces*, would demonstrate his new interest in mandalic form and Jungian psychology.

Eisenman’s leap from deep structure to depth psychology, despite whatever continuity there may have been in the motif of depth, may appear as a sudden and drastic departure from a very rigorous cognitive theory toward a psychological theory of the unconscious that in Eisenman’s previous terms could be accused of a heavy reliance on the semantic. (Eisenman’s preference for Jungian over Freudian analysis may have much to do with his then father in-law, Joseph Henderson, a practicing Jungian who had treated Jackson Pollock). But through this shift Eisenman gave up intentionality – or, at least, intentionality as a strictly individualist concept.

Krauss’s new critical orientation coupled with an editorial change at *Artforum* – Phil Leider departed in 1971 leaving John Coplans as managing editor – produced a strained environment for her. In November 1974, the now-famous ad by Lynda Benglis occur in a conventionalized public language. On this see Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press; Clarendon, 1979). Instead, public language is effectively understood by Krauss to be the world of convention, whereas perceptual embodiedness is understood as the world of the unconventional – an opposition that runs counter to Merleau-Ponty’s insights on institutionality.
appeared, precipitating further acrimony. (These circumstances and the ad will be discussed in the next chapter.) Krauss’s final article for *Artforum* appeared the following month in December 1974. Through she would remain on the masthead for the rest of 1975, Krauss would in that time plan with Annette Michelson the creation of a new art journal with the support of Eisenman and the IAUS.

---

6. Machine

The exchange between Eisenman and Krauss in the years from 1969 to 1974 may be described in terms of a series of moves that each made toward the other. But as each came close to identifying with the other's position, a gap reasserted itself. This gap appeared at times as the difference between art and architecture – a difference that was defined and redefined by Eisenman over the period of this exchange. At the same time, the question of whether or not there was difference between art and architecture served to maintain a parallel trajectory of two different critical projects that ambiguously shared certain terms. The very unease over the distinction between art and architecture highlights the ambiguity between these projects. If one were to pinpoint wherein that ambiguity ultimately resided, it would have to be found in the ways that the relation between art and architecture appeared to depend on another relation – that is, in what had been described in terms of either the differential or non-differential relation to embodied conventions. This second question, in other words, was whether one's experience of art or architecture was wholly embodied or whether one recognized a difference between that experience and one's normal embodied experience.

If the differential and non-differential relations to embodied conventions seem to return the historical problem of this criticism to the production of the new through difference in itself and sameness in itself, an important distinction emerges that distinguishes the problem encountered by Rowe and Fried from that encountered by
Eisenman and Krauss. Earlier I wrote that the notions of difference in itself and sameness in itself were incomplete descriptions of the problems posed by Rowe and Fried but that they nonetheless pointed to the articulation of an event—an event, moreover, described in phenomenal terms. The matter of difference in itself and sameness in itself was for Fried and Rowe a matter of *experience*: though for Fried this was an event of immediacy and for Rowe it was an event arrived at through prolonged engagement. But both describe it as a conceptual certainty grasped through phenomenal experience. For Eisenman and Krauss, those phenomenal terms are replaced by terms whose historical import I wish to expand on here. The production of the new through difference in itself and sameness in itself has, in both Eisenman and Krauss, come to rest on a specific concept of field, or field structure. In other words, what was earlier a matter of phenomenal experience is now attributed to an external causal force. This field concept comes to bear the identity of that relationship between art and architecture, which the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman had ambulated over. What I have described as the separate concerns of Fried and Rowe, those of the practical and the speculative, are here folded in on one another. And as I showed in chapter two, Veblen’s thinking on this demonstrated a movement of discourse that served to institute a new regime of efficiency.

Veblen showed that economists’ borrowing of the concept of field from thermodynamics had resulted in the anthropomorphization of a mathematical function by attributing causality to it. Economics was better understood by a study of institutions, which he essentially described in terms of their division of speculative and practical knowledge. If Veblen’s analysis has any bearing on the matter at hand here, it may be
worthwhile to begin by considering how metaphors for the practical and the speculative played out at this moment.

For example, one might consider Krauss’s shift in interest from the work of David Smith to that of Robert Smithson and Richard Serra as a changed relation to the pastoral. That is, Krauss’s analyses that led to consider the site or the landscape as the material and conceptual ground to the work had pointed to an unacknowledged aspect to modernist art as it had until then been understood. And as much as this was a critique of her colleagues it may also be taken as a self-critique. In this sense, Smith’s oeuvre ought to be seen in relation to the Bennington, Vermont environment of his rural studio. Implicitly, the pastoral is as much a target of Krauss’s later critique as is the notion of co-presence. And if Leo Marx’s historical study of technology and the pastoral tradition in America may be read in contemporaneous terms as well, as Marx intended, it is possible to see this shift away from the pastoral in broader terms. In reference to Marx’s study, Caroline Jones’ *Machine in the Studio*, for example, shows that the challenges of a number of artists in the 1960s explicitly confronted the pastoral metaphors for studio art.¹

Before one establishes the embrace of mechanism as confirming a general historical trend away from the pastoral, however, some consideration should be given to an alternate connotation to the term machine. Such was referred to by Marx recently when he noted the use of the slogan “Stop the Machine” by demonstrators protesting the war in Vietnam.² If “machine” could be given this valence, it stands to reason that aspects of the pastoral could be called upon as a part of a pacifist movement. And it is also worth considering how the pastoral was, explicitly or not, embraced by activist politics among

---

² See note 1 in chapter one.
artists. Take, for example, the incident that served to establish the Art Workers’ Coalition – a collectivity of artists that first formed as a means of lobbying for artists’ labor and intellectual property rights and soon became a voice for artists’ protests against social injustice in the US and the violence in South East Asia. When the Museum of Modern Art authorized the exhibition of a work by Takis, which it owned, the artist, upset at not being consulted about the use of his work, went to the museum, removed his piece from the exhibition and placed it in the museum’s sculpture garden. That the work, a kinetic sculpture, was chosen for an exhibition titled *Machine* is not likely to have determined the artist’s actions. (At issue, according to Lucy Lippard, was that Takis had wanted to be represented by a different piece.)³ It does point, however, to the above mentioned valence to the term machine, which artists with perhaps varying motives had called on in direct and not so direct challenges to the pastoral. In other words, that Takis placed his reappropriated sculpture in MoMA’s *garden* seems to suggest that when, one might say, the machine turns against you, appeals to the pastoral may be made.

I call on the ambivalence of this metaphor to address a more specific issue – namely, how practical and speculative knowledge is figured. For the fundamental ambivalence of machine is that it may represent an instrument of practical knowledge on the one hand and on the other it may become a figure for the appearance of causality in

things themselves. Instrument or automaton, the machine's ambivalence I shall suggest is the very ambiguity between Krauss and Eisenman.

But the ambiguity between Krauss and Eisenman is not (or not simply) expressed through figure or metaphor. Instead it lies in alternate uses of the field concept. In Krauss's criticism this is most evident in her turn to a version of gestalt theory. An alternate notion of field is at work in the linguistic theory of Noam Chomsky that Eisenman relied on and adapted to his own ends as much as Krauss had done with gestalt theory. To discuss the relation between these two field concepts requires a genealogy of the cognitive sciences, which will be drawn upon here in the briefest way in order to sketch out the historical source of the ambiguity in question and to point to the broader domains of knowledge that this problem has impacted on.

When gestalt theory emerged in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s it drew closely on contemporary developments in the physical sciences. As a general theory that aimed to unite physiological aspects of perception with a cognitive psychology, gestalt theory held subject and object under its purview. That is, it attempted to speak of phenomena and their perception in terms of wholes or systems. Thus, the gestalt that results from reading a figure off of a ground is the recognition of a part in terms of a whole, a whole that is founded in the very act of recognition.\(^4\)

The attempt to find a general principle for this process led some theorists to search the physical sciences for a related process. And since the physiology of perception

had been understood in terms of the electrical behavior of neurological impulses, the turn to statistical mechanics seemed appropriate, as electrical and thermal accounts of systems could easily be compared. In particular, the principle called upon was the second law of thermodynamics, which had been around since the mid-nineteenth century but had recently been reinvigorated by quantum theory. The law, which states that energy convertible to use tends to dissipate, a condition known as entropy, was formalized mathematically and thus made available to a range of applications. In this way, gestalt theory could speak of field structures as a kind of equilibrium of neurological charges that was also present in the equilibrium of molecular energy within a closed system – an equilibrium that in both cases tended to maximum entropy.5

This connection of gestalt theory to entropy would, by extension, link it to a broad range of sciences. For the formula of entropy, as articulated by statistical mechanics, became applicable to nearly any study that had anything to do with probability, chance and certainty. In fact, one may say that if Veblen showed that the first law of thermodynamics (the conservation of energy) was the bugbear of neoclassical economics, then the second law may be seen to haunt a whole range of sciences emerging in the twentieth century – cognitive, information, computer, cybernetic, as well as economic.6 In both laws, a field concept is called upon, and it is the alternate uses of this concept in these latter applications that is of concern to my story.

The most notable application of entropy, perhaps, is its role in the development of the digital computer. This has its beginnings in information theory and the development

---

of binary code by Claude Shannon, which entailed the parsing of information into either/or statements to which a digit (0 or 1) would signify a known quantum of information (a “bit” or binary digit). Though this would be the basis for digital computation, at the time the first important application was the creation of a code that could be used by the military to avoid the enemy interception of messages. A theory of communication thus emerged out of the development of binary code. Entropy could be employed in this theory because any given situation could be described in terms of relative uncertainty – the more bits of information you have the less uncertainty. Because in statistical mechanics entropy is a measure of probability (energy statistically tends to dissipate) and, from a certain perspective, uncertainty (entropy is the degree of molecular disorganization of a system), when applied to the notion of signal transmission entropy becomes a measure of the capacity of a code to transmit information. It is based on the paradox that high entropy in a code is able to convey more information – each bit is more information, there is less redundancy.7

The notion of signal transmission at the center of information theory also had its uses in the study of language, where linguistic forms were considered in terms of statistical occurrence. Linguists like Noam Chomsky, however, disputed the accuracy of its analyses. As a rationalist working within a Cartesian tradition, Chomsky argued for the conscious ability of agents to produce from a sufficiently complex grammar unpredictable linguistic forms.8 However, the critique of information theory by linguists like Chomsky was not simply the pitting of rationality against the machine. The

development of computer science and cybernetics was intrinsically wed to the study of rationality – the dream of those sciences was to build a machine that could itself be rational, or could come as close to rationality as possible.⁹

In this way, one might say, some of the ambiguity of the machine metaphor was naturally at home in the computer sciences. Indeed, the other major wartime development in this area, despite certain terms shared with information theory, was in a way its opposite. That development was the invention of cybernetics by Norbert Wiener.

During the war, Wiener was called upon to improve the effectiveness of aircraft gunfire. The specific problem this entailed was that of a moving target. By treating both gunfire and the evasive action of the enemy as information, Wiener attempted to overcome the uncertainty of the battlefield – an uncertainty which he read specifically in terms of entropy. For Shannon, entropy could convey more information precisely as a field against which a code could be embedded – the information received was that sent intentionally as a signal. Wiener’s problem, on the other hand, entailed the reading of “unintentional” information – each evasive action by the enemy would become information added to a system – a self-improving system of gunner and target that was had by creating a feedback loop. Each added piece of information would be input as the system adjusted its overall performance according to the assessment of the previous performance. The system in this initial test case was that of a servo-mechanism, but the theory of cybernetic feedback could be applied to any closed system.¹⁰

---

⁹ Mirowski notes that Chomsky’s hierarchization of languages according to complexity was explicitly adopted by computer scientists, *Machine Dreams*, 88-92.

The law of entropy, then, as an account of causality that functioned as a field, was exploited by computer science and cybernetics in the construction of machines. But the ambiguity of machine as metaphor is also evident in the alternate uses of these machines – that is, in the creation of code and systems improvement based on selected input in computer science, and in the creation of a mechanism that could respond automatically and almost rationally to any input, human or otherwise.

The exploiting of entropy had long been a dream of physicists. In the nineteenth century the notion of a perpetual motion machine was the source of much fanciful speculation. In this context James Clerk Maxwell had proposed a thought experiment in which a tiny agent with the ability to sort out fast moving molecules from slow moving ones might be able to overcome entropy. That the exploitation of entropy by Maxwell’s Demon might be led in alternate directions was recognized by Norbert Wiener:

[Humans are] playing against the arch enemy, disorganization. Is this devil Manichaean or Augustinian? Is it a contrary force opposed to order or is it the very absence of order itself? The difference between these two sorts of demons will make themselves apparent in the tactics to be used against them. The Manichaean devil is an opponent, who is determined on victory and will use any trick of craftiness or dissimulation to obtain this victory. In particular, he will keep his policy of confusion secret, and if we show any signs of beginning to discover his policy, he will change it in order to keep us in the dark. On the other hand, the Augustinian devil, which is not a power in itself, but the measure of our own weakness, may require our full resources to uncover, but when we have uncovered it, we have in a certain sense exorcised it.\(^\text{11}\)

Economic and science historian, Philip Mirowski has shown that in this passage Wiener has diagnosed not only the fact that two senses might found in the concept of entropy, but also the kinds of motivations that were present in the exploitation of the concept in information and computer science during the Cold War years.

The twin demons that governed entropy were assigned a multitude of tasks but as Wiener’s language shows there were certain obvious connections to be made – the Manichaean version was suited to strategic covert operations within military intelligence, which Mirowski describes as a hermeneutics of suspicion, and the Augustinian version was applied to systems improvement like that of the economy, which in its Keynesian postwar years was increasingly treated machine-like as a closed system that periodically needed fine tuning.¹²

A curious thing happened in the 1960s, however. Mirowski shows that the Manichaean version of entropy, the hermeneutics of suspicion, came to be applied more specifically to questions that traditionally concerned economists. Where the rationality of an agent trying to thwart your aims was the main preoccupation of Cold War think tanks, this same concern came to occupy economists precisely as the generic economic agent appeared more and more an agent of disorganization bent on outflanking economic policy.¹³ In particular, as inflation was on the rise economists began to question why policy designed to check it was not working. Some concluded that each policy adjustment was learned by the economic agent so that she would come to expect in advance the outcome of future adjustments and thus make her own compensatory adjustment in anticipation. In this way, the late 1960s saw the rise of the theory of rational expectations in economics, an attempted check against this all-knowing economic agent, which was also a new argument for laissez-faire. Rational expectations theory began to compete with the more advanced versions of Keynesian “fine tuning.” This, as Mirowski’s study

¹³ Ibid., 309-436.
shows, was a competition based on conflicting uses of the concept of entropy, which was
governed by the same “field.”

I draw on the work of Philip Mirowski here to bring attention to the fact that the
ambiguity in the field concept based on entropy was situated in a range of disciplines,
including economics. It is to suggest a framework for locating the alternate uses of the
field concepts in Krauss and Eisenman and to suggest that its connection to these other
disciplines has a genealogical basis.

If Krauss’s turn to a version of gestalt theory came to rest upon the notion of a
field structure, one might note in the first instance that, despite the break with her
intellectual formation, this has resemblances to the general Greenbergian project of
isolating what was intrinsic to the arts. Though, certainly, the reference to the ground or
material support of the work, such as the landscape in Serra’s Pulitzer piece, seemed to
suggest an extrinsic basis to the work. But precisely as information theory’s isolation of
information worked by isolating what was mere disorganization, so too did Krauss’s
account of gestalt theory isolate the field. In other words the field was not all that was not
figure – rather the field was all that was not extrinsic to reading the figure and therefore
excluded mere disorganization. In this sense Krauss’s use of gestalt theory was opposed
to conceptual art understood as idea art or intentionalist art – a kind of arbitrary or
nominalist practice that could not get around the randomness that gestalt theory was able
to overcome.

Eisenman’s reading of Chomsky, on the other hand, was founded on the latter’s
notion of generative grammar. As mentioned, Chomsky critiqued information theory for
supposing a merely mathematical permutability in language. However, Chomsky’s opposition of a Cartesian agent to information theory’s mechanism, did not preclude a machine-like characteristic to that rationality. Namely, the notion of generative grammar was based on a kind of permutability that was recursive.\(^{14}\) Recursiveness was, of course, the basis for Wiener’s cybernetic theory. And Eisenman’s attempt to isolate the deep structure of architecture was based on the effort to make a potentially endless series of “transformations” to a given form recursively embedded in that form.

Both positions of Krauss and Eisenman, then, were defined in a way that essentially posed a politics on two fronts. Each was committed to a critique of her and his intellectual formation that increasingly came to be considered, in both cases, an opposition. And at the same time each was set out against another front that had, in a way, always been there, but now came to be considered necessarily differently. That front which the two opposed had previously been considered as the literal. Now it was a force of disorganization that in political terms was a kind of populism.

For Eisenman, the old debate between the regionalists (populists) and the modernists still served a kind of political orientation, but now a range of semiological theory had been taken up by the populists. And this was the basis for Eisenman’s opposition. Proponents of what Eisenman considered weak semiology included, to a certain extent, Venturi himself, but more so Venturi’s popularizers, who now came to be known as the Grays (as opposed to the modernist Whites according to Robert Stern’s nomenclature), as well as the work of Charles Jencks.\(^{15}\)


\(^{15}\) See note 42 in chapter 3.
To describe Eisenman’s opposition to these forms of weak semiology as a politics is undoubtedly no great claim, but to characterize that politics has been the source of considerable debate. Within Eisenman’s circle, Mario Gandelsonas and Manfredo Tafuri would attempt to translate his project into other terms (those of French structuralism and a combination of dialectical materialism and a Foucauldian theory of language, respectively). And of course to Eisenman’s opponents his project spelled a kind of elitism. But little attempt has been made to compare Eisenman’s project of this period with the politics of the theorist on whose work it so heavily relied.

One may note the apparent lack of relation between Eisenman’s austere architecture and Chomsky’s critique of the US government’s foreign policy and its complicit support from the intellectual establishment. Two points are worth considering in this regard. First, the relation between Chomsky’s own linguistic theory and his political criticism, though definite, can by no means be considered as two areas that are overlaid or whose tools are interchangeable. Rather the two areas have as a hinge a theory of the subject. In other words, Chomsky’s political criticism does not study how ideology is embedded in language (in the way that, say, French structuralism might). Instead the rationality that underpins all language use is used, or rather, appeals to it are made, in political critique (i.e., in a rationalist politics of a democratic Enlightenment tradition). In a certain sense Eisenman’s efforts to speak about a language of architecture, about its


grammar or deep structure, has as its content (if one may admit a content against Eisenman’s proscriptions) rationality itself, which Eisenman designated as the sign of intentionality. As I noted, however, this rationality is constructed in a manner that is implicitly wed to a logic of the machine.

Secondly, and relatedly, a necessary distinction from Chomsky’s linguistics emerges in Eisenman’s attempted translation of it into architecture. Namely, Eisenman is attempting to find a language of architecture, claiming that the normal semantic uses of architecture are a part of ordinary language; whereas Chomsky dealt with the universal characteristics of language acquisition and obviously studied already existing languages. In other words, Eisenman’s efforts to find a language specific to architecture placed his work within a tradition of modernism that sought to find the essential characteristics of the arts. In political terms, Chomsky relied on a model of the public sphere where reasoned argument based on fact and objectivity might clear away the obfuscation and lies of those whose interests are served at the expense of others. But for Eisenman, the task of finding a language of architecture meant that effectively the normal semantic uses of architecture (including both functionalism and postmodernism) were a form of obfuscation. And if that obfuscation was based on the grammar of ordinary language, Eisenman’s attempts to find another grammar only serve to highlight the machine at the heart of that grammar’s rationality. That is, for Chomsky the rational ability to employ recursiveness as a creative means within language is deduced as a feature of the subject.

---

18 In terms of acknowledging a potential to an architectural grammar, Eisenman speaks in reference to future possibilities. He concludes “Notes on Conceptual Architecture,” with the following: “Whether it is possible to develop such transformational methods and at the same time to reduce both the existing semantic and cultural context of any architecture to produce a structure for new meaning, without developing a new sign system, seems to be a central problem for a conceptual architecture.” Eisenman Inside Out, 24.
By setting his architectural project against others as one language against another, Eisenman ignores this kernel of the subject (a linguistic capacity that, for Chomsky, is present in the users of all spoken languages). Instead, he gives us a competition between languages, which is expressed as the integrity of one against the forces attempting to outflank that integrity by the other. This is a competition in which recursiveness is used to preserve integrity against the forces of disorganization, which was the same general concern of cybernetics (as witnessed in Wiener's initial test case of aircraft gunfire).

Speaking of Eisenman in a review of *Five Architects*, titled "Machines in the Garden," Jaquelin Robertson very perceptively called attention to this relation: “‘Deep structure’ (an appropriately ‘now’ title), if I read him correctly, is an essential part of an as yet distilled theory of architectural cybernetics – the ways in which the mind formally (and mysteriously) sorts and maps the territory of the architectural ‘experience’.”

Like Eisenman, Krauss was involved in a politics on two fronts, so to speak. She continued to oppose the criticism of Fried, based as it was on the notion of presentness, or as she put it, copresence. At the same time, Krauss found herself in opposition to another set of criticism that had itself been opposed to the Greenberg and Fried lines all along. As diverse and manifold as these critics were, and as multiply fractious as the editorial board at *Artforum* was, it is fair to say that Krauss conceived of this set of criticism as revolving around the same issue. If the criticism that Krauss opposed may be said to have been

---

19 Jaquelin Robertson, “Machines in the Garden,” *Architectural Forum* v.138 no.4 (May 1973), 50. Since the Five are said (by Rowe and others) to be followers of Le Corbusier, a point with which Robertson concurs (though Eisenman is singled out for departing the furthest in the direction of conceptualism), the obvious allusion here is to Le Corbusier’s famous description of the house as a machine for living. The “garden” context Robertson espies in the work of the Five is the East Hamptons where many of the completed projects are located. Robertson’s review was one of five gathered together by Robert Stern in the same issue of *Architectural Forum* under the heading, “Five on Five,” see note 16 of this chapter. Robertson would later become a partner in the firm established with Eisenman in 1982.
involved in a kind of populism, this was to the extent that it was basically anti-essentialist (recall that Krauss, in contrast, was by now against a Greenbergian sort of essentialism, but still argued for an intrinsic or essential aspect in the field concept that unified the materiality she described in terms of embodied perception). This included fellow editors at _Artforum_, Lawrence Alloway and Max Kozloff, as well as the once occasional contributor, Lucy Lippard. Given Krauss’s onetime loyalty to the Greenberg line and now her trenchant critique of it, and the activist politics of her critic opponents (Lippard and Kozloff in particular), the assessment of Krauss’s politics at this moment, like Eisenman’s, has been the source of some debate.\(^\text{20}\) (I may as well add, even at this late point, that the lack of agreement on this only suggests the need for the extended study undertaken here.)

That Krauss had once been closely affiliated with Greenberg does not in itself seem to bear on her opponents’ criticism – Lippard and Kozloff had made self-avowed and public political turns in the late 1960s (as well as others including Barbara Rose – Alloway’s engagement with British pop in London, however, had been a part of his political orientation before arriving in New York). What critics perceived in Krauss (and Annette Michelson with whom by 1972 she had become intellectually allied) was a continued elitism through a narrow and specialized discourse, even after her distancing from Greenberg.

Krauss, for her part, had come to form in her criticism of Friedian and Greenbergian copresence a position that was equally critical of Lippard, Alloway, and Robert Pincus-Witten. Her “Sense and Sensibility” essay had specifically taken issue

\(^{20}\) For positions counter to Krauss, see the critics of her involvement in denouncing the Benglis ad, discussed below. See also Foster ed., _Discussions in Contemporary Culture_; and for debate over the lasting influence of _October_ in general, see the reviews of _Art Since 1900_ cited in chapter one, footnote 23.
with the labels post-minimalism and dematerialization for post-’60s art. These terms, used by Pincus-Witten and Lippard respectively, were equally as guilty of relying on an unacknowledged narrative as the conventional modernist criticism had been. Moreover, Krauss’s critique of intentionality applied just as much to these critics, who, she claimed, refused to ground their criticism in materiality and were instead content with solipsistic claims to aesthetic validity.21

As for the counter-argument that art need only speak as idea, or as social content, Krauss notes in “Rauschenberg and the Materialized Image” that “while much of Minimal and post-Minimalist work was directed toward internally establishing the primacy of conceptual value over commodity value, the most rarefied versions of Conceptual art managed to render the Idea itself into a kind of commodity” – a concession that Lippard had made in the afterword to her Six Years.22 Moreover, Krauss sees that the specific advantage of materiality is in the way it may potentially be used to level high-art (commodity) objects with other general cultural images (as Leo Steinberg had argued) and thereby invoke a personal, biographical temporality that might counter that of solely aesthetic purpose according to the conventional narratives of art history.23 Evoking explicitly for the first time a Marxian gloss on her project, Krauss considers this in terms of commodity fetishism. Speaking of Rauschenberg’s work (in a manner decidedly different from the much younger author of the 1965 “Boston Letter”), she writes,

21 Krauss, “Sense and Sensibility,” 43.
At the same time, by being absorbed into his world, by being “delayed” there as an incorporated part of his experience, the objects themselves are registered as images. By being deposited onto the pictorial field of experience, they are redeemed from a fate of functioning solely as commodity. And the work, as Rauschenberg conceives it, shares in – by inventing – this redemption.24

Krauss’s invocation of Marxian terms in this essay ought to be seen as part of the context for the now-famous response to the equally famous “ad” by Lynda Benglis. The article on Rauschenberg appeared the month following the Benglis ad and in the very same issue that Krauss and four other editors at Artforum submitted the letter denouncing the magazine’s managing editor for publishing the ad. That letter produced an equally heated response.25 The episode is worth considering further since it has been made the lynchpin of subsequent criticism of, not so much all the signatories to the letter (Kozloff later regretted signing it), but, owing to the subsequent departure of Krauss and Michelson, the presumed politics underpinning their new magazine, October.26

26 See Amelia Jones, review of Art Since 1900: “this image prompted Krauss and several of her coeditors to resign from the board of the magazine and found October,” 378-9; Amelia Jones, “Postfeminism, Feminist Pleasures, and Embodied Theories of Art,” in New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action, ed. Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer, and Arlene Raven (New York: IconEditions, 1994), 16-41; Mira Schor, Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1997). The relation between the ad and the departure of Krauss and Michelson is not as straightforward as maintained by critics of the letter, who prefer to read it as a capsule of the two critics’ motives for leaving the magazine. Though the ad certainly was precipitous, a strained relation between the managing editor and Krauss and Michelson existed since John Coplans took over in 1971. Michelson’s demands for greater coverage for her film and performance interests were continually rebuked (on the grounds, she has claimed, that they did not generate ad revenue). Within two months of the Benglis ad, Kozloff was promoted to a paid editorial position, and
Benglis’s practices leading up to that moment had been quite varied – she had been producing sculptural work since the mid-1960s and video since 1972. She had also recently begun to explore the advertising format as a means of evoking the relation of the image of the artist to commercial media. In what she called her “sexual mockeries” Benglis took on gender and sexual stereotypes of the artist. The first of these was an advertisement that appeared in the April 1974 issue of *Artforum*, where she posed in a sports jacket and aviator sunglasses with her hair slicked back, leaning against a Porsche – an image Benglis would refer to as her “macharina” pose [fig. 37].

This advertisement was for an upcoming exhibition of her metallized knots at the Paula Cooper Gallery. For that same show, Benglis produced an announcement that featured a photograph of her taken by Annie Leibovitz [fig. 38]. Here, Benglis recalls the pin-up tradition. Facing away from the camera, Benglis, nude but for the jeans pulled below her knees, looks back as if coyly from under her raised right arm.

These works serve as precedent for the famous “ad” appearing in the November issue of *Artforum* [fig. 39]. The circumstances of that piece becoming an ad have now become central to reading the work itself and the letter in response to it. For that November issue, Robert Pincus-Witten was preparing an article on Benglis, which he called, “The Frozen Gesture” [fig. 40]. Benglis approached him about including an image as a centerfold. When asked what she had in mind, Benglis presented three images

---

27 Benglis, interview in *Ocular* 4 no.2 (Summer 1979), 34; cited by Richmond, 24.
that she had produced prior to hearing of Pincus-Witten’s upcoming article. These images were meant as different possibilities from which one was to be chosen for the so-called centerfold. Given the content of the images, Pincus-Witten sensed difficulty for the magazine’s publisher, but apparently not for its other editors. He thus told Benglis that artists were not freely given “editorial content.” He suggested, however, that she may purchase ad space. But Artforum stipulated that ads be bought by galleries and not artists. So, Benglis arranged with Paula Cooper to pay for an ad herself that was to have credit given to the gallery, although there was no exhibition of Benglis’s work planned at the time. The rates for the ad were doubled, which was, according to Coplans, owing to the risk that the publisher was taking with the ad.

The piece that resulted, then, was a double page spread inside the front cover, immediately preceding the table of contents. The image of Benglis takes up approximately two-thirds of the right page – the remainder of the space is black, with the small credit that from the upper left corner reads, “Lynda Benglis courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery copyright ©1974 Photo: Arthur Gordon.” The color photo that famously proved so shocking to five of the magazine’s editors and others features a naked and oiled Benglis, with sunglasses, in three-quarter profile thrusting hip and shoulder toward the viewer, while holding from her crotch an especially large dildo.

It may be said that, on the one hand, with this “sexual mockery” Benglis takes aim at the machismo that permeated the New York art world, and perhaps especially that

---

30 This at least is how Benglis tells it in Newman, 390-2.
31 Artforum was published by Charles Cowles with financial backing from his father, Gardner Cowles. Gardner and Mrs. Cowles, who was on the board of trustees at the Museum of Modern Art, despite having nothing to do with the practical running of the magazine, evidently still held moral censure over it. See the comments by Charles Cowles and John Coplans on the matter in Newman, 393-5.
32 The claim that Coplans insisted on doubling the rates is made by Benglis, in Newman, 392. Coplans claims that he had to threaten legal action against the printers, who at first refused to print it. Newman, 393.
of the minimalists, whose workmanlike means had proudly been worn as a badge by many. And indeed, it has often been noted that Benglis produced her sexual mockeries in competitive dialogue with Robert Morris, who, in perhaps ironic commentary on his “minimalist” peers (and the masculinist and hetero-normative discourse surrounding them), had produced his own mocking self-image for an exhibition announcement, which had been reproduced in the September 1974 issue of *Artforum.* On the other hand, Benglis may be said to also take aim at the propriety of that period’s feminism, which largely condoned imagery of the female body only in terms of “positive” archetypes. Indeed, the ad was read as pornographic by feminists who had condemned pornography as essentially misogynistic. But in light of its refusal to submit to 1970s feminist protocols, which have since been critiqued for essentialism and the prohibition on sexual transgression, the ad has also been favorably received as challenging art world biases. And as proof of those biases, the letter from five of *Artforum*’s editors – Lawrence Alloway, Max Kozloff, Rosalind Krauss, Joseph Masheck, and Annette Michelson – has often been cited.

33 The article in which the Morris announcement appears is Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, “Robert Morris: The Complication of Exhaustion,” *Artforum* 13 no.1 (September 1974), 44-9. Almost all discussions of the Benglis ad refer to this “competition” with Morris, and also note the personal relations between the artists, a reference which, owing to the contingencies of biography is sometimes problematic. Schor; Amelia Jones, “Postfeminism.” For some of the problems in obliquely referring to this relationship, see Richmond 27; as Richard Meyer notes, “A series of complex relations between privacy and publicity, between secrecy and exposure, shaped this episode in ways that remain fairly (and perhaps necessarily) opaque to outsiders.” R Meyer, “Bone of Contention,” *Artforum* (Nov 2004), 249. Anna Chave has recently challenged this occlusion, attempting to make public those biographical details that have remained inaccessible despite the resistances of some those involved. Chave, “Minimalism and Biography,” *Art Bulletin* 82 no.1 (March 2000), 149-63.


35 That the ad ought to be seen in relation to the concerns of contemporary artists is suggested by the curators of *Bad Girls* (Marcia Tucker, The New Museum, 1994) and *Gloria: Another Look at Feminist Art of the 1970s* (Catherine Morris and Ingrid Schaffner, White Columns, 2002). The latter exhibition included, incased in a vitrine next to the Benglis ad, a copy of the letter by the five editors. These exhibitions have spurred another round of discussion of the ad. See Richmond, 28-9.
That letter reads, in full, as follows:

For the first time in its existence, a group of associate editors feel compelled to dissociate themselves publicly from a portion of the magazine’s content, specifically the copyrighted advertisement of Lynda Benglis photographed by Arthur Gordon and printed by courtesy of the Paula Cooper Gallery in the November, 1974, issue of the magazine. The history of the copyright mark and the “courtesy,” so anomalous among the advertisement, needs to be told. Ms. Benglis, knowing that the issue was to carry an essay on her work, had submitted her photograph in color for inclusion in the editorial matter of the magazine, proposing it as a “centerfold” and offering to pay for the expenses of that inclusion. John Coplans, the editor, correctly refused this solicitation on the grounds that *Artforum* does not sell its editorial space. Its final inclusion in the magazine was therefore as a paid advertisement by some arrangement between the artist and her gallery. The copyright and the caption linger as vestiges of the artist’s original intention.

We want to make clear the reasons why we object to its appearance within *Artforum*’s covers:

1. In the specific context of this journal it exists as an object of extreme vulgarity. Although we realize that it is by no means the first instance of vulgarity to appear in the magazine, it represents a qualitative leap in that genre, brutalizing ourselves and, we think, our readers.

2. *Artforum* has, over the past few years, made conscious efforts to support the movement for women’s liberation, and it is therefore doubly shocking to encounter in its pages this gesture that reads as a shabby mockery of the aims of that movement.

3. Ms. Benglis’s advertisement insinuates two interconnected definitions of art-world roles that are seriously open to question. One is that the artist is free to be exploitative in his or her relation to a general public and to that community of writers and readers who make *Artforum*. The other is that *Artforum* should be a natural accomplice to that exploitation, for the advertisement has pictured the journal’s role as devoted to the self-promotion of artists in the most debased sense of that term. We are aware of the economic interdependencies which govern the entire chain of artistic production and distribution. Nonetheless, the credibility of our work demands that we be always on guard against such complicity, implied by the publication of this advertisement. To our great regret, we find ourselves compromised in this manner and that we owe our readers an acknowledgement of that compromise.

This incident is deeply symptomatic of conditions that call for critical analysis. As long as they inflect the reality around us, these conditions shall have to be treated in our future work as writers and as editors.36

Though the letter lists the editors’ objections separately, it has been commonplace for those speaking in defense of the ad to point out their connections. That is, the position the

---

36 Alloway, et al., Letter to the Editor.
editors strive for, one on guard against complicity with economic interdependencies within the art world, is one that belies the presumed authority of the critic to speak without interest. This critical detachment is equally on guard against vulgarity for the way it compromises the taste on which the critic’s authority is based. Indeed, Pincus-Witten’s article, which appears in the same issue as the ad, makes the connection between Benglis’s sexual mockeries and her day-glo poured latex sculptures for the way they both throw into question how taste and vulgarity are formed and judged. Further, the editors’ authority is based on the kinds of criticism they espoused, which, it has been claimed, are not all that interested in the women’s movement, despite their second objection. In other words, it has been suggested that owing to the critic’s authority, which is intertwined with the masculinist bias that is an object of Benglis’s critique, the editors were basically unreceptive to that gesture, which they read merely as a shabby mockery of the women’s movement.

I will also argue that the letter’s three objections are connected and that the economic discourse made evident in the third underpins the other two. However, I will suggest as well that an economic discourse also underpins the ad itself. The connection between the economic suppositions of the ad and those of the letter may be had in the dildo itself, or better, in how it signifies. For being presumably the part of the ad that made it a case of extreme vulgarity over and above other instances of vulgarity already appearing in the magazine, the dildo and Benglis’s gesture with it do not receive specific

37 R Pincus-Witten, “The Fozen Gesture.” His article reproduces the “pin-up” taken by Leibovitz. For the letter’s presumed critical detachment and the authority of the critic, see A Jones, “Postfeminism,” 34-5.
38 Both John Coplans and Lucy Lippard point out that Kozloff had displayed feminist sympathies in print, and that both Kozloff and Alloway, through their partners Joyce Kozloff and Sylvia Sleigh, would have been familiar with feminist debate. Newman, 366-7, 422. Though, of course, this did not preclude a “feminist” interpretation of the ad’s failure.
attention in the letter. Yet, the third objection, the ad’s compromising of the editors, must in some sense hinge on how the dildo signifies. Is it enough to suggest that in making the connection to the copyright and the “vestiges of the artist’s original intention,” her “self-promotion,” the editors simply read in Benglis’s gesture a patent “Fuck you!”? Might the dildo have signified in another way for the economic suppositions of the letter? Did the lack of reference to the dildo determine how others have read the letter?

Peter Plagens’ parody of his co-editors suggests at once that their objections centered entirely on this object and that by not identifying what the problem about it was their complaints were merely prudish and nonsensical:

Imagine my perplexity when my nine-year-old son, who’d met this “artist” only weeks before here, in our home, asked me if that dildo was really made of some Japanese plastic which would further depress the situation in our domestic styrene industry! What could I say? I gave him the best evasive fatherly answer I could and assured him that Robert Morris owned controlling interest in the company. And imagine my chagrin when my wife, looking up momentarily from her copy of Screw, asked me if she couldn’t trade me and four box boys in for that … thing! Yet Plagens’ satiric dismissal of the dildo as signifying anything objectionable, certainly a dismissal of the “brutalizing” vulgarity that his co-editors saw, should not be taken as a dismissal of it signifying anything at all. For, indeed, this would seemingly be the precise point of subsequent debate – in particular, whether Benglis has “explicitly collapsed the phallus with the penis” or whether “Benglis loses the dare [between her and Morris] because she manages to offend women by using her body in a pornographic display, and men because she doesn’t just assume a penis, but a huge and defiant one,” or whether “Benglis subverts the psychic symbology of the penis itself [by] literalizing the insistence

---

40 Plagens, Letter to the Editor.
of psychoanalytic models on the woman's ultimate desire to have a penis ... [appropriating the penis to act out its mobility as a sign of gender."

However, it should be noted that most of the debate that centers on the "literalization" in Benglis's gesture seems to assume that the literal object in question is the penis. But is Plagens' letter not more accurately literal? Would not the literal object be the dildo rather than the penis?

In this way, Benglis's mockery of the machismo of the art world is not simply the (ironic) exposing of the fact that in that world one needs a penis, rather she makes that possession a false one, an object that is something else. It is to say that to be successful one depends on a penis the way one would depend on an instrument, or, if you will, a machine. Benglis suggests that mastery in the art world does not revolve around traditional notions of genius, but instead around a masculinist bias that operates as a machine.

At the same time, Benglis's other challenge – that toward the consumption of the image of the artist – is also suggested by the dildo to have an economic dimension. That the dildo is double-headed and equally points toward the artist suggests another reading – that of the desire for the artist. Claiming that the response to the ad shows that Benglis "successfully inverted the oppositional politics of the gaze," Amelia Jones writes: "Appropriating the penis to act out its mobility as a sign of gender, in the meanwhile Benglis elicits uncontrollable critical desires that must be rechanneled into critical opprobrium." If Benglis's appropriation is a transgressive empowerment, she

---

41 Chris Straayer cited in R Meyer, 73; Schor, 24; A Jones, "Postfeminism," 33-34.
42 That the dildo is double-headed (the second head is occluded by Benglis's pubic hair) and has two symbolic valences is pointed out by Richmond, 30.
43 A Jones, "Postfeminism," 34.
nonetheless offers her body to the viewer's gaze, despite or because of this. In one sense the critical desires, which Benglis thematically questions in her work for their "taste," are given an objectified sign in the dildo. In this way, the work challenges not simply by forcing those desires to be rechanneled into critical opprobrium. But by making those desires into an object, the gesture gives symbolization to the mechanism or apparatus that supports that desire.

In another sense, however, those desires may wholly escape symbolization in the dildo – that is, when speaking of desires for the image of the artist plus dildo. It is this surplus that, resisting symbolization, might offer the ad an economic siting that is different from the other gestures. But it is also in this sense that the ad may circulate in a different economic sense – namely, that it lends itself so easily to being unhinged from its site as ad in an art magazine, to its literally being torn out. (As Richard Meyer says, go into any library that has that issue of *Artforum* and more often than not this is what has happened.)\(^{44}\) And moreover, what is torn out is the right page of the two-page spread, leaving the page with the credit behind. Decontextualized in this way the image, one imagines, circulates as any pornographic image might (or else, as Meyer also suggests, it may provoke, again, as any pornographic image might, someone to destroy it).\(^{45}\) This account of the image's potential entry into a circulation the same as that of porn is to highlight the fact that the image only very precariously retains this surplus over and against the other economic readings – that is, only by maintaining its siting as an ad in *Artforum*. And if this precarious relation to its site is precisely the point, that the ease with which the image may be detached from symbolization is encouraged by Benglis,

\(^{44}\) R Meyer, 249.
\(^{45}\) Ibid., 249.
then it returns all the more so to the artist’s manipulation which, again, is given symbolization in the dildo.

In the sense that the dildo offers up these symbolizations, it is perhaps a wonder that the letter by the five editors did not find a means of referring to them. Though it is possible that the divergences among the five signatories on other matters may have been at issue, Krauss’s own position in her recent criticism may have found a means of expressing this. For example, that the dildo might symbolize a critical apparatus as instrument suggests that it is Benglis wielding this instrument – again, this is not, or not simply, in the ironic sense that one might possess a symbolic penis, but in the literal sense that one might operate a machine. In other words, as always with irony, there is the “withheld” position made actual – that of the artist “behind” the image – and in this case the artist manipulates, and stands apart from, the critical apparatuses that reproduce masculinist biases and project commercial desires for the artist. The claim that the artist may stand apart from and manipulate the machine was one that Krauss had refuted as one that had called upon the old machine and garden metaphor. That is, it was the spurious assumption of the pastoral tradition not simply that one could make one’s intentions wholly present to the viewer but that one could stand apart from art’s material determinations.

But if the five editors’ criticism of the ad may be expressed in the terms Krauss was using for critiquing both “formalist” and “conceptual” art, it is equally possible to suggest that the symbolization of the dildo may have been reflected back to Krauss as the very symbolization of her own project. The position in the letter points to an opposition between editorial and advertisement space. Benglis’s challenge to the exclusive domain
of editorial space as that of critics alone may not only be seen in relation to other artists’ magazine pieces, but it is also worth noting that the entire artist-critic relation had been changing since the 1960s. Increasingly artists came to hold MFAs and to enter into the same discursive and institutional orbit as critics.\textsuperscript{46} Thus, when the letter calls upon vulgarity as an issue, it is not only with the motivation that Jones points to – that of preserving a critical authority – it is also in the sense that challenges to that authority had an “institutional,” or, perhaps better, educational, basis.\textsuperscript{47}

Is it, then, too far off to suggest that what Krauss perceived in the Benglis ad was a bad gestalt? For if Krauss’s project up until then was the production of a gestaltist machine based on a field structure, what emerges in the ad is Benglis’s pointing (literally, as it were) to a different kind of ground. The layout of the ad highlights the photo’s position against the blank black space that is literally the advertising page in the magazine. But as ground it points to a broader field that is the economic and, apparently, institutional support for the magazine and its criticism.\textsuperscript{48} Similarly, in his article, Pincus-Witten describes Benglis’s poured latex sculptures as figures that are read against the gallery space as ground.\textsuperscript{49} Where Krauss had previously made the claim that figure-ground alternation had pointed to the gallery space (as in Ronald Davis’s work) as \textit{material} field (i.e., as a field structure that holds as a field because of its material and temporal dimension), Pincus-Witten argues here, and Benglis insinuates in her ad, that the gestaltist field may be better considered as an “institutional” support. What allows an

\textsuperscript{46} A part of this orbit was established with the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1966. See footnote 39 in the introduction.

\textsuperscript{47} I say educational because the ease of reading the ad as institutional critique points to problems of the way “institution” is figured as outlined in chapter one.

\textsuperscript{48} Richmond suggests that the ad’s layout underlined its economic content, but this, she says, is because of the “waste” of space involved, 27.

\textsuperscript{49} Pincus-Witten, 57.
institutional reading here is the making explicit of a causal mechanism. This, of course, will become an issue for the Krauss writing in October in just a few short years (as well as for other October writers). But before coming to that figure – institution – Krauss here may be said to have been confronted by a bad gestalt – by the figuralization of the machine that was then her project.

In short, between Benglis’s symbolization of the dildo as machine-instrument, and the rebounding of this back to Krauss’s project as a bad gestalt, economic discourse surrounding the ad proved beholden to the vicissitudes of the machine. Instrument or automaton, it pointed to the efficiency of (the) economy itself.
7. Crux

The turn Krauss takes away from Fried now needs to be seen in the context of the entire edifice that has become the standard criticism mounted against Fried. The breadth of this critique can be had in the seemingly endless number of Fried’s critics besides Krauss. Here for example is a short list: Robert Smithson, Annette Michelson, Lucy Lippard, Douglas Crimp, Craig Owens, Stephen Melville, T.J. Clark, Hal Foster, Benjamin Buchloh, Maurice Berger, James Meyer, Amelia Jones, Pamela Lee, Caroline Jones, Mark Linder. Krauss’s critique of the notion of presentness was not without precedent. Both Smithson and Michelson had earlier offered sharp criticisms of the apparent metaphysics underpinning this concept.1 But what is significant in Krauss’s critique is how it leads, in the first place, to the kind of postmodernism advocated in the pages of October. Crimp’s revised essay to the Pictures exhibition he curated at Artists Space, which appeared in October in 1979, is important not only because it situated “Art and Objecthood” as the counterpoint to the critical program of Crimp’s exhibition, but also because it provided the framework for what would be identified as the “critical postmodernism” of the “Pictures” artists, which was a category that extended beyond the five in the Crimp exhibition and included others discussed by critics who referred to Crimp’s essay.2

---

2 Pictures showed at Artists Space from Sept 24 to Oct 29, 1977 and featured work by Troy Brauntuch, Jack Goldstein, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo and Phillip Smith. Between the original version of the essay
The notion of critical postmodernism would be set forward by Foster in the 1983 anthology that he edited, *The Anti-Aesthetic*. This book served to align two different strains of art criticism under the heading of postmodernism – namely, structuralist and poststructuralist (the Krauss of the late 1970s, Crimp, and Craig Owens) and dialectical (Foster, who bolstered his own position with the inclusion of Frederic Jameson and Jürgen Habermas). The dialectical criticism was added slowly to *October* – Buchloh, who was not included in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, first wrote for the journal in 1981, Foster in 1985. However, the alignment of both strains would be further reinforced in Foster’s 1986 essay, “The Crux of Minimalism.”

The maneuvering required to align the two strains of criticism is never acknowledged as such. Instead, Foster offers a genealogy of critical postmodernism that happens to have two sources – namely, the two modernisms that become evident through the crux of minimalism. These are the minimalist/site-specificity and the
Duchampian/conceptualist versions of modernism, which are made apparent at the moment of minimalism's crux. And that moment I have alluded to already. It is the moment when high modernist criticism threatens to breakdown. According to Foster, Fried recognizes this in Greenberg's passing remark in "After Abstract Expressionism," where he claims for pictorial art "two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness." Greenberg notes, "the observance of merely these two norms is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture: thus a stretched or tacked-up canvas already exists as a picture – though not necessarily a successful one." Fried interprets this in "Art and Objecthood" by noting that Greenberg had recently suggested that the "look of non-art was no longer available to painting," that "the borderline between art and non-art had to be sought in the three dimensional, where sculpture was, and where everything material that was not art also was." This meant that "Minimal works are readable as art, as almost anything is today – including a door, a table or a blank sheet of paper…. Yet it would seem that a kind of art near the condition of non-art could not be envisaged or ideated at this moment." And for Fried, "the meaning in this context of 'the condition of non-art' is what I have been calling objecthood."

What is notable for Foster in this ushering in of Greenberg by Fried to bolster his argument against objecthood is the necessary distinction Fried is forced to make from Greenberg's position. And this takes place in an extended footnote about what constitutes a successful picture, part of which reads as follows:

---

7 Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 152.
To begin with, it is not quite enough to say that a bare canvas tacked to a wall is not “necessarily” a successful picture; it would, I think, be less of an exaggeration [in 1996 Fried amends this to read, “more accurate”] to say that it is not conceivably one. It may be countered that future circumstances might be such as to make it a successful painting, but I would argue that, for that to happen, the enterprise of painting would have to change so drastically that nothing more than the name would remain. (It would require a far greater change than that which painting has undergone from Manet to Noland, Olitski, and Stella!) Moreover, seeing something as a painting in the sense that one sees the tacked-up canvas as a painting, and being convinced that a particular work can stand comparison with painting of the past whose quality is not in doubt, are altogether different experiences: it is, I want to say, as though unless something compels conviction as to its quality it is no more than trivially or nominally a painting. This suggests that flatness and the delimitation of flatness ought not to be thought of as the “irreducible essence of pictorial art,” but rather as something like the minimal conditions for something’s being seen as a painting; and that the crucial question is not what those minimal and, so to speak, timeless conditions are, but rather what, at a given moment, is capable of compelling conviction, of succeeding as painting.\(^8\)

The distinction that Foster seizes on is in Fried’s emphasis on the requirement of successful painting to compel conviction – a phrase in which Foster reads disciplinary and theological overtones, which are confirmed for him in the essay’s invocation of Jonathan Edwards. Foster’s perception of Fried scrambling to hold together the last remnants of late modernism’s critical seat of judgment suggests for him that minimalism served to break down or expose the basis of that judgment seat. Site-specificity and conceptualism become, then, the two prongs of attack on the institution of art.\(^9\) What Foster does not acknowledge is that this at the same time is an attempted genealogical tracing of the two strains of criticism that come together in *October*, which, I shall argue, is the result of a specific maneuvering under the figure institution.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Krauss’s criticism opposed, and was opposed by, a number of critics who took up a more or less populist banner: people like

---

\(^8\) Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 169 (Fried’s emphasis).
Lucy Lippard, Lawrence Alloway, and Max Kozloff. For what Krauss still owed to her Greenbergian formation – that criticism continued to be necessary to evaluate art’s constitutive conditions – she along with her October colleagues would continue to come in for critique among those who saw in their promotion of critical postmodernism a renewed elitism. By the late 1980s historical accounts of the minimalist and conceptual era began to revise the October genealogy. But what is significant about these revisions and critiques of October-style postmodernism is that the critique of Fried would still stand. Maurice Berger’s monograph on Robert Morris, for example, and Amelia Jones’ tracing of a different genealogy of Marcel Duchamp in the art of the 1970s both reject exclusions made by October criticism. Yet, they at the same time continue to read Fried’s “Art and Objecthood” as modernism’s last gasp – a crux that gave way to a different postmodernism: for Berger this is to be found in the activist politics of Morris and for Jones it is in the range of performance and body art practices of the 1970s.

The October framework of the late 1970s and early 1980s, I am suggesting, is dependant on the uses of the figure institution. And critics of October, like Berger and Jones, have come to see in critical postmodernism not so much a challenge to the institutions of art, but a different kind of institutionalization of certain strategies like appropriation and allegory, key features of the criticism surrounding the “Pictures”

---

10 This criticism was diverse. Real Life magazine, edited by Thomas Lawson, attempted to chart a path for figurative art that avoided the intellectualizing of October and the brash commercialism and questionable rhetoric of neo-expressionism, which the latter also opposed. Meanwhile so-called alternative spaces and various artists’ collectives established a critical discourse outside the October framework that drew on feminist and activist politics. See Ault, ed. One may note the general Manhattan geography that these differences point to: that is, if October opposed the blue-chip mid-town galleries, it found its own constituency in Greenwich Village. However, a whole constellation of East Village practices remained unaddressed in October.

artists. More recently, however, the *October* framework has informed what may be called its second generation. Studies of the 1960s by James Meyer and Pamela Lee, while bypassing the import of minimalism to 1980s critical postmodernism and institutional critique, have returned the understanding of that period to some of the metaphors I described in the previous chapter. What these studies share with their earlier counterparts is the same reading as Foster's of Fried taking high modernism's last stand.

I would like to draw out a few of the running themes in the criticism of Fried and their place in the historiography of the 1960s. First, a common reading of "Art and Objecthood" is that, despite its polemic against literalism, it fairly accurately diagnoses the situation in the late 1960s. In this way Foster can claim that Fried was right to identify the problem in Greenberg, but his recourse to theology, to Foster's mind, was an attempt to avert the matter away from the issue not to confront it. What resulted instead was the laying bare of the faith required of high modernist criticism. But this, according to Foster, does not detract from Fried's diagnosis of literalism as that which was about to supersede modernism. What Fried holds against literalism is what, according to Foster, those artists have to their advantage. The argument had appeared before and was to appear after Foster. It had been made by Crimp in favor of the sensibility of artists he endorsed. Krauss, of course, had come to the defense of some of the artists that were deemed literalist, and Berger would also reiterate the argument in favor of Morris.

---

12 J Meyer *Minimalism*; Pamela M Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960's* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2004). Both Meyer and Lee were students of Yve-Alain Bois, who has published often in *October* and collaborated with Krauss on their *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York; Cambridge MA: Zone Books; Distributed by MIT Press, 1997). Berger was a student of Krauss's whose own oedipal rebellion, one might say, set the stage for his break from her.

13 Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism."
One of the difficulties in this argument, however, appears in a statement like the following: "Despite Fried’s moralizing conclusions about the dangers of the new sculpture, his observations about the way such art functions in relationship to the spectator continue to read as astonishingly perceptive." If Fried’s observations are accurate, what precisely is wrong about his “moralizing”? Is it that moralizing is not allowed in art criticism? Or is it that Fried has simply chosen the wrong side to defend?

The separation of Fried’s observation from his judgment becomes a ploy taken up by most critics of “Art and Objecthood.” For Foster, the accuracy of Fried’s observations can be had in his comments on the famous passage by Tony Smith about his nighttime ride on the New Jersey turnpike –

What was revealed to Smith, Fried argues, was the “conventional nature of art.” “And this Smith seems to have understood not as laying bare the essence of art, but announcing its end.”... in this epiphany about the conventionality of art is foretold the heretical stake of minimalism and its neo-avant-garde successors: not to discover the essence of art à la Greenberg but to transgress its institutional limits (“there’s no way you can frame it”), to negate its formal autonomy (“you just have to experience it”), precisely to announce its end.

– and in his footnote on Greenberg’s tacked up canvas –

“This is not to say that painting has no essence; it is to claim that that essence – i.e., that which compels conviction – is largely determined by, and therefore changes continually in response to, the vital work of the recent past.” This formula is an affirmation of categorical limits (“painting”) and institutional norms (“the vital work”) in the face of the minimalist threat to both. As such it attempts to resolve the contradictions of late-modernist discourse inherited from Greenberg

---

15 Stephen Melville’s deconstructive reading of Fried has, perhaps even more perceptively, noted that the "metaphysics of presence" to be found in “Art and Objecthood” is also a problem in the *October* postmodernist criticism that takes issue with Fried. For this reason, Melville’s critique stands apart from the rest and I will treat it with more care in the final chapter.
16 Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” 51-52. The passage from Smith cited by Fried concludes with: “The experience of the road was something mapped out but not socially recognized. I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that’s the end of art. Most painting looks pretty pictorial after that. There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it.” Samuel Wagstaff, “Talking With Tony Smith,” *Artforum* 5 no.4 (December 1966), 19; cited in Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 158; and cited in Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” 51.
but in a way that remains within this discourse and stands against its supersession in minimalism.¹⁷

The truth of Fried’s observations, according to Foster, has to do with the institutional character of art. What I shall argue in what follows, however, is that Fried’s notion institutionality bears closer examination better than does Foster’s. For the moment, however, let us return to what Foster perceives in Fried’s holding out for the autonomy of late-modernist discourse.

Foster writes,

With its condemnation of theatrical art and its insistence on individual grace, this brief against minimalism is distinctly puritanical (its epigraph concerning the presentness of God refers to the Puritan theologian Jonathan Edwards). And its aesthetic does depend on an act of faith.... Apparently the real threat of the minimalistic paradigm is not only that it may disrupt the autonomy of art but that it may corrupt belief in art, that it may sap its conviction value. Here the doctrine of aesthetic autonomy returns in a late guise, and it suggests that rather than separate from religion (as Enlightenment aesthetics sometimes proposed to be), autonomous art is, in part, a secret substitute for religion – that is, a secret substitute for the moral disciplining of the subject that religion once provided.¹⁸

This issue is often raised by Fried’s critics: that his insistence on the role of judgment has recourse to the language of faith. The one historian who has, perhaps, gone the furthest in probing Fried’s sources is James Meyer. However, despite his attempt to faithfully reconstruct Fried’s politics of communication and its basis in the dialogue with Stanley Cavell, Meyer maintains the standard reading of Fried’s (supposed) invocation of faith:

¹⁷ Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” 53.
¹⁸ Ibid., 52-53. Without (explicitly, at least) conceding Fried’s “accurate observations,” as others so often would, Annette Michelson in 1969 wrote harshly of the same theme in Fried: “Examine the mutation of things,” says St. Augustine, “and thou wilt everywhere find “has been” and “will be.” Think on God and thou wilt find “is” where “has been” and “will be” cannot be,” Absolute presentness being the attribute of Divinity, to experience ‘the work in all its depth and fullness’ as within ‘a single, infinitely brief instant’ is to dwell in Presence, in ‘conviction’ as in Revelation. Modernism seen thus assumes the aspect of a Reformation, bequeathing, in its prescriptiveness, its preoccupation with a canon, its identification of aesthetic decisions with moral choices, a reportory [sic] of Calvinist themes of sin and redemption for our contemporary rehearsal.” A Michelson “Robert Morris,” 19, 23.
In “Art and Objecthood” the “faith in the intellect’s coming into an ever purer self-possession” [Krauss’s paraphrase of the early Fried] is merely faith. The confident viewer… has become a believer burdened by doubt. Opticality is no longer opticality exactly, but has taken on a contradictory meaning…. if we take the target of Michelson and Krauss to be the opticality of Greenberg, or of *Three American Painters*, then their critique remains persuasive. In the latter text, Fried describes Pollock’s line as delimiting “nothing – except, in a sense, eyesight.” But in “Art and Objecthood” visual plenitude is no longer guaranteed. Theater, not presentness, has become the ground of perception, for everyday life is theatrical. Presentness is a best a fleeting sensation, an instantaneous recognition, a mere moment of grace – and then it is gone.19

Meyer, wanting to acknowledge the politics of communication (or, as Meyer prefers, “ethics of communication”) that was founded on presentness, and thereby to deflate some of the polemic in Michelson’s early critique, returns nonetheless to the same basic issue. As “a mere moment of grace,” Meyer argues that “presentness-as-grace is an arbitrarily conferred gift that is infrequently (if ever) experienced, and only by a lucky few.”20 Certainly Fried did not conceive of presentness as a common experience (“we are all literalists most or all of our lives”) but the claim that it is “arbitrarily conferred” is completely counter to Fried’s argument. (Likewise, the statement “theater, not presentness, has become the ground of perception” has no sense in Fried’s criticism). This misreading allows Meyer to affirm the central claim of Foster’s “Crux of Minimalism”: “Like two eternal combatants, ‘Art and Objecthood’ and minimalism (minimalism as theater) came to compose a field of opposition, a before and after: a central divide in the aesthetic debates of the sixties.”21

---

20 Ibid., 240. This reading of Fried’s invocation of grace is not uncommon. “‘Grace,’ in Fried’s own formulation, is a sudden and mysterious gift, not a reward for assiduous study,” Caroline A. Jones, “The Modernist Paradigm: The Artworld and Thomas Kuhn,” *Critical Inquiry* 26 no.3 (Spring 2000), 505, n. 32.
How is it that Meyer comes to misread Fried? It is in large part through a
misreading of the epigraph to Fried’s essay. That epigraph, taken from Perry Miller’s

Jonathan Edwards appears as follows:

Edwards’s journals frequently explored and tested a meditation he seldom
allowed to reach print; if all the world were annihilated, he wrote ... and a new
world were freshly created, though it were to exist in every particular in the same
manner as this world, it would not be the same. Therefore, because there is
continuity, which is time, “it is certain with me that the world exists anew every
moment; that the existence of things every moment ceases and is every moment
renewed.” The abiding assurance is that “we every moment see the same proof of
a God as we should have seen if we had seen Him create the world at first.”

Meyer, reading this (and the source from which it derives), says,

In Miller’s reading, Edwards’s empirical brand of Calvinism used the persuasions
of science to stave off the agnostic’s skepticism. For Edwards the continuity of
the world was evidence enough that we “every moment see the proof of a God as
we should have seen Him create the world at first.”

Edward’s creation narrative, placed at the head of “Art and Objecthood,”
reads as an allegory of modernism and modernist painting in particular. It is
Edwards’s contention that we know the world is continuous only because we are
able to imagine its destruction – and know that this has not occurred. “If the world
were annihilated ... and a new world were freshly created ... it would not be the
same.” Had the world been obliterated, Edwards suggests, there would be no
continuity. Yet because the world is as it is, and has always been, we know that it
is continuous and self-renewing.

Note, first of all, the repeated reversals of syntax that Meyer performs on Miller’s text.

Meyer says, “For Edwards the continuity of the world was evidence that we ‘every
moment see the proof of a God...’.” But in the original, the fact that “the abiding
assurance is that ‘we at every moment see the same [this word is omitted by Meyer] proof
of a God...’” derives, syntactically, from the preceding claim – which is that it is indeed
certain that the world does (really, in fact) exist anew at every moment – not, as Meyer
has it, from the continuity of the world. Continuity, in Miller’s text, owes to (is, in fact)

---

23 J Meyer, Minimalism, 236.
time, not God. Meyer, however, makes continuity a gift conferred by grace. This is the precise opposite of Miller’s text, and indeed is the opposite of the sense Fried derived from it – it is as though when Fried says, “we are all literalists most or all of our lives,” Meyer would wish to read “we are all graced by God most or all of our lives,” which is an absurd misreading of Fried’s argument.

Secondly, Meyer writes, “It is Edwards’s contention that we know the world is continuous only because we are able to imagine its destruction – and know that this has not occurred.” Again, Meyer has distorted Miller’s syntax. Miller does not say that

because Edwards is able to imagine the world’s destruction and then deduce that this has not happened (where does Meyer get this?!?) he knows that the world is continuous.

Miller in fact says, that Edwards has performed his thought experiment – he imagines the possibility that the world may be created anew at each moment – and then, because of continuity, which is time, he is certain that the world does indeed exist anew at each moment – there is absolutely no deduction that this does not happen; on the contrary, he is certain that it does.

Owing to this misreading of the Miller text, Meyer returns to the standard reading of Fried’s invocation of faith.

The Edwards epigraph implies that it is only when painting’s destruction is conceivable that painting is capable – under considerable pressure – of renewal. Raising the specter of its own “death,” painting takes on a new life. ... The refinement, the subtlety of the Edwards analogy is its dialectical implication that literalism (painting’s “death”) does not so much destroy the medium as restore it through the force of its negation. Just as Edwards’s fantasy of world annihilation “proves” that the world exists, so too the possibility that painting could be “dead” assures that it is not.24

24 Ibid., 236.
The claim about Edwards in the last sentence I have shown to be patently false – and so the extrapolation of it into Fried’s argument is equally misguided. Nowhere does Fried argue that because the destruction of painting is conceivable it is capable of renewal. This argument sounds much more like what Foster had claimed about minimalism: because of the breakdown of its autonomy, art found a renewal of its original social functions as neo-avant-garde. Meyer’s mangled reading of the Miller epigraph somehow gives two versions of grace: first there is the grace which is the continuity of the world/painting and then, later, presumably to account for Fried’s concluding line, “presentness is grace,” Meyer argues that the grace that is presentness must be arbitrarily conferred. Both of these versions of grace are simply not in Fried’s text.

The problems in Meyer’s critique are called upon here to highlight the difficulties critics have encountered in Fried’s work, despite the seeming ease with which he may be accused of reproducing the ideology of religion. Foster, for example, says that Fried’s aesthetic requires faith because minimalism has disrupted the autonomy of art, has pointed to the conventional nature of art. As Fried has continued to remind us, he had no sense when writing “Art and Objecthood,” despite the polemical tone of that text, that minimalism was about to win out – that is, his argument is not against minimalism as the sole bearer of literal experience as though art were the only arena of importance, but rather that “we are all literalists most or all of our lives.” The argument is not that faith is

25 Furthermore, the “Hegelian gloss” on Greenbergian modernism, that Meyer claims to read here, is nowhere present. What did exist of Fried’s Hegelian reading of Greenberg was jettisoned already in the “Shape as Form” essay.

26 Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism,” 53. Caroline Jones helpfully argues that Foster’s criticism of Fried relies on as exclusive a notion of a “strong paradigm” as Fried. Caroline A. Jones, “The Modernist Paradigm,” 500. However, she holds to the same criticism of Fried’s “conviction,” claiming that because of the “crisis” in modern art that he espied, Fried felt it necessary to call upon “faith” in order to “police the boundaries of Modernism,” ibid., 520.

27 Fried in Foster, ed., Discussions in Contemporary Culture, 77; Fried, introduction to Art and Objecthood, 43.
required to overcome the experience imposed by minimalist art, or even the
conventionality of art that minimalism demonstrated. Rather, the argument is that grace,
or presentness, is the particular experience of somehow circumventing the
conventionality of literal experience (not simply the conventionality of art, which is a
different matter).\footnote{This distinction is almost always elided by Fried’s critics. In other words, where critics accept the
conventionality of art, they take Fried’s invocation of the importance of \textit{conviction} as contradicting this
notion of art, as though convictions about conventions are \textit{necessarily} wrong or arbitrary assertions of
power. The assumption is that the conventions of art are a special case, and that one’s experience of the
conventions of everyday life requires no convictions at all. (Stanley Cavell has cogently argued otherwise
in \textit{Must We Mean What We Say?}) Therefore, according to this reasoning, conviction is only ever “resorted
to” by those whose beliefs are threatened to prove false. Since conviction, by this account, is never proved
true or right (as happens with everyday convictions, however provisionally), it is from the start linked with
an outcome of falsehood. Thus, in her essay on Fried’s footnote reference to of Thomas Kuhn’s \textit{Structure
of Scientific Revolutions}, Caroline Jones repeatedly ties Fried’s use of conviction to the conventionality of
art and concludes that this must mean the \textit{policing} of a paradigm. Caroline A. Jones, “The Modernist
Paradigm.” In this way when Fried speaks of quality or above all \textit{fitness} to that paradigm, Jones sees Fried
evoking a measure that is \textit{beyond} art’s conventionality (a claim Krauss had made in 1971) – this “beyond,”
according to Jones, is the teleological assumption of the evolutionary model that supposes a measure of
“fitness.” Denying the possibility that conviction can refer to conventions and the means of acknowledging
them (a position Fried has abundantly articulated), Jones, unfortunately, follows all who have dismissed the
social import of evolution as an expression of social Darwinism: “The Darwinian mechanism of survival of
the fittest is a rhythm, Kuhn suggests, that is recapitulated in the way the scientific community takes up and
abandons its theoretical tools through ‘selection by conflict.’ Where there is explicitly no God, and no
Truth, there is nonetheless the criterion of fitness (which becomes analogous to Fried’s standards of \textit{quality}
and \textit{fecundity}),” ibid., 505-6. Thus despite recognizing the “nonteleological Evolution” at work in Kuhn,
Jones reads, “against the grain of Kuhn’s [and Fried’s] stated opposition to progressivism,” a “faith” in just
such a progressive modernism, ibid., 506. To be fair, Jones proceeds from Fried’s argument in “Shape as
Form,” which was the first of Fried’s essays aimed clearly to disentangle his criticism from what he himself
took to be the teleology in Greenberg’s “modernist reduction.” The teleology of this reductivism did
indeed haunt Fried’s earlier criticism, although, as I noted in chapter four, he had qualified it as early as
1963. For Jones however, Fried’s efforts to disentangle himself from such a position in “Shape as Form” was
“too late” as he was “already mired” in the “reductionist enterprise,” ibid., 495. If anything has the air of
inevitability, it is this framing of Fried’s position. Not even his own expressly stated views to the contrary
(in 1966 or in 1998) can save Fried: “Interestingly, Fried uses this particular footnote [the one citing Kuhn
to argue against the notion of an ‘irreducible essence to all painting’] again in 1998 [\textit{Art and Objecthood},
35-6] to defend against critics’ charges that his view of Modernism in the mid-1960s was in any way
reductionist (because he said it wasn’t in 1966),” ibid., 496, n. 12. The \textit{evolutionary} model of \textit{conventions}
offered by Veblen, as this thesis hopes to make clear, is an important corrective to the assumptions
employed by many of Fried’s critics.}
Treating it strictly as a paraphrase and quotation of Edwards, none have inquired into Perry Miller's reading of Edwards. (Meyer should be credited for considering seriously the source, but besides the misreadings he makes nothing of Miller's project.) Miller's work, I shall argue, offers much when it comes to reading Fried's invocation of grace.

Why would a secular historian, concerned with charting an intellectual history in order to explore the idea of America, turn to the eighteenth century and bypass the major figures like Franklin and Jefferson? How is it that of the unremitting Puritan, Jonathan Edwards, "no American succeeded better ... in generalizing his experience into the meaning of America"? Perry Miller's answer is that "Edwards' preaching was America's sudden leap into modernity." But why Edwards and not Franklin, who preached the virtues of applied science and the accumulation of wealth? Miller's answer is that Edwards founded his theology, and the source of all meaning, on experience. And it was an understanding of experience that forced his peers to confront their own role in the making of society that was meant as a critique of both the conventions of Puritan doctrine and secular business.

Edwards' role in the Great Awakening of the 1740s - a revival of Puritanism which saw new parishioners proclaim their faith by emphatically demonstrating their conversion experience - has often led historians to consign him to most histrionic phase of New England theology. Indeed, he is often remembered for his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." But Miller's study is aimed at recovering the pivotal role

---

29 P Miller, Jonathan Edwards, xxxiii, 147. See also the introduction to the same text by Donald Weber, v-xxix.
Edwards played, not just in transforming Puritanism, but in reconceiving of social transformation itself.

Edwards is known in theological history for challenging the Federal theology of the covenant, which had become a legalistic and contractual affair that made the church beholden to the exclusive interests of wealthy property owners. At the same time, his interest in broadening the church’s congregation was decidedly not in the name of democracy. After all, it was the deployment of democracy, in a limited sense, within the Federal theology that led to the election of an exclusive clan of elders. Edwards came to believe in political leadership that “has the job of accommodating [it]self to the realities of human and, in any particular situation, of social, experience.” But, writes Miller, “the more one studies Edwards, the more one finds that much of his preaching is condemnation, in this language of welfare and calamity rather than of ‘morality,’ of the rising and now rampant businessmen of the Valley.”

All this is the stuff of social history that might make Edwards more than what he is. As Miller says, “I have no design of inscribing him among the prophets of democracy or the New Deal.” But his attention to Edwards’ intellectual dilemmas does point to something of import to Miller’s time. Aware of the preponderance of the garden and machine metaphors used to describe the social situation at the beginning of the 1960s,

---

30 P Miller, “Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening,” *Errand into the Wilderness*, 164, 165. Here is what Miller wrote immediately preceding this: “He says it without, as we might say, pulling any punches: a ruler must, on these considerations of welfare, be unalterably opposed to all persons of ‘a mean spirit,’ to those ‘of a narrow, private spirit that may be found in little tricks and intrigues to promote their private interest, [who] will shamefully defile their hands to a gain a few pounds, are not ashamed to hip and bite others, grind the faces of the poor, an screw upon their neighbors; and will take advantage of their authority or commission to line their own pockets with what is fraudulently taken or withheld from others.’ At the time he spoke, there sat before him the merchants, the sharp traders, the land speculators of Northampton; with the prompt publication of the sermon [of 1748], his words reached similar gentlemen in the neighboring towns. Within two years, they hounded him out of his pulpit.” Ibid., 165  
31 Ibid., 166.
Miller presented a paper that, while critical of the effects of business and technocracy, rejected the contemporary longings for pastoral retreat, as found for example in much of the renewed enthusiasm for *Walden*. What he called for instead was an ethical practice founded on the sort of understanding of experience that he had attempted to extract from Jonathan Edwards.\(^{32}\)

And it is that account of experience that he offers in the passage cited by Fried – a passage that appears in the penultimate paragraph of *Jonathan Edwards* and serves to summarize what can be learned from the eighteenth-century Puritan. The point of Edwards’ little thought experiment is that it presents his unique formulation of causality entirely within the limits of Puritan doctrine.

Edwards had read Newton and had been impressed with his account of mechanics and the laws of cause and effect, but how was this to be reconciled with the Puritan’s faith in the law of predestination? By arguing precisely that the world is created anew each moment, Edwards maintains a God who graces us with a world, but whose design is removed from the worldly laws of cause and effect. But at the same time, one must not lapse into the thinking that one may do as one pleases because God’s plans are unknowable. This latter, faulty thinking accounts for the free will espoused by Arminianism (named after Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), a Dutch protestant who challenged the Calvinist doctrine of predestination), which Miller describes as the theological counterpart to Franklin. Effectively, it restores an external causality (in God’s design) as the alibi to one’s day to day actions (which is why it was so appealing to business types like Franklin).

\(^{32}\) The paper, “The Responsibility of Mind in a Civilization of Machines,” was presented at a conference called “The Community of Learning,” which was held at NYU in 1961, and is reproduced in *The Responsibility of Mind in a Civilization of Machines* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979).
In the American tradition, Edwards is the most formidable defiance yet leveled against the liberal spirit, against the cult of progress that starts with a denial of man’s kinship with nature and claims to elevate him above the workings of cause and effect.\(^{33}\)

For Edwards, the world that does not have a divine plan written into its own laws of cause and effect meant that the link between the sequences of events was the will (an argument he made with the aid of Locke).

Edwards, we must remember, did not take “cause” in the positivistic sense of that which determines the effect, but rather as that which is necessarily and aesthetically antecedent. So he said that the will is caused by the motive which, at the moment of action, lies strongest in view of the mind, that the view is caused by the prevailing inclination. A man does what he does, not by becoming every moment a new beginning, but “necessarily,” by an inevitable sequence of connections, in which the will is a link.\(^{34}\)

God’s grace was linked up with the human will, and it was up to that will, through constant exertion, to focus itself on experience, which was the site of practical cause and effect.\(^{35}\) And only in this way could one serve God – which was Edwards’ lesson – but it was also in this way that one could avoid the pretenses of Arminianism and, in particular, the opportunism of Franklin – this is Miller’s lesson.

Is there a story of institutionality in *Jonathan Edwards*? (Miller underscores the contemporary import of his book by heading each of its chapters with a passage from a modern author, the first of which is from Veblen.) Edwards broke from the conventionality of speculative knowledge in the doctrines of Federal theology, but at the same time this break produced a reaction that was commensurate with the realignment of the new kinds of practical, business knowledge under the purview of a new Puritan doctrine. In light of this it is interesting to read Fried’s invocation of Edwards. His attack

\(^{33}\) Miller, *Jonathan Edwards*, 257.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., 257.

\(^{35}\) Edwards’ linking of grace with the human will that exerts itself is overlooked by Meyer, who claims grace is merely arbitrary.
on literalism may be likened to Edwards’ attack on Arminianism. And if Fried is like Edwards, may we then say that Greenberg is Cotton Mather (the patriarch of covenant theology) and the critiques mounted by Krauss and Michelson are the reaction of the Harvard faculty to Edwards, which treated him as a pariah and led to his expulsion from Northampton, and sowed the seeds of Franklinian ideology?

That Krauss may be linked to the ideology of Franklin, which assigned an external causality as guarantor of economic practice, is, I am arguing, to be found in her recourse to a field concept in the period I am examining. The persistence of this line of reasoning owes to the continual reading of Fried, as not so much the bogeyman of late modernism, but, despite this, in his perspicuous observation of the “crux” of his historical moment. But what nearly every critic and historian has read in his perspicuity is the identification of literalism, and theatricality, as the way out of the impasse of late modernism – or, more precisely, the ideological basis of late modernism. Thus Pamela Lee, “embroidering upon Meyer’s reading,” sees “Art and Objecthood” as the perfect statement of Fried’s “chronophobia.”36 Lee’s study of the art of the 1960s does much to situate it within the broader discourses of the social sciences of a number of studies that have reconsidered that period’s grappling with the concept of medium. And although she finds discursive links between the minimalists and Fried, Lee makes the duration of literalist art the champion over Fried’s presentness. And what is the duration of literalist art? It is nothing other than the temporality of systems theory and, in particular, the recursiveness of Norbert Wiener’s theory of feedback.

36 Lee, Chronophobia, 36-81.
Lee tracks in great detail the developments of the social sciences, cybernetics, and information theory in the 1960s, as an imprimatur for the emerging concept of medium that was to follow the impasse identified by Fried. Citing Krauss’s recent work on automatism and medium, Lee finds in recursiveness, not only a critical foundation for thinking through the problem of medium (in this post-medium condition, as Krauss says), but also a temporality that is supposed to offer some measure of “resistance:”

For it is in slowness and the capacity to parse one’s own present that one gains ground on what’s coming up next, perhaps restores to the every day some degree of agency, perhaps some degree of resistance. In slowly taking measure of the endless present, one refuses teleological end games. Instead one rests with the immanence of being and the potential to act.  

The entirety of Lee’s book, *Chronophobia*, is founded on the potential of recursiveness, which, as I say, she traces to the development of feedback in Wiener’s cybernetics and its deployment in systems theory. But the problem is in differentiating this potential from the popular accounts of systems theory in “futurology” and other utopian prognostications. Lee attempts to pry free an ontology of time from the technologizations founded on the same theory.

In this way, she claims to approach the issue of recursive temporality as an historical phenomenon by noting, repeatedly, its historical specificity in a “deep structure.” Providing no framing of this Chomskian concept, she embeds her historical account of recursiveness in a structural concept that is itself founded on recursiveness. Indeed, Lee makes a point, in many places throughout her book, of turning her meditation on recursive temporality in on itself, as if recursively.  

But Lee offers no historical

---

38 Claiming this to be the merit of Hans Haacke’s *Grass Cube*, she writes: “Not only does it reflect upon its environment as a transparent box; it seems to mediate a dialogue between minimalist criticism and systems
account of that concept’s foundation on entropy and the second law of thermodynamics. She notes this source but does not see its dependence on an externally causal field concept, which may give to contradictions. For example, Lee focuses exclusively on Wiener’s use of entropy, but does not touch on Shannon’s. Ultimately, Lee’s embedding of her account of recursiveness in an historical concept (deep structure), itself founded on recursiveness, makes it hard to distinguish her “ontology” from the pop sociology enthusiasms she repeatedly denounces.

The point, then, in Lee’s reading of Fried is not to castigate him as someone who is “chronically” phobic of time, but to draw attention to the fact that his preoccupation with the instant is the flip side of the literalists’ fascination with duration. (This diagnostic value of “Art and Objecthood” is, as I say, a by-now familiar theme.) The “metalogical sensibility” – Gregory Bateson’s phrasing of a dialogue about a dialogue – “converges most significantly with Friedian theatricality ... that endless presence in time.” Lee concludes her chapter on Fried with the following:

[T]he legacy of Friedian presentness will haunt our discussion on time and technology in the art of the 1960s, no matter how distant from the minimalism he so criticized or the modernist works he so respected. Chronophobic for some, liberatory for others, the stakes will be high indeed. Grace may not be forthcoming after all, for redemption is hardly possible without an end.

discourse, a mediation on the self-productive and temporal character of medium itself.... Grass Cube is meta-logical. It’s a self-generating dialogue about self-generation: about the recursive, autopoietic relationship between media and the environment.” Ibid., 80-81. This by the way, is Lee’s neat resolution to the machine/garden division that is so predominant in 1960s social discourse – “Grass and Plexi are two sides of the same coin.” Ibid., 81

39 Lee cites an interview with George Kubler, whose Shape of Time she claims for her ontology of duration. There, the interviewer asks whether Kubler had seen connections between his own work and information theory. Kubler responds, “Of the Wiener type, rather than the Shannon type, yes.” Ibid., 255. Had Lee been attentive to this distinction she may have recognized some of the contradictions in the use of entropy. On these contradictions, I refer the reader again to Philip Mirowski, Machine Dreams.
And then, as if in riposte to the pithy line that concludes “Art and Objecthood,” Lee adds, “Begin the begin.”

The endlessness that is the duration of recursive time preempts grace. But the significance of Fried’s presentness, I want to suggest, is that it offers a conceptual break to the field consistency which founds Lee’s “ontology.” This is in the same sense that Edwards, in Miller’s eyes, may be seen to offer a critique of Arminianism. And if Edwards was critical of the free will in Arminianism because it made one’s actions, understood in an economic sense, consistent with divine plans, then might not presentness be a challenge to the “agency” Lee finds in the causal laws of recursiveness? Is Lee’s dismissal of redemption not akin to Franklin’s emphasis on the here and now as the corollary of divine plan, that one’s freedom to accumulate wealth is corroborated by the grand scheme of things? As Miller’s study of Jonathan Edwards shows, “agency” is the oldest ruse in the capitalist book.

The second major theme in the criticism of Fried is the issue of how to read Merleau-Ponty. As I outlined earlier, this was at the core of the difference between Fried and Krauss. That is, this was a difference of whether one considered embodiedness as circumscribed by conventions and through an acknowledgement of them one produced the new as a difference from them, or whether one considered embodiedness in itself as a difference from mere illusiveness, thereby making the identity of embodied conventions a goal of critical practice. In short, it was a matter of conceiving of a differential or non-differential relation to embodied conventions.

---

40 Lee, Chronophobia, 81.
The story I am concerned to tell is of how Krauss’s reading of Merleau-Ponty led to the *October* usage of insitutionality – that is, from her reading of embodiedness as a spatial and temporal experience that countered high modernism’s copresence to the identification of this experience with a gestaltist field, and then from this identification of site as field to the naming of the field as institution. As I explained, Foster effectively codified this chain by making Fried the one who made visible the institutional nature of art. (And, although Foster does not discuss Merleau-Ponty, he implies that Fried’s reading of the phenomenologist only served his reactionary defenses.) Insofar as Meyer and Lee follow Foster’s “crux” thesis, they appear to endorse Krauss’s reading of Merleau-Ponty over Fried’s. However, for them the crux thesis merely informs the larger aims of each of their projects, which arguably is to turn the problem of institution back into a problem of field. But as Lee’s study makes plainly clear, the field she is concerned with (and the one the current Krauss is concerned with as well) is the recursive field – the precise opposite of the gestaltist field that Krauss was preoccupied with in the early 1970s. (It is as though now after many years Krauss finally has come to take up the theme that had preoccupied Eisenman at that time.) For this reason, perhaps, Lee sees no need to go into the question of Merleau-Ponty when she reads the criticism of Fried. (Meyer is plainly ambivalent on the matter: he notes that Fried used Merleau-Ponty in order to distinguish himself from Greenberg but in a way that affirmed his theory of presentness. At the same time, Meyer sees Michelson’s critique of Fried, which uses

---

41 This is clearly the case with Lee as just described. Meyer offers something of a structuralist field of difference as the object of his historical study of minimalism. This field concept has less theoretical weight in Meyer’s hands than in Lee’s, but it does demonstrate a desire for historical explanation that bypasses some of the determinations of “critical postmodernism.”

basically the same Merleau-Ponty as Krauss’s, as collapsing all the claims Fried had made about a politics of communication.)

If Meyer and Lee may be considered second generation *October*-ists, it will be worthwhile to consider two of the critics of *October* that intervened between generations. Both Maurice Berger and Amelia Jones offered up criticisms of the critical postmodernism espoused by *October* for its exclusion of practices that fit outside the narrowly defined avant-gardist tradition. Their critiques have opened important ground in the art of the 1970s that has mostly been left untouched by the *October* critics. However, they situate their own histories of art activism and body and performance art in relation to the same landmark that served the *October* genealogy – namely, “Art and Objecthood.” Furthermore, Berger and Jones both take up the issue of Merleau-Ponty as one that, as they see it, crucially determined the different directions of postmodernism.

Berger and Jones also draw upon, to a certain extent, Foster’s “Crux of Minimalism.” That is, they both perceive that Fried’s “Art and Objecthood” is the symptom of modernism’s last gasp. For they each claim to take up a version of postmodernism. But the postmodernisms they endorse are decidedly different from the so-called critical postmodernism of *October*. That postmodernism is seen to be as exclusive as the modernism it presumed to break from. In short, what has happened is that the appropriation and allegorical practices theorized under the heading of critical postmodernism have themselves become institutional. Or, better, they have accommodated the institution, which is more properly understood in terms of the sexual and social exclusions it performs. In this, Berger and Jones break from Foster’s argument.

However, insofar as they maintain “institution” as the operative term, they are nonetheless beholden to the central point of the crux thesis.

Rehearsing all the usual arguments about “Art and Objecthood,” Berger claims that Robert Morris’s work was expressly about the theatrical in order to “avoid psychological references,” to aim for “a strategic disorientation of the spectator … [and] a deliberate negation of traditional sculpture.” In support of this argument, Berger cites the critique of Fried made by Michelson in 1969. There, she employed Merleau-Ponty against Fried. “Michelson, therefore, advocated a radical revision of the critical vocabulary, one that would reject the flourishes of the formalist metaphysician – ‘the language of our art criticism’ – in favor of the discourse of real experience.”45 But Berger stops short of fully endorsing Michelson’s critique: “Failing to transcend the limitations of phenomenology despite her astute observations, Michelson’s critical method continued formalism’s inherent resistance to broader social issues.”46 The Merleau-Ponty Berger comes to favor is the one Morris himself had produced, which was as read through Herbert Marcuse’s theory of repression and liberation. “If the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty envisioned a world where ‘clear and articulate objects [are] abolished,’ where experience is pure and simple, it did so to apprehend the world free of the conditions of logic and reason established by a positivist, scientific, industrial order.”47 Here, Merleau-Ponty’s notion of embodied experience becomes an aid to the “desublimation of art.” In this way, Berger sees Morris’s work as a “commitment to the

45 M Berger, Labyrinths, 11.
46 Ibid., 11-12. That Berger does not see “social issues” in Michelson’s critique, a charge he also levels at Krauss, is indicative of the kind of definition of that term he adopts – namely, one that takes politics as transparent.
47 Ibid., 67.
idea of desublimating art in order to defy the repressive institutions of art." Institution, then, is by way of Marcusean theory, a function of repression, and read into Merleau-Ponty it becomes something wholly external to embodiedness.

Amelia Jones’s reading of Merleau-Ponty is more complex, but ultimately it leads to the same conclusion. Like other critics of Fried, she endorses the theatricality that Fried condemns. But where *October* critics like Foster saw Fried’s inadvertent exposure of the institutional nature of art through the lens of specifically avant-gardist tactics—in particular, the Duchampian readymade—Jones is concerned to recover a different postmodernism that emerged from this same historical crux. This is the postmodernism of performance and body art, which could equally lay claim to Duchamp as (ironic) patriarch. And given the *differences* of *this* postmodernism from the *October* version of critical postmodernism—that is, the differences that have to do with the exploration of sexual difference—Fried’s attack on theatricality is seen not only as an attack on sexual difference itself (the suppression of difference) but also as an attack on what have been perceived as feminized art practices.49

Like almost every other critic or historian who has critiqued Fried with the aid of Merleau-Ponty, Jones does not address point by point Fried’s own use of the phenomenologist. Instead, she begins by establishing the “modernist subject” as the “Cartesian conception of self.” Against this she reads the critiques of this subject offered

---

48 Ibid., 75. Ultimately, Berger argues that the critique of institutions must take place both “within” the institution—Morris’s experiments with anti-form—and “without”—Morris’s activism, as in his role in the Art Strike at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 22, 1970.

49 A Jones, *Postmodernism*, 41-44. Jones calls upon the historical tendency to feminize the theatrical while degrading it by pointing to Nietzsche’s misogynistic tropes surrounding theater. “The parallel with Nietzsche’s text (as we have seen, itself an exemplar of an en-gendering logic common in Western culture) has the effect of making Fried’s entire essay read as a masculinist diatribe against the threat of feminizing theatrical artistic products.” Ibid., 42. Without wanting to question the existence of an “en-gendering logic” in any criticism, I do, in what follows, want to question the rhetorical strategy of drawing “parallels” and reading their “effects.”
by Merleau-Ponty and others like Sartre. Merleau-Ponty’s critique is held up for positing a “performative self.”

The performative self, whose meaning and significance is not inherent or transcendent but derived ‘from the whole scene of his actions,’ dramatically overturns the Cartesian self of modernism, which construes the body not as enacting the self but as a brute object or hollow vessel given meaning only through the animating force of the consciousness that can presumably transcend it.50

Just as Krauss saw embodiedness as the difference in itself from illusiveness (at first, however, it had appeared as something like the means of modernist illusiveness), Jones sees Merleau-Pontyan embodiedness as opposed to the “transcendent ‘I’ ” of modernism. And just as Krauss therefore saw the aim of critical practice to identify embodiedness (not differentiate from it), Jones argues, “There is no limit or boundary between the body and the world since the world is flesh. (Mendieta’s Silueta pieces, which turn the earth itself into flesh and vice versa, seem to instantiate Merleau-Ponty’s observation.)”51

The issue for Jones is complicated, however, by the fact that Merleau-Ponty has come in for criticism by feminist scholars who have read in his phenomenology of the flesh of the world, a gendered division between the implicitly masculine subject that attempts to overcome his alienation through self-other relations, which are read through a feminized flesh of the world. But Jones does not, because of this, give up on Merleau-Ponty’s theory of embodiedness. The redeeming feature of his theory is the fact of the subject’s enactment, which makes difference (or, différance) the production of a performative.52

50 A Jones Body Art, 39. The quotation in this passage is from Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, which Jones aligns with Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception.
51 A Jones, Body Art, 41.
52 Ibid., 124.
Jones’s reading of Merleau-Ponty against the grain of his feminist critics converges with her reading of feminist performance and body art practices against the dismissal of them by anti-essentialist feminist criticism. In particular, Jones aims to recover practices that were deemed essentialist by critics in the 1980s like Griselda Pollock and Mary Kelly. Such anti-essentialism treats sexual difference as a constitutive difference, and Jones sees this criticism still operating within the modes of transcendence. Jones argues for those practices that have been deemed essentialist precisely because they turn the matter to embodiedness. But, recognizing the critique of Merleau-Ponty, Jones sees the embodied, performative self as split. On the one hand, it is constitutive of difference through a “reversible” relationship of the body/self to world, and on the other it is beholden its original motivation, which is the overcoming of alienation – and this links it with the Sartrean model of transcendence. But how can these two aspects of the embodied self co-exist, especially as the performative dimension was to “overturn” claims to transcendence? Jones holds to the primary distinction between the masculinist prerogatives of the Cartesian subject and embodiedment as its other. And the chain of terms that link up with this Cartesian subject – masculinist, transcendent, disembodied, modernist – are gathered together under the heading institutional. In this way, Jones’s objective is to pry apart from Merleau-Ponty’s embodiedness the constitutive (performative) in the name of practice that might challenge the institutional (that which is already instituted). (In effect, Jones’s anti-anti-essentialism is an institutional critique of not only the anti-essentialist criticism of Pollock and Kelly and the critical postmodernism of the October critics, but also the “institution” of the transcendent subject.)

53 A Jones, Body Art, 41-42.
By holding constitution as model of subject-formation above institution, in a manner that is consistent with artworld definitions of "institutional critique," Jones overlooks that fundamental feature of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, which is the rejection of models of constitution in favor of one of institution – that is, institution as the matrix of subject-object co-production.

If the subject were taken not as a constituting but an instituting subject, it might be understood that the subject does not exist instantaneously and that the other person does not exist simply as a negative of myself. What I have begun at certain decisive moments would exist neither far off in the past as an objective memory nor by present like a memory revived, but really between the two as the field of my becoming during that period. Likewise my relation to another person would not be reducible to a disjunction: an instituting subject could coexist with another because the one instituted is not the immediate reflection of the activity of the former and can be regained by himself or by others without involving anything like a total recreation. Thus the instituted subject exists between others and myself, between me and myself, like a hinge, the consequence and the guarantee of our belonging to a common world.54

In Merleau-Ponty's rejection of the constituting subject is the rejection of objects that consciousness has itself constituted; of the latter "there is nothing in the objects capable of throwing consciousness back toward other perspectives."55 This implies the rejection of treating institution as just such an object. Although her own reading of the performative subject seems to follow much of what Merleau-Ponty describes as the instituting subject, Jones nevertheless holds out for such an object as institution. And this informs her reading of the October critics. This is why when she reads the Benglis ad, it appears as a once-deemed essentialist work, recoverable as a performative that challenges the institutional authorities of the art world.

As I have been attempting to show, the figuralization of institution, the making of it an external force, is the figuralization of a causal efficiency governing the things under its purview. What Jones’s study does is give the figure institution to the latent theme of the machine in the discourse surrounding the Benglis ad. The economy of machine is made the economy of institution – and the nature of that economy I am arguing is a regime of efficiency that cuts across the fields of art, architecture and economics. What follows in the next chapter is an account of how the breaking point was reached in the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman, of how that dialogue turned from an ambulation over the field concept and its related metaphors to a discourse on institutions.

The first issue of *October* appeared in early 1976.¹ It was, of course, not the first magazine in the new period of process and conceptual art to be published outside of the strictly commercial market. Indeed, if one were to consider the magazine as a part of the growth of independent magazines in the 1970s, one would have to discuss others like *Art-Rite* (1973-78), *Avalanche* (1970-76), *Aspen* (1965-71), and *The Fox* (1975-76).² And one would have to discuss factors that led to this growth, such as the creation of the NEA in 1966, which served to subsidize an alternative art market by offering grants to artists, artist-run centers or “alternative spaces,” and, for a while, to critics. In addition to this, the competition for grants encouraged artists to acquire MFA degrees, which at once worked to disseminate critical discourse and to ratchet up the measures of competency.³

I am arguing that the emergence of alternative spaces and an alternative press necessarily coincides with the development of institutional critique (again, through a figuralization of institution) – that is, the alternative appears as an outside to the institution which alternative discourse aims to critique. And while *October* appeared among a broader range of “alternative” magazines, and while its discourse was connected

---

¹ There were two issues in 1976 appearing in the spring and summer of that year. Although it would eventually take a quarterly format, it was not until 1979 that four issues began to be published yearly. There were two issues again in 1977 (spring and fall) and three issues in 1978 (summer, fall and winter).


with others that figured institution in similar ways, it is my contention that in certain important respects *October* was unique among these.\(^4\) In particular, the magazine was closest to the event of institutionality that I am describing, as it became a site of the conflicting uses of the figure institution. In the first instance, this was prefigured in the exchange between Krauss and Eisenman, and then later as *October* took up a discourse of institutions, it emerged in the theory of critical postmodernism.

This unique position I am arguing for *October* owes in many ways to the fact of Krauss's debt to the Greenbergian tradition, which she aimed to divest herself of – a divestment that one may say was never total or complete. For this reason, *October* has often been seen as being not particularly "alternative." It did include coverage of some of the SoHo artists that emerged in the system of alternative spaces there, but of the contemporary artists it covered only some moved in those circles, or moved only loosely in those circles. Furthermore, the editorial contribution of Annette Michelson brought to the magazine much coverage of European historical avant-gardes, which arguably had ceased to be a concern to most conceptual, performance, and post-minimalist artists.\(^5\)

However, I want to argue that the task that Krauss set for herself, and which others would come to take up – that of defining a new critical project out of the salvageable aspects of a modernism that had run its course – placed *October* in the position, in the historical event I am outlining, of siting the divergent figuralizations of institution. What this enabled was the interchange of the competing senses of institution

---

\(^4\) In this sense, I diverge from the Habermasian reading of alternative space/press as counter-public, as developed by Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992), 109-42, and applied to the artworld by Allen and by Frazer Ward, "The Haunted Museum: Institutional Critique and Publicity," *October* 73 (Summer 1995), 71-89.

\(^5\) Where there was a connection was in Michelson's other interest of the time, which was the dance of the Judson group and the film of, among others, Jonas Mekas, Michael Snow, and Hollis Frampton.
through its primary theoretical concept, which was that of critical postmodernism. This, in other words, enabled the interchange of different uses of the figure institution by precisely masking their differences. The interchange of competing figuralizations of institution is, I am arguing, the event of institutionality itself, for it enables, in turn, a new regime of efficiency, a new scheme of practical and speculative knowledge. The place *October* established came about as it, in one sense, defined itself apart from *Oppositions*. Despite little subsequent deliberate exchange between the two journals, they ought to be seen as counterparts. *October*’s own place in the siting of institutionality was effectively set once it became apparent that the projects of Krauss and Eisenman could no longer be reconciled.

* 

My narrative of the exchange between Krauss and Eisenman broke off with the events of 1974. By that time Eisenman was about to abandon his use of Chomsky as he continued work on his series of houses. Krauss had signed her name to the letter denouncing the appearance of the Benglis ad in *Artforum*, and in early 1975 she had sworn off all connection to the magazine. As Eisenman committed the IAUS to funding *October*, the two were about undergo perhaps the most extensive of their exchanges. (I continue to use the term exchange in a qualified sense, by noting that it was not always acknowledged as such nor was it at all moments reciprocal. Eisenman, for example, has acknowledged the influence of Krauss on his “Post-Functionalism” essay, whereas Krauss’s addressing of Eisenman took place in large part through oblique references to certain themes in his writing. Since her break with Fried, Krauss had mostly quit citing

---

6 Eisenman, interview, 17 August 2000.
her colleagues. The end of such a heavy dependence on another's authority, Krauss has since claimed, was a mark of her maturing as a critic.⁷ Both the act and the claim about it may be read as a strategy of distancing herself from her early attachments to Fried and Greenberg.)

During 1976 Eisenman worked on the design for House X while preparing for his entry to the architectural exhibition at the Venice Biennale, which he was also organizing. His commission for House X was lost due to his preoccupation with the Venice project. In that project Eisenman orients his work by way of Jung. At about the same time Eisenman underwent Jungian analysis, owing, he has claimed, to the devastation of losing the commission for what was to be his most important built work.⁸ The Jungian orientation in Five Easy Pieces, the name for his entry to the Venice Biennale, would be mostly discarded in his “Post-Functionalism” editorial for the fall issue of Oppositions, an essay that Eisenman wrote with the aid of Krauss’s criticism. Krauss had, meanwhile, published essays in the first two issues of October. For the spring issue she wrote “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,” and for the summer issue “Jasper Johns: The Functions of Irony.”⁹ As Eisenman dealt with the loss of House X, he planned an exhibition of architectural models, for which he would invite contemporary architects to submit a model that could somehow stand as a statement about (of) architecture itself rather than as a representation of a particular design process. The exhibition, Idea as Model, which opened in December 1976, evidently aimed to establish the possibility of reading Eisenman’s unbuilt work as “architecture” in itself. At Krauss’s

---

⁷ Krauss in Newman, 347. See also, Krauss, “A View of Modernism.”
instigation, Gordon Matta-Clark, an artist she had come to admire, was invited to produce a piece for the show. What resulted in the end was his now well-known *Window Blow-Out*. This work famously provoked Eisenman’s harsh reaction toward the artist, while Krauss, along with many in the artworld, stood by Matta-Clark. *Window Blow-Out*, then, served as a wedge between Krauss and Eisenman at the end of a year that saw a fairly extensive exchange between them. And in particular, that exchange was one that again had worked to close the gap between art and architecture—a gap that was reasserted definitively in the fallout to the Matta-Clark piece. What sets the dialogue of 1976 apart from what had gone on earlier, was that it had begun to search for alternate means of addressing the notion of the field concept that the two had held in common. Those means were no more coherent than the two formulations of the field concept that they had previously followed (i.e., a materialist account of gestalt and a version of Chomskian recursiveness). They were now found in alternate formulations of psychoanalysis and irony. What this dialogue demonstrates that the two involved, sensing perhaps the dead end they had reached by 1974, now turned to the issue of negation.

The decision to name the new magazine edited by Krauss and Michelson *October* reflects where those two art critics’ interests had converged. The immediate reference, of course, is to the Eisenstein film of the same name that represented the Russian Revolution of 1917. The singling out of a work of art in this way was, to be certain, ambitiously laying down the critical stakes. But as the editors opened their first issue,

We have named this journal in celebration of that moment in our century when revolutionary practice, theoretical inquiry and artistic innovation were joined in a manner exemplary and unique. For the artists of that time and place, literature, painting, architecture, film required and generated their own Octobers, radical
departures articulating the historical movement which enclosed them, sustaining it through civil war, factional dissension and economic crisis.\textsuperscript{10}

The general reference then is to a number of Octobers, artistic revolutions, of the historical avant-garde. The input here of Michelson – who, recall, had ten more years of published criticism than Krauss – is clear. The aspiration to be multi-disciplinary is stated up front, and to the extent that this meant coverage of film, dance and theater it reflects Michelson’s primary occupation at the time. But in their intellectual alliance, Krauss had come to look more closely at these same areas. In fact, her essay on Eisenstein’s film, which had appeared in \textit{Artforum} in January 1973, is as important a frame to the magazine’s chosen name as is Michelson’s earlier writing on the filmmaker.\textsuperscript{11}

Krauss’s essay on Eisenstein’s film in many ways served to restate her view of modernism. And in light of the searching undertaken in the 1971 essays described above, the essay on Eisenstein’s \textit{October} appears as a clarification of the matter that would serve her “Sense and Sensibility” essay at the end of 1973. The dialectic that Krauss sees in Eisenstein is essentially that between the real and the ideal, or between the factual/documentary and the ideal.

If there is a dialectic in \textit{October}, two of its terms must be seen in that alternation between a documentary and a formal space. … In the documentary mode it is the space of objective events and their seemingly absolute facticity. In the case of an esthetic or formal mode, it is the grip of our present space and time during which we actually perceive the art object and its apparent resistance.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{12} Krauss, “Montage ‘October’,” 62. The editorial in the first issue of \textit{October} states: “As this issue demonstrates, we will publish writing grounded in presuppositions that are materialist, or at times idealist. Indeed, the tensions between radical artistic practice and dominant ideology will be a major subject of inquiry.” Gilbert-Rolfe, et al., 4.
Taking these two terms as the limits that historical materialism aims to overcome, Eisenstein developed a “formal space,” a “dialectical third term,” through the practice of montage.

And the great filmic equivalent that Eisenstein wanted to draw was that between the leap of revolutionary consciousness which transcends the limits of the real to open up access to the future, and the leap of visual consciousness which goes beyond the normal bounds of a film space understood either as the reality of documentary or the reality of ‘art.’

This filmic equivalent is the formal space of montage through which one might “grasp... the meaning of events rather than their mute surfaces.”

Though Krauss’s reading of October was largely a recapitulation of Eisenstein’s own claims for his work, it nevertheless made apparent the dialectic that was coming to inform her understanding of gestalt. This had, it seems, emerged from her reading of the documentary mode as the counter to the suppositions of copresence described in her 1971 essay, “Pictorial Space and the Question of Documentary.” There, the documentary itself made materiality a factor in the work of art. In the essay on post-’60s sculpture, however, Krauss points to the material ground (read as field) that supports the figure-ground reversals. The Eisenstein essay intervenes between these two essays and suggests that Krauss was thinking in terms of both gestalt and dialectics – a relationship she would refine in her first two essays for October. Moreover, Krauss’s synthesis of these theoretical modes would, in a number of ways, speak to Eisenman’s attempts to reconceive the design process. In order to chart this connection, I shall first reconstruct Krauss’s line of thought in these two essays.

In the first issue of *October* Krauss’s “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism” defines the gestaltist recollection of the field by way of figure/ground reversals as a feature of a dialectical reflexiveness. In fact, this reflexiveness is a restatement of her “View of Modernism,” which aimed to differentiate her position from the apparent turn to “formalism” that Greenberg had recently taken. It is not insignificant that in her first essay for *October*, Krauss restages this argument and in particular situates Fried at the center of it. For it was Fried’s “reflexiveness” that Krauss had been positioning herself against all along. The opening lines begin:

It was a commonplace of criticism in the 1960s that a strict application of symmetry allowed a painter “to point to the center of the canvas” and, in so doing, to invoke the internal structure of the picture-object. Thus “pointing to the center” was made to serve as one of the many blocks in that intricately constructed arch by which the criticism of the last decade sought to connect art to ethics through the “aesthetics of acknowledgement.”

By referring to Fried’s “aesthetics of acknowledgement” Krauss recalls his particular version of reflexiveness, which involved the acknowledgement of medium. The gambit employed here is to recall Fried’s argument about Noland’s concentric circles in order to draw a connection to Vito Acconci’s *Centers*, in which the artist literally points to the center of the t.v. screen (by pointing at the video camera recording him) [fig. 41]. Not only does Krauss elide the revisions Fried had subsequently made to his argument about acknowledgement – namely, his rejection of Noland’s miming of the canvas’s structure in favor a differential reference to it – but she also avoids naming Fried specifically by

---

14 Krauss, “Video,” 51. Though Fried is most immediately recalled in this passage, it is worth noting that what disappointed Krauss about Greenberg’s recent writings was his abandonment of what he had famously described by way of Kant as art’s self-criticism. Krauss, “A View of Modernism.” The notion of modernism as reflexiveness was thus deeply embedded in Krauss’s formation, and remained the “Greenbergian” feature that she continued to be attached to.
suggesting the earlier argument was a “commonplace of criticism in the 1960s.” (Note also that it was this earlier position of Fried’s that Eisenman had seized on.)

But, for all this, Krauss does take up Fried’s reflexiveness in a way that serves to distinguish her version of modernism from the recent concerns of many video artists like Acconci and Lynda Benglis. Returning to Fried’s argument that acknowledgement involves reference to the flatness of the picture plane, Krauss argues that the modernist “unbalanc[ing of] the relationship between the terms ‘picture’ and ‘painting’” is in opposition to the video artist’s simple strategy of reflection and mirroring.\(^{15}\) The exemplary modernist here is Jasper Johns, whose *American Flag* works by exploiting “the synonomy between an image (the flag) and its ground (the limits of the picture surface).”\(^ {16}\) Here Krauss obliquely summons Fried’s 1963 review of Johns in *Art International*, a piece that will become of greater significance in her second essay for *October*.\(^ {17}\) As earlier, the figure/ground reversals serve a further end. But here it is spelled out in dialectical terms:

By forcing us to see the actual wall on which the canvas hangs as the background for the pictorial object as-a-whole, Johns drives a wedge between two types of figure/ground relationships: the one that is internal to the image; and the one that works from without to define this object as Painting. The figure/ground of a flat, bounded surface hung against a wall is isolated as a primary, categorical condition, within which the terms of the process of painting are given. The category “Painting” is established as an object (or a text) whose subject becomes this particular painting – *American Flag*. The flag is thus both the object of the picture, and the subject of a more general object (Painting) to which *American Flag* can reflexively point. Reflexiveness is precisely this fracture into two

---

\(^{15}\) Krauss, “Video,” 56.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 56.

\(^{17}\) Fried’s review of Johns has for a long time served Krauss as a means of establishing her position in relation to him. As noted above it informed her early review of Rauschenberg, a position she later rejected. Here and in her full-length essay on Johns, she appears to accept its arguments as summarizing what was at the core of the modernism she espouses. She cites it as an important piece in Newman, 76, and in Foster, ed., *Discussions in Contemporary Culture*, 78.
categorically different entities which can elucidate one another insofar as their separateness is maintained.\textsuperscript{18}

The fracture between two figure/ground relationships here produces something more complex than the field which was earlier defined as the material support. What has entered is the very notion of categorical conditions.

In her 1973 essay on Robert Rauschenberg materiality had been the term used to describe the means of evoking the specific temporality of the combine and silkscreen paintings. That is, it called upon the temporality of memory and, Krauss argued, this worked to subvert or allay the commodity-oriented temporality of copresence. Here, however, the material support is called upon as one part of a dialectic of figure/ground relationships.

The problem with the non-reflexive work of video artists like Acconci and Benglis is that they merely mimic the procedures of video. If Acconci’s parody of Noland’s circles suggests the lack of center to the medium of video, indeed the lack of material support in video, what this serves to demonstrate, according to Krauss, is that the very medium of video appears to be narcissism. The work of Acconci’s \textit{Centers} and Benglis’s \textit{Now} simply mirror the drive to identification. Refusing any critical function to this mimicry, Krauss claims that it reproduces the impulses to commodity-fetishism. Reflexiveness, as opposed to mirror reflection, on the other hand, is tantamount to the analysand of psychoanalysis breaking from the hold of the narcissistic diagnosis, who “disengages from the ‘statue’ of his reflected self.”\textsuperscript{19} Following Lacan, Krauss argues that a “more dialectical view of the analytic experience” involves the distinction between “the person lying on the couch” and “the person who is speaking.” With the analyst, the “third

\textsuperscript{18} Krauss, “Video,” 56.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 58.
person" present in the analytical situation, the question that must be put, according to
Lacan, is "Where is the moi of the subject?" According to Krauss, the "patient
speaking" dialectically and reflexively adopts the position of the "analyst," or, more to
her point, the successful video artist reflexively adopts this oblique point of view, that
which grasps categorical conditions. Thus, the installation video work of Peter Campus is
held up for literally interrupting the narcissistic drive to self-recognition. In his mem and
dor (both 1974), the arrangement of live video feed and installation space requires the
viewer to contort himself in order to capture his own image [fig. 42]. "Campus’s pieces
acknowledge the very powerful narcissism that propels the viewer of these works forward
and backward in front of the muralized field. And, through the movement of his own
body, his neck craning and head turning, the viewer is forced to recognize this motive as
well." The difference between the material gestaltist field that had defined her earlier
work on minimalist art and the dialectical outcome of the two gestaltist relations
examined here is, Krauss suggests, the difference between "pure" and "applied
psychology." The notion of applied psychology takes on considerable resonance when
viewed in terms of her connection with Eisenman, not simply because Eisenman was
about to undergo analysis himself, but because for Eisenman the proper applied
psychology was Jungian not Freudian. And, indeed, Krauss’s attempt to read a Freudian-
cum-Lacanian reflexiveness as the basis of modernism runs into the problem of irony −
the subject of her second essay for October − and this problem, as Eisenman’s Five Easy
Pieces will show, takes on a particularly Jungian form.

22 Ibid., 64.
As Krauss argued in the “Video” essay the “fracture” produced by Johns’s American Flag was one that isolated the category “Painting.” In “Jasper Johns: The Functions of Irony” Krauss returns to the early Johns and his reflexive relation to painting. This relation is one that had earlier been described as ironic by both Greenberg and Fried. Krauss here attempts to recover the critical functions of irony that the other two critics had dismissed. If Krauss was able to relate the reflexiveness of a video artist like Peter Campus to the materiality of Rauschenberg’s silkscreen paintings, it was, she claimed, by way of recalling the temporality of personal memory. This materiality had been evoked in the work of Johns through a sort of gestaltist dialectic that isolated the category “Painting.” Thus, the tropes that called up a foreclosed three-dimensional space, such as the “drawer” and “shade” in the works of those names, are ironic assertions of modernism’s claims to flatness, not simply cheap conceptual or literary gags.

The main issue Krauss takes up in her Johns essay, however, is how to read his most recent all-over hatching paintings [figs. 43 & 44]. There it seemed the irony had

---

23 Greenberg, “After Abstract Expressionism,” The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol.4; Fried “New York Letter” Art International 7 (February 1963). Krauss here cites only Greenberg, though, as noted, she was not only familiar with the Fried review but was deliberately working against it – partly, one can only surmise, as an exorcism of her early reliance on it. (See chapter 4.) Fried’s dismissal of Johns’s irony as “literary,” “conceptual,” and “cheapening” was taken up by Krauss in her early review of Rauschenberg – her more recent recovery of the “materiality” in Rauschenberg is here paralleled in her recovery of Johns’s irony. Krauss, “Boston Letter,” Art International 8 (November 1964). Fried’s dismissal of this irony had involved a critique of Greenberg’s account of it. Greenberg had pointed to Johns’s exploitation of the synonymy of an image and its ground, which Krauss cites: “Everything that usually serves representation and illusion is left to serve nothing but itself, that is abstraction; while everything that usually connotes the abstract or the decorative –flatness, bare outlines, all-over or symmetrical design – is put to the service of representation.” Greenberg, “After Abstract Expressionism,” The Collected Essays and Criticism, Vol.4, 127, cited in Krauss, “Jasper Johns,” 98. Fried, however, had cited the larger passage from which this line comes. There, Greenberg had argued that these contradictions involved a kind of literary irony. Johns had accomplished this, he said, by employing de Kooning-esque value contrasts in his sign imagery, a kind of fracture of depth and flatness. Fried took issue with this account. It was not the juxtaposition of value contrasts with the sign imagery that created this fracture, rather it was the setting of the sign imagery in a plastic brushwork. This, Fried argued, was a more complex irony than the playing with conceptual ambiguities (as, for example, with the stenciled word for red appearing blue in Diver). Fried, “New York Letter,” Art International 7 (February 1963), 61-2. Where the early Krauss had agreed with this account of the cheapened irony, the later Krauss agrees with Fried’s version of complex irony.
disappeared, the questioning had ceased. But, Krauss argues, a new ironic mode had emerged in Johns’s work. Rather than isolating the category of painting these works ironically recall the *genre* of history painting. “Contained in this attack on the *genres* or sub-sets of the convention of picture-making – each with its own history – is the ironist’s basic attack on the significance of history itself.”

Thus, by referring to Picasso’s standing portraits of 1907-08 (in *Weeping Women*) and to Jackson Pollock’s last attempts at all-over painting (in *Scent*), Johns evokes the most recent versions of history painting, a modernist genre [figs. 45 & 46]. This irony of genre is to be contrasted with the earlier irony in Johns’s work.

The structure of his early work was based on synthesizing modalities or categories which had proved, historically, to be distinct. ... Before, though the historical categories were toyed with and reversed, they were nonetheless a source of energy. In the new works they are simply leveled out negated. In being so treated they are much more deeply challenged as a source of value.

In this way the materiality and reflexiveness which had in Rauschenberg given way to personal memory and a private temporality is here turned to public history as a matter of strict negation. “What is left as always is the performative voice: Johns creating, patiently, this scenario of negation.”

In her first essay for *October*, then, Krauss had synthesized her earlier gestaltist formulation with a dialectical model of history. But in the second essay the material field which had grounded that history has given way entirely to the matter of convention. Indeed, irony itself enters the process of becoming conventional. When comparing Johns’s first hatching paintings (of 1972) [fig. 50] with the recent ones of just a few years

---

25 Krauss names the proto-cubist hatching paintings as the stylistic referent for *Weeping Women*, not Picasso’s own *Weeping Woman* of 1937.
27 Ibid., 98.
later, Krauss writes: "Johns’s hatching, reduced from the task of representing the three-dimensional world, and relegated to the ‘mere’ ornamentation of a painted panel, did institute itself as ironic in the 1972 pictures."  

To the Krauss writing in 1976 irony is a public voice of negation. "And that voice, resonating with the skepticism about received values which we recognize as modernist, establishes through its complex tone of doubt the single, positive note the ironist is capable of striking: the voice itself is a model of autonomy."  

The language of autonomy had for some time now been thrown into question by Krauss, as it founded the logic of copresence that she had been so critical of. Here, however, she speaks of autonomy accomplished through negation. And this undoubtedly must be seen in relation to Eisenman’s own efforts to articulate the language of architectural autonomy. Indeed Eisenman has claimed the importance of Krauss’s essay on Johns to his own work – however, he has also noted that his reading of it was also a misreading of it.  

When Krauss writes that “the autonomy of the voice is the ironist’s last source of value,” one can imagine the ways that this may be open to readings and misreadings.  

At the time “Jasper Johns: The Functions of Irony” was published in the summer of 1976, Eisenman was in preparation for the opening of the architectural exhibition at the Venice Biennale. The American exhibition he was organizing was called “Suburban Alternatives: Eleven American Projects.” The organizational theme spoke to the

---

29 Ibid., 94.  
30 Eisenman, interview, 16 August 2000.  
31 The American entries and the European ones were exhibited together and were represented in the catalogue, Franco Raggi, ed., Europa/Amerlca: Architetture Urbane, Alternative Suburbane (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978). The eleven entries to the American exhibition were by Raimund Abraham, Emilio Ambasz, Peter Eisenman, John Hejduk, Craig Edward Hodgetts, Richard Meier, Charles Moore,
perceived differences between the European and American professions. Against a more integrated European urbanism, Eisenman, in his introduction to the American exhibition, wrote that the problem facing American architecture was the disconnect between suburbia and urbanistic theory. Displaying his talents for framing the debates of his profession, Eisenman brought together entries from both the “Whites” and the “Grays.” In this way, the divisions within American architectural theory could serve as the starting point for the project that he entered in that show. *Five Easy Pieces: Dialectical Fragments Toward the Reintegration of Suburbia* was comprised of a series of drawings, models and didactic panels. The drawings and models consisted of existing suburban house types, and mandalic forms (mostly of south Asian origin) as well as plans of existing European approximations of the mandala [figs. 48 & 49]. These and the text of the didactic panels served to introduce Eisenman’s new design method, which was represented by drawings and a model of his House VIII [fig. 50].

The design process for House VIII bears many visual similarities to the earlier Chomskian-inspired efforts at isolating a generative grammar. It begins with four regularly arranged cubic forms to which a succession of transformations is applied. By this series of transformations, Eisenman aims to imply a simple geometry to which they refer. The second phase in the process Eisenman calls decomposition, and through it he aims to return the previous geometric unities to a prior state of fragmentation and multiplicity.


Architecture is the potential co-existence within any form of two non-corroborating and non-sequential tendencies. One tendency is to presume architectural form to be a recognizable transformation of pre-existing geometric solids. In this case, form is understood as a series of registrations designed to recall a more simple geometric condition. The second tendency sees architectural form in an atemporal, decompositional mode, as something simplified from some pre-existent set of non-specific spatial entities. Here, form is understood as a series of fragments – signs without meaning dependant upon, and without reference to, a more basic condition. The former tendency, when taken by itself, assumes some primary unity as basis for all creation. The latter, by itself, assumes a basic condition of fragmentation and multiplicity. Both tendencies, when taken together, constitute the essence of a new architectonic dialectic. They begin to define the inherent nature of the object in itself and of itself and its capacity to be represented. They refuse functionalism.\textsuperscript{33}

Although the dialectic of transformation and decomposition prefigures the work Eisenman would come to do under the sign of Derridean deconstruction, here it is presented entirely within the framework of Jungian theory. The two terms of this dialectic are associated with the Jungian oppositions: collective/individual and conscious/unconscious. In this way, the disintegration of suburbia is given a psychological interpretation.

The American suburb has been made a manifestation of individual will. It has symbolized the triumph of private interests over public ones. Consequently, it has failed to provide the psychological and spiritual (if not political) sense of the collective in both its conscious (society) and unconscious (the integrated self) manifestations. We have reached a point that could be called quality zero.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33} Eisenman, “Cinque pezzi facili: Frammenti Dialettici verso la Decomposizione e la Reintegrazione del Suburbio,” in Europa/America: Architettura Urbane, Alternative Suburbane, ed. Franco Raggi (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), 116-8. The English panel of this text is not reproduced. My translation of the Italian follows closely the paragraph in “Post-Functionalism” that is based on it. On Eisenman’s changes to the text in the subsequent essay, see below.

\textsuperscript{34} Eisenman, “Cinque pezzi facili,” 113. This passage is from a panel that also describes a state of “quantity zero”, which describes the point of maximum economization and standardization of the housing industry. “Since there is no longer any chance of cutting costs, there is no longer any possibility of economic gain.” Ibid., 113. This formulation of quantity/quality, as well as the notion of multiplicity and fragmentation, seems to derive from the book by the Italian Rationalist, Cesare Cattaneo, Giovanni e Giuseppe: Dialoghi di architettura (Milan: Jaca book, 1993), which Eisenman has claimed to be an important source for his work of this period. Eisenman, interview, 22 February 2001.
The dialectic that Eisenman proposes for the reintegration of suburbia is distilled in the Jungian archetype of the mandala. “Mandalic form is the conscious representation in a single image of the reintegration of psychic, archetypal oppositions.” For Eisenman, the mandala is the simplified form that represents (psychic) unity, but, as he had always maintained, geometric regularity of form is simply geometry, not architecture. Thus, the process of decomposition is to make architecture out of the mandalic form – or, in other words, it is to make a three-dimensional mandala out of mandalic form, which is only two-dimensional. “Non-mandalic form is similar in appearance to mandalic form, but it lacks the intention to express the psychic, archetypal themes of mandalic form.... To make non-mandalic form into mandalic form in three dimensions, geometry must first be transformed into architecture through architectonic means” [fig. 51].

Eisenman’s foray into Jungian theory must have come as a surprise to those familiar with his earlier work that claimed to be founded on the rigorously rationalist theory of Noam Chomsky. In order to account for this shift, it may be obvious to point out that Eisenman’s father-in-law at the time was the Jungian analyst, Joseph Henderson. Eisenman has noted that he learned Jungian theory through Henderson. Henderson had achieved a certain notoriety in 1970 when he exhibited and then later sold drawings Jackson Pollock had made for him as a part of the analysis he underwent with Henderson in 1939-40. Michael Leja has studied Pollock’s relation with Henderson and with Jungian theory in general and has amply demonstrated that Pollock’s need to “represent the

36 Ibid., 119.
37 Eisenman owned a copy of Jung’s lectures on Nietzsche, then not yet published in English. The lectures were given in Zurich in 1934-39 and were attended by Henderson. Eisenman, interview, 22 February 2001.
unconscious" had much to do with what Leja calls the “Modern Man discourse” of the mid-century United States.\(^3\) It is certainly fair to say that Eisenman, too, felt the need to represent the unconscious, but what cultural discourse might account for the appeal of Jungian theory in the 1970s?

To begin with, it cannot be too much to claim that part of that appeal was had in the controversy over Pollock’s analytic drawings, an episode that did much to secure many of the Pollock myths of artistic angst. Henderson’s eighteen-month analysis of Pollock had come at a time when the artist was about to “break through” to his all-over paintings. Thus, part of the Pollock myth is the role of unconscious in his artistic breakthrough. And Henderson’s role in facilitating this has reached legendary status. As he later wrote:

> I wonder why I neglected to find out, study or analyze his personal problems in the first year of his work. ... I wonder why I did not seem to try to cure his alcoholism. ... I have decided that it is because his unconscious drawings brought me strongly into a state of counter-transference to the symbolic material he produced. Thus I was compelled to follow the movement of his symbolism as inevitably as he was motivated to produce it.\(^3\)

The analyst here appears more as a guide and witness to artistic achievement than as a therapist concerned with psychological well-being. And certainly Eisenman saw his own use of Jungian theory in precisely these terms.\(^4\) Moreover, upon the exhibition of Henderson’s collection of Pollock’s analytic drawings Krauss wrote an article reviewing the show [fig. 52]. She steered clear of judging whether the exhibition of the drawings

---

39 Henderson quoted in Leja, 139-140.
40 This becomes entirely apparent in Eisenman’s interviews, and elsewhere in the IAUS archives. Eisenman has kept records of his dreams since his first encounter with psychoanalysis. And according to Fredericke Taylor, he often left them lying around the photocopier at the Institute. Fredericke Taylor, interview by Louis Martin, 4 October 2000, transcript, Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies archives, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal.
breeched patient-analyst confidentiality, but she noted that as an “art historian” the drawings did provide invaluable material, comparing them with the notebooks of David Smith, without which her work on the sculptor, she says, would have been incomplete.41

Eisenman would thus have had the precedent for considering artistic dilemmas as the sort of thing that might be solved through Jungian theory. (Like Pollock, Eisenman evidently became interested in Jung and psychoanalysis before undergoing analysis himself. According to his own account, Eisenman lost the commission for House X because of the amount of time spent preparing for the Biennale and upon return from Venice he entered analysis.)42 It is worth noting, however, that Henderson had also introduced the mandala to Pollock, it being an archetype of integration representing the circularity of life/death cycles. But as Leja has shown, part of the motivation for Pollock to move to the all-over paintings was the need to divest his work of specific symbolism.43 Eisenman had already become quite well known for the degree of his abstraction, not just in his designs but also in his texts. It would be a matter of speculation to suppose that Eisenman’s motivation for turning, at least partly, to Jungian symbolism owed to a need to reintroduce the semantic content to his work that he had earlier excluded. But Eisenman has pointed out in retrospect that the move into depth psychology coincided with his work’s move, literally, into the ground, in the projects gathered under the

41 Krauss, “Jackson Pollock’s Drawings,” Artforum 9 no.5 (January 1971), 58-61. Krauss quotes the same passage from Henderson’s recollections as appears in Leja. The confidentiality issue has not been entirely clear. Henderson claimed that the drawings were not made for analysis, but were a part of Pollock’s professional artistic activity and were introduced to analytic discussion. See Leja, 124-6.
42 Eisenman, interview, 22 February 2001. Leja notes that one of the concerns that Henderson helped Pollock “work through” was the matter of, in Harold Bloom’s expression, “the anxiety of influence.” In particular, the figure of Picasso loomed large over Pollock. Leja, 139.
43 Leja, 174-75. Leja argues that Pollock’s use of more literally Jungian symbolism also depended on his making it personal, 173. On his use of the mandala and Jungian symbolism in general, see Leja, 150, 155-173.
heading, Cities of Artificial Excavation (namely, the Canareggio project, the Berlin IBA project, and the Wexner Center).\textsuperscript{44}

If the cultural discourse that may have made Jungian theory appealing in the 1970s had more to do with the mythologization of an earlier generation of artists than with Modern Man discourse, this may be apparent in more than just the biographical connection between Eisenman and Pollock. The immediate reference of Eisenman’s Biennale entry was to the film of the same name. \textit{Five Easy Pieces}, directed by Bob Rafelson and released in September 1970, explored many of the themes that had informed Eisenman’s interest in Jung.

This film, starring Jack Nicholson, has often been considered as not only a pessimistic response to the idealism of 1960s counter-culture, but also, partly because of its cast, as a direct response to the film \textit{Easy Rider}, which was released a year earlier.\textsuperscript{45} (Not only did Nicholson appear in the film directed by Dennis Hopper, but the two actors playing prostitutes in that film, Karen Black and Toni Basil, also appear in \textit{Five Easy Pieces}.) Where Nicholson played a “straight” man (actually an ACLU lawyer busted on public drunkenness) who takes up with the counter-cultural heroes (Hopper and Peter Fonda) in \textit{Easy Rider}, in the Rafelson film he plays a character similarly in and out of middle-class society. But rather than romanticizing the freewheeling lifestyle of the road movie buddies, \textit{Five Easy Pieces} tells the story of cultural stagnation without the symbolic escape through the trope of the road/travel. Or rather, the film is loosely based

\textsuperscript{44} Eisenman, interview, 22 February 2001.  
\textsuperscript{45} See, for example, David Laderman, \textit{Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie} (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). \textit{Five Easy Pieces} was written by Rafelson and Adrian Joyce (the pseudonym of Carol Eastman), and was released by BBS/Columbia Pictures in September 1970. \textit{Easy Rider}, directed by Dennis Hopper, was written by Hopper, Peter Fonda and Terry Southern. It was released by BBS/Columbia Pictures in September 1969.
on the road movie format – it has a road trip at its temporal and structural center – but the road does not offer the symbolization of individuality and freedom typical of road movies. Instead the road symbolizes, at the end of the film, merely escape from responsibility with no redeeming qualities at all. (Eisenman’s placing of the road at the center of the problems of suburban disintegration may easily be read here.)

The narrative of *Five Easy Pieces* revolves around the character played by Nicholson, an accomplished classical musician, who has left his talents behind in order to work the oil rigs of southern California and take up with his witless girlfriend (played by Black) who has a particular fondness for the music of Tammy Wynette. Unable to find satisfaction in a life with few responsibilities, he is called to his familial home in Oregon to see his dying father. There he meets and falls for a sophisticated musical apprentice, played by Susan Anspach. However, his lingering distaste for the life of highbrow culture intervenes in their budding relationship.

In its most basic form, *Five Easy Pieces* is a film about the emptiness of both lowbrow and highbrow culture. But rather than offering as an escape the freedom of individuality in the form of the counter-culture, the film directly caricatures the idealism of the 1960s. Along the road trip at the center of the film, Bobby (Nicholson), who has reluctantly brought along his girlfriend, gives a ride to two women (played by Basil and Helena Kallianiotes), coded as lesbian, one of whose rejection of consumer society can only find means of expression through the disparagement of all things “dirty” and “filthy.”

The film employs many tropes that coincide with Eisenman’s Jungian interests. Most significantly it is a film about artistic boredom, a long-standing modernist trope that
serves to identify cultural malaise. The artist’s boredom is a sort of disease which the 
broader culture inflicts on him – the artist of this theme is invariably male. The film plays 
this up through his opposition to the role of the female muse, who never successfully 
achieves the desired results for Bobby. (The title refers to the name of a child’s beginner 
piano lesson book, but seems also to refer to the relationships Bobby has with women.) 
One may note in this regard that the Jungian archetypes offered to Pollock by Henderson 
employed the opposition of male creativity and female anima. Further, the film exploits 
the typically Jungian distinction between reason and emotion, and society and the 
individual.

The psychic (or psychoanalytic) narrative of the film draws its momentum from 
Bobby’s fleeting back and forth between reason and emotion, never quite able to 
integrate into society, the goal of Jungian therapy. Moreover, a Jungian drama may be 
read in the film’s penultimate scene. Bobby, on his knees before his father, who is 
iccapacitated from a stroke, acknowledges his personal failures – most significantly, 
those of not living up to his father’s musical expectations. But rather than a Freudian 
version of the Oedipal drama (the character’s mother is nowhere present in the film – 
though perhaps this fact partly serves a Freudian narrative), this scene evokes, by way of 
the father’s position as head of a musically gifted family, a Jungian narrative of 
individual versus cultural drives.

The film Five Easy Pieces, then, serves to identify a cultural discourse – of post-
60s cultural malaise – that makes Eisenman’s appeal to Jungian theory understandable, 
even if it did not directly draw on the specific symbolism of cultural archetypes so central
to Jung.\textsuperscript{46} The film may also serve to identify further points of connection between Eisenman and Krauss in 1976.

Recall that Krauss had arrived at a gestaltist version of modernism that reflexively, dialectically, pointed to a material ground (field), and that in her study of Johns's irony this had given way to a consideration of genre and convention as ground. It had made the evocation of public history (by way of its negation) the only means of asserting the autonomy of the artist's voice. The problem of irony had made the dialectic of narcissist and analyst (the modernist, reflexive dialectic of art / not-art) into a dialectic of private voice and public history. Though this did not take up the Jungian symbolics of Eisenman, it did approach the same terms of individuation and convention. (Moreover, Krauss had not dismissed the import of Jung and an artist's need for symbolism. Her review of Henderson's collection of Pollock drawings read the proliferation of symbolic forms in terms that were made familiar by gestalt theory, however: "one faces a configuration in which areas of the figure get reconverted into ground for new, yet more autonomous pieces of figuration, they in turn becoming ground for further figures.")\textsuperscript{47}

Krauss's turn to the problem of irony had posited a limited autonomy to the artist's voice. This, as I noted, appears to have approached the same matter of autonomy that Eisenman had been pursuing all along. But if Krauss's turn toward the division between the individual artist and public convention had represented only a partial turn toward "Jung," we may at the same time ask to what extent Eisenman approached the

\textsuperscript{46} For this discourse within the genre of the road movie, see Laderman, especially the chapter titled, "Drifting on Empty: Existential Irony and the Early-1970s Road Movie."

\textsuperscript{47} Krauss, "Jackson Pollock's Drawings," 61. Jungian and Gestalt psychology were not incompatible in Pollock's time – proponents of both schools moved within the same institutional orbit at the New School for Social Research, where Pollock had taken classes. See Leja. On the relation between Jungian analysis and Gestalt psychology in connection with Pollock, see Shep Steiner, "Great Moments in American Painting: Dogged Looks from the Other Side of the Fence" (PhD dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1999).
problem of individuation and convention in terms of irony. There indeed seems to be little ironic in his Biennale entry of 1976 – the tone of the didactic panels is, precisely, didactic. But the film *Five Easy Pieces* may again offer another angle on Eisenman’s work.

The pivotal scene occurs when Bobby’s new love interest asks him to play the piano for her. He complies by playing a Chopin adagio. She is visibly moved by his playing, but when he finishes he says that he chose the piece because it was the easiest one he could think of, that he learned it as a child, and that he played it better then. She is rebuffed by his lack of sincerity, and he by what he had previously taken to be her interest in his disregard for the stuffiness of effete culture. The hinge of the film, now making the significance of the film’s title more apparent, lies in the way the disaffected artist responds to his boredom. The title of the film refers ironically to both highbrow and lowbrow culture, to Chopin and Tammy Wynette, to the precise degree that Bobby’s insincerity fails to capture “easiness” (and, again, this is figured through the trope of woman as muse).

The “easy pieces” invoked by Eisenman are registered in as complex ways as in the film. Both the mandala, in its geometric regularity, and the so-called fragments that comprise a prior state of multiplicity are supposed in the title. But the dialectic that Eisenman refers to through the “fragmentation and reintegration” of suburbia draws upon the existing conventions of the house. Insofar as these conventions are meant to be negated (or dialectically superceded), Eisenman’s project recalls Krauss’s reading of

---

48 As announced in the film’s opening credits, the film’s score has exactly five classical pieces (Chopin – Fantasy in F Minor Op. 49; Bach – Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue; Mozart – E-flat Maj. Concerto K.271; Chopin – Prelude in E Minor Opus 28 no. 4; and Mozart – Fantasy in D Minor K.397) and not five but four by Tammy Wynette (“Stand by Your Man,” “D-I-V-O-R-C-E,” “Don’t Touch Me,” and “When There’s a Fire in Your Heart”).
irony. But the issue for Eisenman, of course, is that if the treatment of the architectural conventions of the house be ironic, then what looms as potential threat (the threat of being misread, as in the case of the film’s main character) is the postmodern pastiche of his architectural opponents.

It is my contention that the problem of irony as it was articulated by Krauss and Eisenman in mid-1976 represents the wavering between their two projects and, indeed, between the distinctions of art and architecture that had subtended those of practical and speculative knowledge. We are not certain whether, as Eisenman has it, he has read or misread Krauss’s account of irony. What is clear is that the specific language used by each, that of Freud and that of Jung, was difference enough to warrant further revision.

Eisenman’s editorial essay for *Oppositions* 6, “Post-Functionalism,” appeared in the fall of 1976. He has claimed it was written with the close input of Krauss. One can, in light of this acknowledgement, fairly easily identify what parts of the essay owe to her influence. In it, the dialectic that Eisenman had described in terms of transformation and decomposition remains, but the Jungian oppositions that he had linked up with it are dropped. As noted earlier, he restaged the opposition between function (program) and form (type) in order to go beyond both of its terms. Arguing that these terms are both beholden to a humanist discourse that had placed “man” at “the center of his world” and had made him “an originating agent,” Eisenman claims to perceive the potential of an architectural modernism, which unlike the other arts is not yet “upon us” and is based on the displacement of man away from the center of his world. “This new theoretical base changes the humanist balance of form/function to a dialectical relationship with the
evolution of form itself.” In describing this dialectical relationship, Eisenman proceeds to reproduce the passage from *Five Easy Pieces* describing the process of transformation and decomposition (quoted above). However, he introduces a few changes to account for “the new theoretical base.” As Eisenman makes these changes, he implicitly returns for one final moment to the supposition held by Krauss that there is no essential difference between art and architecture.

Rather than referring to pre-existing geometric regularities as mandalic form, he situates the need for a “geometric or Platonic solid” as “a relic of humanist theory.” The outcome of his two processes of transformation and decomposition “begin to suggest that the theoretical assumptions of functionalism are in fact cultural rather than universal.”

The critique of humanism marks a major turn in Eisenman’s thought, and one can imagine the input of Krauss here. Jettisoning Jung (at least as theoretical rationale, if not therapeutic model), Eisenman has in its place taken up Foucault (at Krauss’s suggestion? – note that the very first article in the first issue of *October* is Foucault’s “Ceci n’est pas une pipe”). Eisenman, of course, has read Foucault in his own selective way, aligning the latter’s critique of humanism with the tasks of modernism. However, the turn marked by “Post-Functionalism” was one that appears to have brought Eisenman’s dialectic (previously read as that between the individual and the collective) in closer relation to Krauss’s art / not-art dialectic. Indeed, when Eisenman speaks of a dialectic of “form with itself” – meaning transformation and decomposition – he calls upon a form-making process that is in relation to a state of fragmentation and multiplicity that could be read in a way similar to Krauss’s notion of materiality. This similarity is further reinforced by the

---

49 Eisenman, “Post-Functionalism,” 87.
50 Ibid., 87.
fact that Eisenman has abandoned the earlier requirements of architecture to have a material object presence that connotes a bodily frame of reference. In other words, he seems to have accepted the terms of minimalism as he had previously perceived them, terms that had once been used to describe the limitations of minimalism.

At this point, then, Eisenman had come to accept that there was no basic difference between art and architecture, a point that had become crucial to Krauss. For her part, Krauss had come to view a form of autonomy to be necessary to circumvent, or negate, the public conventions of art – a position Eisenman had long held with respect to architecture.

Such a convergence between the thinking of Krauss and Eisenman would have been the state of affairs when Idea as Model began to be organized. This exhibition was bound to test that convergence, and as it turned out it became the site of an episode that would drive a wedge between the two.

Idea as Model was conceived as an architectural exhibition, but one that endeavored to draw links with the aims of art as outlined by Krauss. As Eisenman wrote in the preface to the catalogue that was eventually published in 1981,

This exhibition had its origins in a long-standing intuition of mine that a model of a building could be something other than a narrative record of a project or a building. It seemed that models, like architectural drawings, could well have an artistic or conceptual existence of their own, one which was relatively independent of the project that they represented.  

52 Eisenman, preface to Idea as Model, 1. Owing to the usual publication delays at the IAUS, the catalogue was not published in 1976. By the time it was about to be published four years later, it was decided to invite the same participants to submit a second round models for an exhibition sequel. The catalogue thus represents both the 1976 and 1980 exhibitions.
This premise was open to criticism that it merely served a side-market for architects (though drawings were the preferred medium of collectors) at a time when the building market was drying up (a charge leveled at “conceptual architecture” or “paper architecture” in general). Indeed one must note the timing of this exhibition in relation to Eisenman’s recent loss of the commission for House X. However, it is clear from Eisenman’s new theoretical base that one of his concerns was a form-making process that did not depend on scale. This would be further developed in his Canareggio project of the following year.

Despite this theoretical base, and perhaps owing to the amount of preparation time left, Eisenman’s piece for the exhibition was a model of his House II. (His House X was represented in the second Idea as Model exhibition in 1980.) Eisenman was ultimately dissatisfied with this model, feeling that its conceptual content had already been elucidated in the drawings. Nevertheless, it is clear that Eisenman had hoped that the exhibition might provide an avenue for exploring his new theoretical approach.

55 Ibid., 9.
56 According to a recent interview, Eisenman claims that the exhibition was not originally conceived as “Idea as Model” but instead had the name “Goodbye Five:” (with this punctuation). Eisenman, interview, 22 February 2001. I have found no record of this alternate name. However few records of the original exhibition remain. If this title was indeed considered, it would have been recognizable to viewers as a conscious effort to disown the “New York Five” label that was often attached to the IAUS – an effort that would nonetheless inscribe the “five” as reference point. See, for example, Goldberger, “Architecture’s ‘5’ Make Their Ideas Felt,” New York Times 26 November 1973, p. 33. However, one can also imagine Eisenman announcing a detachment from his Five Easy Pieces.
When, at Krauss’s instigation, Gordon Matta-Clark was invited to produce a piece for the show, he was the only non-architect to be in the exhibition. However, as the dialogue had proceeded through the course of 1976, it would have seemed as though Matta-Clark was a perfect fit for the undertaking in the *Idea as Model* exhibition. What the piece Matta-Clark eventually produced for the exhibition ultimately did, as I have suggested at the outset of this thesis, is to drive a wedge between the positions of Krauss and Eisenman.

In the fallout to *Window Blow-Out*, Krauss begins to read the material gestaltist field as being an artificial or historically contingent construction. As she writes in “Notes on the Index,” “It is the meaningless meaning that is instituted through the terms of the index.” Krauss has moved from the material ground she developed out of a reading of gestalt theory to an institutional ground. It is as though, as many readings of *Window Blow-Out* suggest, that institutional ground was activated by Eisenman himself when he threw Matta-Clark out of the *Idea as Model* exhibition. If Krauss had admired Matta-Clark’s work for not simply the gestaltist reversals of his building cuttings but, more to the point in terms of where she had arrived in 1976, for its deliberate negation of the public conventions of art, it now seemed that that negation was not the ironist’s voice of autonomy. Rather that negation was superceded by those public conventions. The institutional now precluded any autonomous voice of negation as Krauss came to view the structural determinations of art as those of its institutions.

57 Matta-Clark, however, had studied architecture at Cornell, where Rowe and Hoesli were teaching. (To a certain extent, the program of the Texas Rangers had moved to Ithaca.) His architectural interventions, which he called “anarchitecture,” were becoming well-known among the SoHo community of artists.


59 The structural is first outlined in “Sculpture in the Expanded Field.” It is later tied to the institutional in “The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodern Repetition;” and “Sincerely Yours: A Reply [to Albert Elsen],” *October* 20 (Spring 1982), 110-30.
For Eisenman’s part, the aims of art he had come to see as being compatible with his own architectural project are, in the immediate period after *Window Blow-Out*, abandoned. The dialogue with Krauss had led him to view the “decompositional” process as necessarily giving up the material distinction he earlier supplied as the difference between art and architecture. As he had said of minimalism, but now had come to accept as his own project, the attempt to make intentions speak through form had to be made without reference to a material base. The scalelessness of minimalism came to be taken up in Eisenman’s next projects. Only now the “undecidablity” of context that resulted from what Eisenman was about to call “scaling” did not lead to a general form of communication that was common to both art and architecture. Rather, it led to the self-referential language of architecture alone, a language that Eisenman maintained was distinctly modernist, as against the semantically loaded work of architectural postmodernism and the structuralist terms that provided the institutional ground of art in Krauss’s new adoption of the theory of postmodernism.

This divergence in the dialogue that Krauss and Eisenman shared marked the beginnings of a discourse of critical postmodernism in *October*. This would set the art journal apart from *Oppositions*, where a discourse promoting modernism continued to oppose an architectural postmodernism. In each journal the figure institution becomes fully operational, working toward the same ends now – which is to suppose a neoconservatism as an institutional force. What is more at issue, however, is that neoconservatism, itself, produced its own discourse of institutions – one that supposed a New Class of liberal professionals had infiltrated the university and other institutions of
democracy – and it along with that in *October and Oppositions* worked in concert, effecting a new regime of efficiency.
9. The Real Crux; or,

Just What is the Difference between Art and Architecture, Anyway? or,

Why the Fantasy of Postmodernism Still Remains

The discourse on institutions I described at the outset of this thesis now has the bases for properly historicizing it. As I described, this discourse is founded on an antinomy. To restate, it was one that considered the figure institution as a sign of doubling that could be read as either a repetition or a difference. Thus, for example, the museum described by Krauss and Douglas Crimp was such that it ordered heterogeneous objects into a narrative of unity, but that order could be confounded by demonstrating the repetition of its elements (in the grid and the photograph, for example). This repetition could then serve to demonstrate the actual heterogeneity that makes up the entire world of things. Similarly, the institution of architecture, according to Manfredo Tafuri, and Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas, was a coded set of differences. And again by confounding its elements, by repeating architectural fragments, as Tafuri explained, the language of architecture becomes a closed circuit. In this way, the world of Non-Design, to use Agrest’s term, may be recognized in its actual heterogeneity.

At the same time, the figure institution may work in exactly the opposite direction. Following Peter Bürger’s account of the institutionalization of the avant-garde, Hal Foster describes the institution of art under a period of conservative reaction as the
homogenization of the radical difference of once-deemed avant-garde practices. Rather than holding to Bürger’s pessimistic note, Foster argues that a critical postmodernism has found a means of confounding popular culture’s institutionalization of avant-garde practices. This involves transforming the repetitive elements of popular culture, as in the Hollywood clichés drawn on by Cindy Sherman, for example. The transformative process is one that attempts to recover critical difference against the homogenizing effects of institutionalization. Similarly, by Anthony Vidler’s account, Aldo Rossi’s recomposition of institutional, or typological, form involves the process of transforming the repetitions of typology into a critical difference that exposes the political content of typologies.

That the work of Aldo Rossi or Cindy Sherman could each bear competing figurations of institution suggests that the difference and repetition that establishes those figurations are in some way united. Rather than strictly pursuing a Deleuzian ontology here, I will return the problem to the terms set out by Veblen and that have informed my study of the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman.

If we may say, following Veblen, that the usual working of discourse is to produce a statement on causality in the world of things, and that the practical counterpart to that discourse, the knowledge of what may be acted on by the efficiency of persons, is had in its performative dimension, then it will become clear that the discourse on institutions operates differently. For what the figural use of institution designates is an impediment to practical efficiency, an artificial causality in the world of things.

My study of the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman showed that a single field concept had united them, but that it took different forms, which had prevented the legibility of that field concept’s identity. The different forms may be described in terms
of an Augustinian causality and a Manichaean causality. That is, the gestaltist field for
Krauss was such that its causal scheme guaranteed the effectivity of the practices she
endorsed. The project this entailed was the stripping away of all that was not reversible in
a gestaltist field. For Eisenman, on the other hand, the causality of the recursive field
could only be harnessed if one synchronized one’s efforts with it. This meant
circumventing what was merely arbitrary in architecture by speaking from its rational
core.

The figure institution, as it was employed in October and Oppositions, merely
designated the impediments to these modes of causality. In the first case, that of the
Augustinian causality, practical efforts are made possible by an external scheme, and any
impediment to such practical efforts is found in the arbitrary. The ordered differences of
the museum or the institution of architecture are false differences; at their core are
unacknowledged repetitions. The institution, according to the new critical projects, is to
be confounded by enacting those repetitions in order to arrive at the actual heterogeneity
of the world of things.

In the second case, that of the Manichaean causality, the external scheme may
guarantee practical efficiency, but only if one works in accord with it. The randomness of
the world of things acts as an opponent that one must overcome. With the figuration of
this impediment, the institution of art or architecture is the categorical name for the
causal scheme, but its practical benefit is hindered by its institutionalized contents. In
other words, the strategic difference of avant-garde practice is homogenized for the
market by the institution. Confounding this homogeneity with a more radical difference is
the aim of a critical practice that seeks to recover the proper dimensions of the institution
of art or architecture.

What both figural uses of institution seek is actual difference or heterogeneity, which is the fount of practical knowledge. That is, the efficiency of persons is measured in the difference that is *made*. Repetition (or its identity) simply *appears*.¹ In one case the impediment is a false difference – the fiction of the museum or institution of architecture. In the other case, the impediment is an actual homogenization by a functional institution, to be defeated by a truly radical difference. Since in both cases the aim is actual difference or heterogeneity, we may describe the discourse on institutions as a discourse of practical knowledge. And given the localized movement of institutionality, this should not surprise. That is, if the usual working of discourse is to describe a speculative scheme, we may discover it in the usual institutions of higher learning. But as I suggested at the outset of this thesis, the movement of institutionality may be directed to “alternative spaces.” Just as the discourse on institutions emerges in this alternate sitting, so is it productive of a discourse of practical knowledge. This is its mode of critique – to produce a practical knowledge not sanctioned by the usual institutions of speculative learning.

¹ Deleuze’s critique centers on these conventional modes of conceiving repetition and difference. Using his terms, we may say that the difference sought by the criticism in *October* and *Oppositions* is not “pure difference” – rather it supposes a difference that is subsumed under the Same, in the guise of representation. Deleuze’s project has much in common with Veblen’s: both make use of a theory of the faculties, and their accounts of habit resound quite strongly. However, where Deleuze speaks of an ontology, Veblen speaks of an institutionality. Veblen’s criticism of his French contemporary, Henri Bergson, an important figure for Deleuze and with whom Veblen also has much in common, serves to draw out this distinction. Everywhere Bergson speaks of an *élan de la vie* (to which we may add Deleuze’s univocity of Being), Veblen identifies an instinct of workmanship, which as we saw continually folds in on itself through the institutional. See Veblen’s lengthy footnote on Bergson in *The Instinct of Workmanship*, 334-6. If Deleuze’s philosophical frame is the ontological, we may say that Veblen’s is the conventional, and this perhaps brings the latter closer in line with the “ordinary language” philosophers, J.L. Austin and Stanley Cavell. That the ontological and the conventional can be shown to have such similarities, however, encourages a reconsideration of what are usually taken to be very different philosophical systems.
If the discourse on institutions is a discourse of practical knowledge founded on the representation of difference, then the question that arises is: how can it be made out of, and made into, a discourse of speculative knowledge? More precisely, how can a repetition be made into a difference and a difference into a repetition? I argued at the outset of this thesis that the discourse on postmodernism resisted historicization because it was built on composite discourses that seemed unable to cohere into a single historical description – on the one hand, that postmodernism had a plurality of definitions and that this plurality was in turn a sign of postmodernism, and, on the other, that two distinct postmodernisms existed, a conservative one and a critical one, and that by alternate accounts one reacted to the other, ultimately leaving unsettled the question of which was causally prior. At the center of these speculative accounts of postmodernism are the arbitrary and the undecidable. Repetition is represented in these two ways: the arbitrary through the discourse on pluralism (the species of postmodernism reiterates the genus postmodernism) and the undecidable through the representation of causality (the critical postmodernism and the postmodernism of reaction inscribe two causalities, whose undecidable relation makes the identity of one repeated in the other).

The arbitrary and the undecidable also appeared before the emergence of the discourse on institutions and were at the center of the critiques of modernism launched by Eisenman and Krauss. In his study of Rowe, Eisenman found not an impending logic to modernist architecture, but rather the arbitrary use of forms. And in her critical exchange with Fried, Krauss arrived at the undecidable relation between presentness and the literal through her reading of the necessary obliqueness (literalism) underpinning the frontal perceptive of pictorial presentness.
There are two histories that converge here: that of the transformation of difference into repetition and repetition into difference. When Krauss and Eisenman begin their dialogue in 1969, it soon becomes clear that a common opponent is the arbitrary, which seemed to describe both the newer conceptual art and the populist semiology of pop and adhocism that were to be the bases for the ahistorical architectural postmodernism. Rowe’s account of gestalt theory had proven to Eisenman that architectural form required a logic grounded in architecture itself which could uncover the historical imperatives of modernism, rather than, as Rowe had it, a process of *undetermined* form-making that itself derived from the historical moment. If Eisenman saw in Rowe’s use of gestalt an articulation of the arbitrary with no basis in historicity, Krauss would turn to a form of gestalt in order to combat what she saw as the arbitrary and groundless conceptualism of the newer post-60s artists.

Krauss’s turn to a materialist field version of gestalt resulted from the impasse she had reached in her exchange with Fried – an impasse that occurred in her essay, “On Frontality.” There Krauss arrived at the undecidable relation between presentness and literalism, but rather than working through that relation with Fried, she, in a sense, redirected it toward the exchange with Eisenman. As I noted in chapter four, at the end of that essay, Krauss smuggled in a Kantian gloss on the embodiedness that had been her major charge against Friedian presentness in order to recover the critique of literalism. In the following months, however, Krauss came to perceive a rearguard formation of the arbitrary in Fried and Greenberg. The difference in-itself that had been at the core of Fried’s account of presentness came to seem subtended by an artificial narrative of modernism-as-series.
Thus, when Krauss turned to gestalt theory by adapting it to her own ends at the beginning of the 1970s, it was with a clear sense that it had to defend against the arbitrary. Given, Eisenman's criticism of Rowe, this should cause some wonder. But where Eisenman saw Rowe's fascination with gestaltist reversals as being merely groundless, Krauss could see a strong basis for those perceptual ambiguities. What had left Rowe open to criticism from Eisenman was that he pursued gestaltist reversibility as that alone which was historically undetermined in the historical logic of modernism. Rowe's meditation on repetition "for-itself" was ultimately as unappealing to Eisenman as Fried's meditation on difference "in-itself" was to Krauss.\(^2\) Gestalt theory's emphasis on repetition must have been viewed by Krauss as a valuable corrective to the weight Fried had assigned the perception of difference. But for Krauss the repetition described by gestalt theory was, or needed to be, grounded in a clearly represented form, and this form was in the original German gestalt theorists' concept of the field.

In a similar sense, Fried's meditation on difference in-itself must have been seen by Eisenman as a corrective to the uncertainty represented by Rowe's adaptation of gestalt theory ("in history a given epoch may endow with 'field properties' the idiosyncracies of the various figures which it supports"). Only that for Eisenman, this difference, like Krauss's gestaltist reversals, had to be given a clearly represented form. In this sense Chomskian recursiveness was the field of consistency that gave coherence to the perception of difference.

In the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman that took place from 1969 to 1976, some sense of their "mentors'" meditations on unrepresented difference and unrepresented repetition was bound to enter. Deleuze of course has pointed to the

\(^2\) I am here using Deleuze's terminology as employed in *Difference and Repetition.*
ontological link between what he calls pure difference and complex repetition. But the link between the projects of Rowe and Fried were, in the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman, mediated by forms of representation that served to confound this relation. When Krauss advances a material field as the basis for gestaltist reversals, she does so as a check against the arbitrariness of conceptualism as well as that of the narrative aspect of Greenbergian and Friedian modernism. This field concept represents repetition as a determination in the world of things. In this sense Krauss’s gestaltist position is to assert no distinction between art and architecture, a position that attempts to undercut what she saw as Fried’s transcendental presumptions of medium.

When Eisenman takes up a recursive field concept as the basis for the perception of difference, it is in order to check the advances of the arbitrary forms of (the soon-to-be) postmodern architecture, to which he added Rowe’s pluralist defense of formalist architecture. This field concept represents difference as a practical efficiency (a means of communication) in the world of things. Since communication of the sign of intentionality is the measure of efficiency, medium bears the weight of this field concept, and it is meant as a critical response to the “weak semiology” of the likes of Jencks and Venturi, which took signs to be transparent. At the same time it served as a rejoinder to Rowe’s phenomenal transparency, which Eisenman took as an arbitrary and undetermined account of the perception of form, ungrounded precisely because it had no account of the medium of architecture.

The representations of repetition and difference were thus at odds with one another. This uncertain relation centered on the question of medium, and more specifically, on whether or not there was a distinction between art and architecture. Since
for Krauss (in her strictly gestalt-based period) repetition was materially determined in the world of things, there was no distinction between art and architecture, no need for an account of medium. From Eisenman’s perspective, the lack of a distinction between art and architecture loomed as a sign of the arbitrary. At the end of 1976, after the intervention at the IAUS by Matta-Clark, the dialogue that the two had maintained for nearly seven years fell apart. They would each turn their critical attention elsewhere. Krauss’s gestaltist representation of repetition would be turned into a representation of difference in the ensuing discourse on institutions. It is as though the material field suddenly became ungrounded, an arbitrary assertion of power (the instrument-machine as the specter of the literal), as Eisenman booted Matta-Clark out of the *Idea as Model* exhibition. The material field became for Krauss the institutional ground.

Meanwhile, for Eisenman, Matta-Clark’s intervention represented the mirror image of that apparition of the literalist machine – the automaton. By 1976 he had begun to adopt the dialectical methods that Krauss had been incorporating into her own criticism. For Krauss this had meant the dialectical negation of public conventions as a private and negative act of individuation (as in her reading of Johns’ recent work). In his *Five Easy Pieces*, Eisenman’s dialectic of transformation and decomposition was meant as a negation of the conventions of the house. As architecture, this was still medium-specific as Eisenman continued to employ the notion of medium as that which would communicate the concept of intentionality. Krauss evidently convinced him to drop this notion in his “Post-Functionalism” essay, resonating as it surely must have with the problems of Friedian presentness. The dialectical negation of public conventions that
Krauss held out in her essay on Johns’ irony became for Eisenman “a dialectical relationship with the evolution of form itself.”

If the film *Five Easy Pieces* had suggested that the danger of irony was that of being misread, then this threat appeared as a frightening reality upon Matta-Clark’s intervention at the IAUS. Eisenman would have had no warning that he was about to be the target of a direct attack. Indeed Krauss’s rationale for inviting Matta-Clark to *Idea as Model* would have been perfectly reasonable to Eisenman. The artist’s by-then quite well known building cuttings would have been just the sort of dialectical negation of public conventions that Krauss had described in Johns’ recent paintings. In light of the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman that preceded it, Matta-Clark’s tactic in *Window Blow-Out* is not all that different from that of his building cuttings. But the result for Eisenman is devastating. The “private” act of negation in Matta-Clark’s cuttings could easily have been read against the conventions of architecture. Eisenman aimed to do nothing less himself through the process of transformation and decomposition that he described for his House VIII. In *Window Blow-Out*, however, the act of negation is literally in the blown out windows at the IAUS. Krauss’s dialectic of a materially grounded private act of individuation against public conventions suddenly takes on its other appearance, which was completely anathema to Eisenman: the dialectic of art and not-art. For Eisenman this was no dialectic at all. The literal appearance of the negative of art in the blown out windows threatened the very positivity of medium on which all of Eisenman’s work rested. Through the cracks in those windows there loomed the apparition that suggested

---

3 Eisenman has described, not unreasonably, the feeling of immanent danger upon the occasion of Matta-Clark’s intervention, in which the gun-wielding artist showed up at the Institute to carry out his unannounced action. Eisenman, interview, 22 February 2001. Unfortunately, accounts differ as to when Matta-Clark arrived and who was actually present, and whether Eisenman knew of MacNair’s permission to shoot out at least some of the windows.
that the perception of difference, which was the sign of architecture’s efficiency as a medium of communication, was really a repetition determined in the world of things, an automaton-machine.

In *Window Blow-Out*, then, the very undecidability over which the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman wavered appeared in spectral form. Eisenman’s response was not to turn to a discourse on institutions, however (though his colleagues at *Oppositions* had already begun that). Indeed he could not, for what had appeared was repetition’s ugly head. As faithful to psychoanalysis’s therapeutic value as Eisenman was (just as Krauss was and proclaimed to be in the “Video” essay), that undecidability had to be incorporated, worked through and, above all, represented. In his ensuing projects (Canareggio, the Berlin IBA project, Wexner), Eisenman would make architecture’s ground, its context, the undecidable feature on which the medium of architecture would rest.

In the remainder of this chapter I want to argue that undecidability is the basis for the fantasy I am associating with postmodernism. (In Deleuzian terms, we may say that undecidability derives from, and is itself, representation.) The undecidablity between the projects of Krauss and Eisenman, I have said, lies in whether or not there is a distinction between art and architecture. This question determines other relations – a distinction between art and architecture calls upon medium-specificity, and necessitates an account of practical efficiency. The lack of distinction between art and architecture, in the case of Krauss’s use of gestalt theory, implies a material determination of repetition in the world of things.
If this undecidability is in its most basic form an undecidability between the representation of difference and the representation of repetition, then the key question that arises is whether it necessarily follows from the meditations on difference and repetition by Fried and Rowe. Krauss’s essay, “On Frontality,” emerges as the crucial text for answering this question. It serves as the pivot between a dialogue over the nature of Merleau-Pontyan embodiedness and an outright rejection of the ability of medium to offer itself transparently.

The issue of debate between Fried and Krauss in the years leading up to “On Frontality” centered on the Merleau-Pontyan institution. In particular, it came down to the difference between a differential and a non-differential relation to embodied conventions – whether embodiedness was the normal mode of conventional experience and the task to differentiate from it, or whether subjective experience was conventional and the task to identify embodiedness. Since her reading of “The New Sculpture” in her essay on Judd, Krauss had identified embodiedness as a means of projecting the modalities of Greenbergian illusiveness. Fried, in his critique of the teleology in Greenberg’s criticism (the “modernist ‘reduction’”), had come to theorize embodiedness as the modality of everything that Greenberg had dismissed as tactile. But in place of the teleology provided by an essential theory of medium, Fried had also come to treat the question of medium as nothing more or less than the difference established between a “gesture” and the conventions of embodiedness.

In “On Frontality,” Krauss’s continued allegiance to Greenbergian illusiveness helped her to produce what might have been the most trenchant critique of Fried’s new conception of medium. What thwarted this was effectively found in that same allegiance
– namely the opposition to “literalism,” which she recovered through the recourse to a final Kantian gloss on that project. The effectiveness of the remainder of her critique of Fried, however, was had in what may be described as the identification of an undecidability in Fried’s deployment of the notion of objecthood as the form of embodied perception. In particular, Krauss pointed out that the frontal perspective, which although Fried never acknowledged as such stood as the opposite of objecthood, necessarily entails objecthood as its basis (“the very word ‘frontal’ implies a three-dimensional object”).

This critique of Fried landed on the polemic that had been produced in “Art and Objecthood.” In many ways, the subtlety that came through in “Shape as Form” was lost in the blusterous attack on literalism of the later essay. Already in “Art and Objecthood,” the difference that was evoked by acknowledgement in “Shape as Form” is now represented as an opposition – that between art and objecthood. When Krauss took on Fried’s polemic a year later in “On Frontality,” that represented difference could only become an undecidablity – however, as an undecidability it appeared as a representation of repetition. The fact that frontal is necessarily one of a number of aspects to a three-dimensional object meant that these aspects could alternate. Krauss found perfect description for this through a reading of the theory of gestalt, whose field concept served as a different representation of repetition – until ultimately in the dialogue with Eisenman that representation of repetition appeared as the undecidable again under the specter of the machine.

Deleuze’s ontological study of difference and repetition has demonstrated the ways representation has stood in the way of a consideration of difference “in-itself” and
repetition "for-itself." I have drawn on it considerably here, but I wish to return to the institutional in order to draw out some of the historical matters that bear on this study.

The dialogues under study in this thesis suggest two obstacles to thinking the institutional. The first may be described as institutionality's received wisdom (I purposely inscribe this obstacle in the institutional). It is that the false hinders human efficiency. In the discourse in *October* and *Oppositions*, the antinomy arrived at these two positions: the institution is a fiction, a false unity gathering together the disparate elements of art or architecture; the institution is filled by false contents, disrupting its enabling power. These are the impediments to the two causalities identified earlier (the Augustinian and Manichaean causalities). According to each case, practical efficiency is thwarted.

These modes of the false have determined most readings of Fried's criticism. Either Fried has falsely evoked a faith in a speculative scheme of things, or he has falsely located the source of practical knowledge outside the body. In the first case, the measure and means of practical efficiency (medium) is falsely aligned with a speculative scheme (the modernist "narrative"), which is merely conventional. In the second case, the same means of practical efficiency is denied the undetermined measure of embodiment, and instead locates practical efficiency in the subjective, which is merely conventional. The conventional in both cases is the falsehood that hinders practical efficiency. Fried's sources had already offered ways of thinking around this obstacle. Against the charge that faith can only hinder efficiency by merely reproducing the conventional, Cavell showed that the conventional can only be known by conviction and can be the only basis for efficiency in communication. Against the charge that the subjective is the conventional which hinders embodied efficiency, Merleau-Ponty showed that institution is the matrix
of subject-object coproduction, that the conventional can not be located in either embodiment or subjectivity alone.

The second obstacle to thinking the institutional lies precisely in the manner in which postmodernism has resisted historicization. It is a second bit of received wisdom – which is that there is no practical efficiency at all, only a metaphysics in its place. If the efficiency of persons cannot be distinguished from the efficiency in the world of things, then any claims to practical efficiency are said to be an arbitrary assertion of power. (It is in this way that the undecidable and the arbitrary are linked.)

Stephen Melville’s readings of Fried’s writing are powerful analyses of some of the conceptual ambiguities surrounding the notion of medium. At the same time, they pose some of the dilemmas of this obstacle. Firstly, Melville touches upon the undecidability, which has been considered by Jacques Derrida as a machine. This machine bears similarities to that shared by Krauss and Eisenman. Melville oscillates over it just as Krauss and Eisenman had, and, moreover, this oscillation mimics the movement he makes, over the course of two analyses of Fried’s criticism, with regard to the name of his project – at first, postmodernism, and then modernism.\(^4\) Tracing Melville’s movement as he calls upon the notions of medium and, implicitly, context may shed light on the undecidability that had subtended the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman.

In his “Notes on the Reemergence of Allegory,” Melville argues that Fried’s attempt to shore up the boundaries of medium depended on the concept of presentness in

a way that, despite itself, exposed its faults. The problem for Melville is not so much the Puritan source of that concept, but the way it presumed all the metaphysical properties of speech that Derrida had deconstructed in many of his writings of the 1960s. Derrida had shown that the presumption of presence was implicit in models of language that gave priority to speech, by supposing that an absent author may be made present through the voice. Melville argues that Fried’s presentness bears all the presumptions of this concept. But what is also significant about his essay is that instead of simply endorsing the literalist, anti-medium critique of Fried, Melville shows that that critique and its present guise as critical postmodernism / allegory is equally founded on an undecidability that Derrida had identified in his critique of the metaphysics of presence.

To the extent that this series of writings [that on allegory and postmodernism by Crimp, Craig Owens and Joel Fineman] amounts to the taking of a position, the presentation of a thesis, it presents a position that is fundamentally not different from (only later than) the position Fried has been building all these years – and it is powerful, if it is, precisely because this is what it is.

Melville’s essay, which appeared in October 19 (Winter 1981), is remarkable for incorporating the basic premise of the then emerging critical postmodernism into his déconstruction of Fried’s critical and historical writings. In fact, it at first appears to contribute much towards identifying what may be called the metaphysics of presence that underlies the October uses of institution.

---

“Art and Objecthood” figures for us here as an attempt to defend the adequacy and integrity of the museum/encyclopedia – an attempt to show that the coincidence of art and good art can be maintained. We might say that the museum/encyclopedia has for its internal threat what appears as the “institutional theory of art” – the idea, most simply, that the museum means nothing, that art is nothing more than what makes it into the museum and that the appearance of the museum as at once guaranteeing and guaranteed by the history of art is simply and finally empty. Institutional theories would have us believe that there is nothing radically scandalous in art or its history – not because of the way art builds itself in and out of its history, but because the museum can absorb anything (Fountain is the proof).  

The “institutional theory of art” is a term that had been employed in aesthetic philosophy by George Dickie and, more notably, by Arthur Danto. But Melville sees a significant difference between that theory and the uses of institution (as museum/encyclopedia) in the October critics. 

Against such a theory, the museum/encyclopedia proves itself through the historically and systematically grounded exclusion of that which is irredeemably theatrical: the scandal of Tony Smith or Donald Judd or Robert Rauschenberg. 

Thus, where Melville comes close to deconstructing the uses of institution in October, he returns to a difference between Fried and his critics. 

The claim has now been advanced that we live in and on the ruins of this museum – in and on the failure of its exclusions – the wake of “Art and Objecthood.” I suggest that we should recognize in these ruins what we have come to call “the artworld” – a complex and contradictory network of (among other things and persons) museums, galleries, alternative spaces, sites, nonsites – arenas of various and mutual exclusions. This “artworld” is, in a sense, the artworld of the institutional theorist, but brought down to earth and stripped of its simplicity and homogeneity – so that if at one level this artworld as a whole is capable of 

---

8 Ibid., 70. 
10 Melville, “Notes,” 70. The reading of institution as encyclopedia refers specifically to Owens’ “Allegorical Impulse,” which draws on Foucault’s reading of Bouvard and Pécuchet.
absorbing all the scandals with which it is presented, it can do so only by absorbing them as scandals, by taking internal controversy and radical dissension as proper to itself. To appreciate a work in this new "museum" is with a new explicitness to map its world, and to do so partially with prejudice.

What is surrendered or radically transformed in the passage from museum/encyclopedia to artworld is any faith in the homogeneity, simplicity, or univocity of art history: the scene is ineradicably plural.¹¹

The difference asserted here is at the same time the reassertion of a basic concern about postmodernism that was beginning to appear as a recurring theme in *October* and elsewhere. And this was that two postmodernisms could be identified – one an essentially conservative political formation that exploited de-historicization in all aspects of material culture, and the other the critical thinking that had come to question all forms of "grand narratives." Critical postmodernism, as it was about to be codified by Foster, was indebted to its modernist predecessors.¹² This double version of postmodernism is an expression of a distinction between practical and speculative knowledge. In other words, the practical matter of the discourse on institutions is returned to a speculative account of a reactionary postmodernism, which is given its own causal efficiency.

In Melville’s treatment, however, this speculative account is founded on the same undecidability that had informed Derrida’s critique of presence. A quick look at “Signature, Event, Context” will help to describe what was at issue here. Derrida’s critique of writing as medium takes explicit aim at its economic dimension. “The history of writing will conform to a law of mechanical economy: to gain or save the most space

¹¹ Melville, 70.
¹² Melville writes: "'Postmodernism' means, if it means anything, something about the way in which modernism must inevitably come to see in itself its own allegory (and so also something like its own failure, its nonidentity with itself - but these then would be the terms of its power and success). Where postmodernism would mean something more radically separate from modernism (where it would forget modernism) it will end by forgetting itself as well - and it will do so by falling into the trap of modernism's favored mode of (self-)forgetting, the (non)dialectic of the mere and the pure," "Notes," 91. Outside of *October*, see the essays by Frederic Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, and Jürgen Habermas in *The Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. Hal Foster, as in note 3, chapter 7.
and time possible by means of the most convenient abbreviation; hence writing will never
have the slightest effect on either the structure or contents of the meaning (the ideas) that
it is supposed to transmit [véhiculer].”13 Against/within this mechanical economy that
presupposes the making present of an absent author Derrida counter-/interposes the
notion of iterablity – which bears the difference (also the deferral, absence) and repetition
(recourse to iteration and code) of writing. “To write is to produce a mark that will
constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future
disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning, offering things and itself to
be read and to be rewritten.”14

The machine is both the impossibility of presence and the condition (possibility)
of writing. But as much as Derrida’s essay is a critique of medium as presence, it is also a
critique of the import of “context” to that same notion of writing. In this Derrida takes
issue with (and expands on) the performative theory of speech acts in J.L. Austin’s How
to Do Things with Words. Austin’s theory of performatives, according to Derrida, depend
on a subject that can totalize and grasp the entire “situation” in which a speech act is to
take place. This is another way that models of language that give priority to speech
invoke the notion of presence (i.e., in a subject that is totally present to its context).

As has been well remarked, Austin’s student, Stanley Cavell, was (and is) a friend
of Michael Fried, and together their work has charted a path of mutual influence.
Something of Cavell’s reading of Austin is at work in Fried’s criticism. This, especially,
is to be found in Cavell’s notion of acknowledgement. Much as Fried argued that the
artist’s gesture was to acknowledge and go beyond embodied conventions, Cavell argued

---

13 Derrida takes Condillac as exemplary of this theory of writing, “Signature, Event, Context,” 176.
14 Ibid., 180.
that Austin’s account of the speaker’s relation to conventions of language was one that required their acknowledgement. At the same time, this did not mean, according to Cavell, a totalization of the situation or context in which a speaker may find herself.

Austin, he argued, allowed for aspects of the situation to escape comprehension – and these, too, the speaker might acknowledge as a kind of limit (as in Austin’s account of excuses). The issue, then, is whether Fried supposes the same totalization of context by the subject as Derrida accuses Austin of supposing. For all that Fried is said to be exclusively concerned with medium, it is often forgotten that he does speak of context – and this he invokes as the embodied conventions whose acknowledgement it is the task of the artist to signal. (This oversight is why critics complain of Fried’s faith in and fidelity to medium, which they read as a convention, but they do not see this as evoking the conventionality of literal experience.) The totalization of context will only be assumed if conventions are considered as having the same presentness as the medium of acknowledgement. But they are not assumed as such by Fried. Fried implicitly introduces the paradoxical concept of the medium of convention. This counters the suppositions of undecidability, and affirms an important insight into institutionality made by Veblen.

Against the notion that institutions move in a single, ever-expanding direction, continually subduing the new by increasing the contents of the conventional, Veblen identifies two movements to institutionality. This is had in the consigning of practical knowledge to the institutions of speculative learning and the simultaneous making available of practical know-how out of once-deemed speculative knowledge. New conventions are not an institution’s making, as though institutions have their own

---

15 Cavell, “Must We Mean What We Say?” in Must We Mean What We Say?; see also Cavell, Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida (Oxford UK; Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1995).
efficiency. Rather, Veblen shows a different process at work, one that reads the habitual use of conventions as a means to a new efficiency. This requires the “discovery” of convention, as Fried made clear with respect to painting: “the task of the modernist painter is to discover those conventions that, at a given moment, alone are capable of establishing his work’s identity as painting.”

Melville’s criticism of Fried in the 1981 October essay employs Derrida’s deconstruction of presence in a way that collapses the critique of context (the realm of convention) into the critique of medium. Thus, in Melville’s reading, Fried’s presentness depends on a concept of medium that belies its repetitions. In particular, Melville seize on the rhetorical play between Fried’s identification of “mere allegory” (as in the way theater is allegorical of the experience of objecthood) and “purity,” that holdover from the Greenbergian conception of medium.

The uneven, stumbling rhythm at work between Fried’s footnotes – the broken-legged, limping dialectic of “purity” – is crucial to the formalist program; it is between and across purity’s eclipse and recovery of itself that the work of this criticism is achieved. Its work is that of separating, impossibly, the “mere” from the “pure”; where its rhythm ceases, where the jagged hesitations of purity is the forgetting of modernism (if such a forgetting and such an impulse to Puritanism were not also a hallmark of what we call modernism in its double impulse to repetition and origination).

Later, in his Philosophy Beside Itself, Melville attempts to align Cavell’s project with Derrida’s in a way that is much more forgiving of Fried and the very notion of medium (in the provisional status Fried gives it) – which both Fried and Cavell maintain as a necessity and which is inscribed in their very modernity/modernism, a modernism which Melville now ascribes to Derrida as well. Here the “contextual” or speculative way

---

16 Fried’s emphasis, “Art and Objecthood,” 169. Fried’s restriction on what conventions count clearly carry over the same desire for an essential medium as held by Greenberg.
17 Melville, “Notes,” 63.
out that Melville presented in his 1981 essay – that is, the production of two
postmodernisms (in his terms, one that is allegorical of modernism and one that is
forgetful) – is rethought. In its stead, Melville argues for an account of modernity that is
at once both structure and event.

I am suggesting that we see Derrida in something like the way Fried sees Manet
or Morris Louis – as a figure deeply involved in a history and a discipline that has
become complex and problematic, to the point of being deeply, internally, at war
with itself.

...we are returned once again to considerations of the ways in which
modernism is and is not an event, and of the ways in which this “event”
transforms the terms in which we can construe history – so that history appears as
a continuity that is traversed at every point by discontinuity and disruption,
permanent revolution.18

This duality is resorted to in order to precisely find a means of linking the event of
difference and the event of sameness by making them productive of a single effect (which
is now read as modernity/modernism).

The dilemma for Melville is this: present an overarching modernity/modernism, a
dual structure-event that accounts for the parameters of institutionality since its inception,
or present two postmodernisms, an invocation of institution as the presence of an
artificial causality against a critical practical knowledge. This distinction, in fact,
accounts for much of the difference between October and Oppositions. Where October
repeatedly invoked the two postmodernisms – one to be espoused and one to be fought –
the architectural discourse at Oppositions continually warded off a single form of
postmodernism, in fact could only see one form of postmodernism. Indeed, Eisenman
would continually describe his project as a specifically modernist one. One might find,
however, Eisenman’s modernism in precisely the kind of deconstruction he would come
to espouse – namely, a deconstruction of context that returned every time to (and

18 Melville, Philosophy Beside Itself, 18, 31.
reasserted) the *medium* of architecture.\(^{19}\) In other words, where Melville in 1981 led the
deconstruction of medium to a reassertion of context, Eisenman turned the deconstruction
of context to a reassertion of medium. (And, in a way, Melville’s turning of Derrida into
a modernist in his 1986 book is wholly in concert with Eisenman’s project from 1977
through the 1980s.)\(^{20}\)

In either case – in a postmodernism that is allegorical *and* forgetful of modernism,
or in a modernism/modernity that postmodernism only pretends to speak to – the
speculative scheme is founded on an undecidability. This undecidability was at the core
of the dialogue between Krauss and Eisenman. It was what their writings continually
ambulated over, taking the form of a relation between art and architecture. When, at one
moment, a difference between art and architecture was asserted, the dialogue attended to
the question of medium and its basis as a form of practical knowledge. When, in the next,
a non-difference between art and architecture was asserted, the dialogue attended to the
question of context and its basis as a form of speculative knowledge.

As a study of efficiency, this undecidability may seem to demonstrate the
impossibility of efficiency in itself, in the manner that Derrida’s work has claimed
economy to be beholden to a metaphysic, suggesting in that impossibility the very
possibility of efficiency as an (arbitrary) effect of the power of that metaphysic. The
institutionality described by Veblen suggests that as much as speculative schemes may be
metaphysical they are performed as a human efficiency. This performance, however, is
not simply the arbitrary enacting of an undecidable relation between the efficiency of the

\(^{19}\) Eisenman, “The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, The End of the End,” *Perspecta* 21
(Summer 1984), 154-72, reprinted in Eisenman Inside Out, 152-68.

\(^{20}\) Derrida’s own involvement in, and later disavowal of, Eisenman’s project is the subject of much needed
discussion.
world of things and the efficiency of persons. Veblen shows not the power of a prevailing metaphysic, but the institution of conventions in the precise sense as a form of practical efficiency. This insight into institutionality allows one to read for the ways a prevailing metaphysic, a fantasy of efficiency, may dissemble, decompose, and reform.

In this sense, this thesis has described the movement of art and architectural criticism into the "alternative" spaces, the think tank, which was, of course, a temporary home for that criticism. The IAUS, for one, did not survive long into the 1980s. Eisenman, with Jacquelin Robertson, established his own architectural firm in 1982, stepping aside (at least partially) as director of the Institute. He had been responsible for securing much of its finances, and now with an uncertain future, the Institute could now longer keep itself afloat. Along with the IAUS, Oppositions folded in 1984. At the same time, the ownership of October went to its editors, Krauss and Michelson, and the journal thereafter began to be published directly by MIT press.

The dissolution of the IAUS, then, may be seen as part of the way the criticism produced around it moved back into the conventional institution of higher learning, the university. And in the manner described by Veblen, this may also be seen as a return to a form of speculative knowledge. For what occurs at the same time, in this story, is postmodernism's becoming historical, which has been evidenced, for example, with the appearance of postmodernism in survey texts.

The undecidability espied by Melville may be read in the indeterminate historicity of the two postmodernisms – the postmodernism of reaction and critical postmodernism are shown to have a causal relation, but neither can be placed definitively prior. At the same time, an arbitrary power emerges, which is read in the tautology of pluralism – the
plural definitions of postmodernism form a sign of the plural postmodern times. The fantasy of postmodernism is this becoming historical. That is, it allows postmodernism to be understood as a period that ushered in the explicit and arbitrary exploitation of conventions as an effect of power (and by this account the term still holds currency for some). At the same time, it allows postmodernism to be understood as a dated practice or term of criticism in art and architecture, linked to a long since passed moment in the 1970s and 1980s. The effect of this fantasy is the illusion of the historical, that the moment has passed, which dissimulates the reorganization of a regime of efficiency that took place under its spell, and continues with us.
Epilogue

The Education of David Stockman

This thesis has attempted to historicize postmodernism by turning to its formative moments, and by analyzing its discursive components. In particular, this has meant a study of the way the term institution came to be deployed. I have suggested that this deployment was involved in the emergence of a new regime of efficiency, and that this very efficiency has been an obstacle to historicizing “postmodernism” despite the fact that the term’s use in art and architectural circles can be easily dated to the 1970s and 1980s.

The sense that a new regime of efficiency emerged from this date should not surprise those concerned with a history of economics. Indeed, popular accounts often note the end of the Keynesian management of the economy by the Welfare State, the narrowing of the role of government in the economy, the spread of free trade and international markets – and these have been tied to an ideological contest, not unlike that which give rise to the Vital Center in the 1950s, that has a new free market ideology rise triumphant over an earlier generation of bureaucratic managers.¹ However, I suggest that the events that gave to this shift have been as resistant to historicization as those of postmodernism, and that despite this, and for reasons similar to those surrounding

¹ For such a popular account, see Daniel Yergin and Joseph Stanislaw, The Commanding Heights: The Battle between Government and the Marketplace that is Remaking the Modern World (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998). This book appeared in a second edition in 2002 with the subtitle, The Battle for the World Economy. It was also made into a TV series for PBS.
postmodernism, we nonetheless feel compelled to think of those events of the early 1980s as still being with us.

In the US, popular history has the narrowing of the Welfare State tied to the presidency of Ronald Reagan. His campaign rhetoric of getting government off the backs of ordinary Americans served him in his landslide election victory in 1980. The subsequent cutbacks to government programs in an effort to “trim the fat” off the federal budget extended to social security and thus broke a campaign promise and threatened his popularity. But the recession of 1981-82 was called upon as forcing the leanness of government. And although the prosperity that Reagan promised would result from a sweeping set of tax cuts did not materialize for the majority of Americans, he was eventually credited with effecting a turn-around in the operation of government. Popular history has tied this to the ending of the Cold War, an achievement often attributed to Reagan that at the same is said to confirm once and for all, if not the justness of the free market, then at least the norms international economics.

At the time, Reaganomics was the term used to describe the ambitious reforms of the new Republican administration – a term that still connotes rosy optimism about the ability of free enterprise to service the needs of everyone, while belying the harsh realities of ending entitlements and the services of social welfare, strike busting, and the refusal to bail out failing industries and their employees. The cynicism associated with the term grew as the press reported on the inner workings of the first budget of the summer of 1981 and the discretions of officials in arriving at it. This history has much to tell about the logic of the events that gave rise to what I am calling a new regime of
efficiency, and I offer it as a coda in order to link up my story of *October* and *Oppositions* with economic discourse.

The head of the Office of Management and Budget under Reagan was the young congressman from Michigan, David Stockman, who was charged with drawing up the new government’s budget in 1981, which according to conventional Republican creed, and now dire national economic straits, was to be balanced. The course of his decision-making throughout the year was recorded in interviews by William Greider, an editor for the *Washington Post*. Both Stockman and Greider agreed that the interviews were “off the record” for the time being, but would be used at a later date, well after the budget had passed congress and economic judgment could be positively handed down assigning wisdom, as Stockman presumed, to the economic reforms. The interviews were indeed put to print, but in an article that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in late 1981, only some months after the passing of the budget, still in the midst of recession and many public misgivings. “The Education of David Stockman” caused a stir in the national media, as it demonstrated the conscious duplicity on the part of the government in drawing up its budget and carrying out its reforms.² The Reagan official was quoted in a kind of confessional, claiming to not really believe in the numbers of his budget and in the plausibility of their intended effects.

In a certain sense the story was nothing new – scandal on the inside of government, the inevitable discredit of politicians. And to the financial establishment, the story was clear long before it was “broke” by William Greider. Those that knew

---

something about the economic models that the Reagan administration was drawing on were aware that there were explicit conflicts, and that the budget, for one thing, was going to show signs of this. It was this conflict of competing economic models that was the substance of Greider’s story, and that, for economic history, has been the embarrassment of the Reagan plan. The conflict of economic models has a conceptual affinity with the competing uses of the figure institution within the discourse on postmodernism.

In one sense, the story of the Reagan budget was that of a clash between the old conservatism of fiscal prudence and balanced budgets and the new economic theory taken up by Reagan and certain of his supporters, including Stockman, but not shared by the majority of Republicans. That theory was known as supply-side. As opposed to the old Keynesian “demand-side” stimulation of the economy in periods of high unemployment through government spending, supply-side theorists said economic stimulation could be had by ensuring that people had more money, rather than more work. Broad tax cuts could be handed out at no cost to the government, according to the supply-siders, because the stimulus would increase productivity – more taxable income, but taxed at a lower rate. The theory of this “reflow” was much touted by supply-siders, including Reagan in his television appearances, promising a great boon to the US economy. For critics of supply-side, including traditional Republicans, the theory was not well founded. It was the work of fringe economists and neophytes, they said. George HW Bush, in a 1979 debate with Reagan for the GOP nomination, called it “voodoo economics,” a label that would stick and that he would later regret when he became Reagan’s running mate and then vice-president.
The budget story that Greider told in late 1981 was of an early adherent of the new supply-side theory losing his faith and returning to the verities of the old conservatism of fiscal prudence. The new tax cuts were not to be as deep as the supply-siders wished, lest the conventional wisdom (that of balanced budgets) of the majority of congress, both Democrat and Republican, be disturbed. The duplicity that was revealed in the Greider article involved not so much Stockman and his relation to the supply-side creed, but the way even the lesser demands of the smaller tax cuts forced discretion over priorities in the budget. As Reagan and his inner circle made clear to Stockman, the Department of Defense was “off limits” to funding cuts. At a time when the growing arms race caused military funding to balloon, this made Stockman’s job all but impossible, forcing him to take larger cuts out of a smaller pie.

These compromises make up the thrust of Greider’s article. But as the following year did not see significant changes to the Reagan plan, the article was made into a small book with an additional account by Greider of the larger economic conflicts of 1981. The reason why the financial establishment could read problems into Reaganomics well before insider intrigue hit the national media, he explained, was not simply that supply-side theory was itself unfounded, but that it was on a collision course with the monetary policy of the Federal Reserve. The two were at effective cross-purposes.

What had given Reagan such a tremendous boost in the 1980 presidential election were years of mounting economic uncertainty, which the previous administrations could not solve. Under the pressure from the oil crises and energy shortages of 1973 and 1978, inflation grew steadily throughout the 1970s, reaching double-digit rates. Meanwhile real economic growth turned to recession, a combined phenomenon that had never occurred before.

---

3 Not all supply-siders agreed, however, on the degree of detriment a budget deficit would lead to.
in postwar America. Although the 1978 recession abated, inflation continued at high rates. In order to squeeze out the inflationary spiral, the new chair at the Federal Reserve (appointed in 1979) tightened the money supply. This enforced credit crunch pushed up interest rates to new highs.

As the Federal Reserve operates at, technically, an arm’s length from the government, there were no binds that compelled the White House administration to produce fiscal policy that would better harmonize with monetary policy (or vice versa). Thus, when the supply-siders in Reagan’s circle announced the plan to increase the flow of money in consumers’ hands by turning out across-the-board tax cuts, the financial establishment could see that this ran counter to the logic of the Federal Reserve, which was to tighten the circulation of money. It has since become conventional wisdom among economists that the recession that was manufactured by Federal Reserve – a necessary pain to gain control of runaway inflation – was made worse than it needed to be by the fiscal policy of the Reagan administration.

The conflict of policies – fiscal and monetary – that appeared in the early years of Reagan’s presidency was highlighted in Greider’s book as a sign that government was more interested in making policy that suited its political agenda than reasoned economic wisdom. For critics of the Reagan government, this was hardly a surprise. But the conflict also suggests that the new conservatism had yet to achieve a consensus in economic theory.

While Reaganomics was once a term used strictly to describe supply-side theory, it has become a name for the general economic shadiness of the new reforms (as even Stockman was compelled to admit, it ended up being just another variation on old-
fashioned “trickle-down” conservatism). But another reason for the economic upheaval of 1981-82, not generally covered by the term Reaganomics, was that the monetary policy at the Federal Reserve was essentially as untried as supply-side theory. Both the new monetary policy and supply-side demonstrate some of the contradictions that we have seen elsewhere in the discourse on institutions.

The new monetary policy taken up at the Federal Reserve beginning in 1979 was heavily informed by the work of Milton Friedman, recognized as a key figure in the so-called Chicago School of economics at the University of Chicago. The Chicago School had become known as something of a hot house of libertarian thinking, and has been seen as leading the charge against the older Keynesian models. (Friedman was awarded a Nobel Prize in economics in 1976 and was one of three eventual Nobel laureates associated with the school at Chicago.)

According to traditional Keynesianism, inflation and unemployment were seen as having an inverse relation. They were understood to offer a trade-off to fiscal policy-makers – one could stimulate growth in the economy (through government spending) at the price of increasing inflation, and, conversely, one could curb inflation (through reduced spending) at the price of increased unemployment. Friedman had gained a certain notoriety in the 1970s (he was from 1967 a columnist for Newsweek) for predicting the hitherto unknown phenomenon of a combined rising inflation and rising unemployment.

Friedman’s critique of Keynesianism suggested that it did not pay attention to the real problem in inflation, which was the money supply. As he argued in his Nobel lecture of 1976, the Keynesian model failed to treat the cumulative knowledge acquired by

---

4 George Stigler was awarded the Nobel Prize for economics in 1982, Gary Becker in 1992.
economic agents. This was a point advanced by rational expectations theory, and suggested that policy intended to check inflation would be learned by agents and eventually would fail to work. Friedman suggested, following others, that the Keynesian belief that unemployment could be controlled was unfounded. Instead, basic economic givens produced what was described as a natural rate of unemployment. What made the economy of the 1970s appear to lurch back and forth were the unfounded attempts to control unemployment. These would be learned by economic agents and, as Friedman put it, would become a part of the economic institutions. When one policy went wrong and a counter-measure proposed, the institutionalized behavior would act as an impediment to the new policy because it was not understood or not measurable.5

In short, what Friedman’s monetary theory proposed was a clearing of the institution of money (technically, this meant the targeting of a mathematically determined, optimum quantity of money in the economy, rather than reactively adjusting credit rates to changes in inflation and other factors). In other words, the money supply itself would be freed of institutionalized behavior, creating an optimal situation where all agents were equally informed, and their activity would not be hindered by undue forces.

Friedman’s theory was put into practice at the Federal Reserve from 1979 until 1982, when the targeting of the money quantity was finally abandoned after the resulting interest rates no longer corresponded to desired aims with respect to inflation and the real economy. Friedman’s ideal of a transparent money institution was in effect impossible. Still, for some, the lessons of the era were learned, and it subsequently became one of the primary objectives of the Federal Reserve to not let inflation get out of control, though

now through other modeling (popularly held as an intuitive achievement of conductor-like orchestration that was the claim to fame of the next Fed chair, Alan Greenspan).\(^6\)

The recourse to the language of institutions was not unique to Friedman's monetary theory. Supply-siders equally held to the notion that traditional Keynesian policy produced an institutional impediment to proper workings of the economy. Supply-side theory was much less involved in the latest developments in the field of economics. In fact, its fringe status owed to its resurrection of much of classical theory. Its apostle, Jude Wanniski, was an editor at the *Wall Street Journal* who had no formal training in economics. After becoming converted to the theory as it was articulated by a relatively unknown economist at the University of Southern California, Wanniski continually promoted it in editorials in the *Journal* and wrote an economic handbook intended to convert other economic neophytes.\(^7\) That book became the pitch Wanniski and other Republican insiders made to Reagan as they attempted to find a presidential candidate who would support their untried theory. It had obvious appeal to Reagan, who styled himself as the candidate who would trim back the excesses of government.

At the core of supply-side theory was the old notion put forward by Adam Smith that the welfare of society as whole could be had with the economic freedom of its individuals. Wanniski continually returned his argument to this proposition. As he and other neoconservative popularizers of classical economics like Irving Kristol argued, Keynesian intervention in the economy was an institutional impediment to the optimal workings of the free market. Those workings, as Smith had famously put it, were guided

---


as if by an invisible hand that guaranteed the improvement of all. According to Kristol and other neoconservatives, the free market was one of a number of democratic institutions that had of late been subverted by the undue claims made by the New Class, which had convinced the government to make interventions in its natural workings.\textsuperscript{8} The task of the neoconservatives was to return these institutions to their pure state, and as they saw it, supply-side theory was a perfect reflection of this.

Thus, the economic collision course between supply-side theory and monetarism that was described by William Greider and recognized by the financial establishment was more than just that. It represented the antinomy within the discourse on institutions that we have seen elsewhere. In other words, Friedman's notion of clearing the institution of money supposed a resulting freedom of individual economic activity, while Wanniski and the supply-siders claimed a return to the classical foundations of the institution of the market would set right the efficiency of the economy as a whole, benefiting all. Though their rhetoric often overlaps, a clear sense of the difference between the two can be had in the titles of two of their most well-known books: \textit{There's No Such Thing as a Free Lunch} and \textit{The Way the World Works.}\textsuperscript{9} These are, certainly, pithy encapsulations of conservative commonplaces, suggesting on the one hand the need for an individual work ethic rather than entitlements and, on the other, the certainty that there is a natural order to the economic world. But do these not return us to the distinctions about practical and speculative knowledge that were the object of the discourse on institutions within art and


\textsuperscript{9} Wanniski, \textit{The Way the World Works}; Milton Friedman, \textit{There's no such Thing as a Free Lunch} (LaSalle IL: Open Court, 1975).
architectural criticism? Are they not the same claims to an undetermined practical efficiency, and a larger causal efficiency in the scheme of things themselves? The claims, that is, about an Augustinian and a Manichaean causality in the world of things?

*

When William Greider reprinted and updated his exposé on the inner workings of Reaganomics, it was published as *The Education of David Stockman and Other Americans*. Reflecting on the broader lessons of the budget episode of 1981, the education in question referred not just to one politician's forced conversion of economic faith, but to the lessons of failing to read the mixed messages of government. Not without a sense of his own professional duty as journalist, the “other Americans” of the book's title referred this lesson to the media as well as the public. Greider argued that a dialogue needed to take place in order ensure that mixed messages could be read as such, rather than accepting political truths by merely substituting one verity for another according to convenience. It is fair to say that that dialogue never took place - at least not in the forum that Greider imagined.

In a similar sense, we may say that the truths of postmodernism were, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, accepted according to convenience, that their mixed messages were not analyzed as such. And just as the broad shift in economics of this same period has been made historical in the precise sense *that it has been instituted* for us today, so too has the fantasy of postmodernism persisted.

---

11 Ibid., 122-36.
Illustrations

Figure 1  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Gordon Matta-Clark, Bronx, 1976 (photograph used for Window Blow-Out, 1976). Gordon Matta-Clark (London: Phaidon, 2003) p.103
Figure 2  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Gordon Matta-Clark, Bronx, 1976 (photograph used for *Window Blow-Out*, 1976). *Gordon Matta-Clark* (London: Phaidon, 2003) p.103
Figure 3  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Gordon Matta-Clark, *A W-Hole House: Datum Cut, Core Cut, Trace de Coeur*, 1973. 6 black-and-white photographs [detail]. *Gordon Matta-Clark* (London: Phaidon, 2003) p. 72
Figure 4  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: View of *Day's End* by Gordon Matta-Clark, 1975. *Gordon Matta-Clark* (London: Phaidon, 2003) p.10.
Figure 5  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Day's End*, color photograph, 1975. *Gordon Matta-Clark* (London: Phaidon, 2003) p.9.
Figure 6  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Gordon Matta-Clark, *Doors Through and Through*, 4 color photographs, 1976. *Gordon Matta-Clark* (Marseilles: Musées Marseilles, 1993) p.266.
Figure 7  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Cover, *October* 16 (spring 1981), published by the MIT Press for the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.
Figure 8  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Cover, *Oppositions* 6 (Fall 1976), published by the MIT Press for the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.
Figure 9  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Back pages, *Oppositions* 7 (Winter 1976), p.98.
Figure 10   This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Leon Krier, Poster for the exhibition, "Peter Eisenman: House Number X," at Princeton University, 1977. From *Oppositions* 14 (Fall 1978), p.59.
Figure 11  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Louis Hellman, Illustration for “Eisenman’s Bogus Avant-Garde,” by Diane Ghirardo in Progressive Architecture 75 no.11 (November 1994), p.70
Figure 12  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Funny Pages, *Skyline* 3 no.1 (April 1980), p.18.
Figure 13 This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: John Hejduk, Courthouse and Lockhart Savings and Loan Association, Lockhart, Texas, photograph, from the essay, "Lockhart, Texas," by Colin Rowe and John Hejduk, *Architectural Record* 121 (March 1957), p. 201.
Figure 14  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Walter Gropius, Bauhaus, Dessau, 1925-26. Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa, and Other Essays* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1976), p.180.
Figure 15  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Le Corbusier, Villa Stein, Garches, 1927. Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa, and Other Essays* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1976), p.20.
Figure 16  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Colin Rowe and Robert Slutsky, analytic diagrams of the façade of San Lorenzo, from Colin Rowe and Robert Slutsky, “Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal, Part II,” *Pespecta* 13-14 (1971), pp.294-5.
Figure 17  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Anthony Caro, *Midday*, 1960, steel painted yellow. From *Anthony Caro*, by Terry Fenton (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p.33.
Figure 18  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Donald Judd, untitled sculpture, 1965, Aluminum and purple lacquer on aluminum. From Donald Judd, by Barbara Haskell (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1988), p.58.
Figure 19  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Kenneth Noland, Sound, c.1966, acrylic on canvas. From Kenneth Noland: A Retrospective, by Diane Waldman (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1977), p.91.
Figure 20  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Artforum 9 no.9 (May 1966), pp.24-5, “Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd,” by Rosalind Krauss.
Figure 21  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Frank Stella, *Conway I*, 1966, florescent alkyd and epoxy on canvas. From *Frank Stella*, by William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), p.116.
Figure 22  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Installation view of Noland exhibition at André Emmerich Gallery, New York, 1967. From Kenneth Noland by Kenworth Moffett (New York: Harry N Abrams, 1977), p.67.
Figure 23  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Jules Olitski, *Prince Patutsky's Command*, 1966, acrylic on canvas. From *Art and Objecthood*, by Michael Fried (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), plate 11, unpag.
Figure 24  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: *Artforum* 11 no.9 (May 1968), pp.40-1, “On Frontality,” by Rosalind Krauss.
Figure 25  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, House II, analytic diagrams, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art, pp. 34-5. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.
Figure 26  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, House I, analytic diagrams, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art, p. 22. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.
Figure 27  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, House II, analytic diagrams, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art, pp. 32-3. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.
Figure 28  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, House II, black and white photograph, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art, p. 37. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.
Figure 29  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, House II, axonometric, from *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier*, by the Museum of Modern Art, p. 31. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975
Figure 30  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Giuseppe Terragni, Casa del Fascio, view looking out onto the piazza. From “Dall’oggetto alla Relazionalita: La Casa del Fascio di Terragni,” by Peter Eisenman, Casabella 344 (January 1970), p.39.
Figure 31  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Giuseppe Terragni, Casa del Fascio, oblique view. From “Dall’oggetto alla Relazionalita: La Casa del Fascio di Terragni,” by Peter Eisenman, Casabella 344 (January 1970), p.40.
Figure 32  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, “Notes on Conceptual Architecture,” *Design Quarterly* 78/79 (1970), p.1.
Figure 33  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Frank Stella, Installation view, Lawerence Rubin Gallery, *Konstie II, Chodorow I*, and *Felsztyn III*, 1971. Photograph by Eric Pollitzer. From *Artforum* 10 no.4 (December 1971), p. 43.
Figure 34  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Ronald Davis, *Four Fold*, 1969, at the Castelli Gallery. From *Artforum* 8 no.4 (December 1969), p. 69.
Figure 35  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: *Artforum* 10 no.9 (May 1972), pp.38-39. “Richard Serra: Sculpture Redrawn,” by Rosalind Krauss.
Figure 36  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Richard Serra, untitled (Pulitzer piece), 1970-71. Three views in *Artforum* 10 no.9 (May 1972), p. 40.
Figure 37  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Lynda Benglis, exhibition advertisement, “‘mcharina’ pose,” 1974. From *Lynda Benglis: Dual Natures*, by Susan Krane (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1991), p.40.
Figure 38  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Lynda Benglis, exhibition announcement, photograph by Annie Leibovitz, 1974. From Lynda Benglis: Dual Natures, by Susan Krane (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1991), p.41.
Figure 39  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Lynda Benglis, advertisement, *Artforum* (November 1974). From "Bone of Contention," by Richard Meyer, *Artforum* 53 no.3 (November 2004), p.73.
Figure 40  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: *Artforum* 13 no.3 (November 1974), pp. 54-55. “Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture,” by Robert Pincus-Witten.
Figure 41  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: October 1 (Spring 1976), pp. 50-51. “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,” by Rosalind Krauss, with two stills from Centers, 1971, by Vito Acconci.
Figure 42  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Campus, *mem* (below) and *dor* (above), 1974. Photographs by Bevan Davies, from *October* 1 (Spring 1976), p. 63.
Figure 43  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Jasper Johns, *Weeping Women*, 1975, encaustic and collage on canvas. From *Jasper Johns*, by Michael Crichton (New York: Abrams, 1994), pl.168, unpag.
Figure 44  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Jasper Johns, *Scent*, 1974, oil and encaustic on canvas. From *Jasper Johns*, by Michael Crichton (New York: Abrams, 1994), pl.161, unpag.
Figure 45  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Pablo Picasso, *Nude with Drapery*, 1907, oil on canvas. From *Picasso: Style and Meaning*, by Elizabeth Cowling (London: Phaidon, 2002), p.184.
Figure 46  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Jackson Pollock, *Untitled (Scent)*, c.1953-55, oil and enamel on canvas. From *Jackson Pollock*, by Kirk Varndoe (New York: Museum of Modern Art), p.312.
Figure 47  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Jasper Johns, *Untitled*, 1972, oil, encaustic, and collage on canvas. From *Jasper Johns*, by Michael Crichton (New York: Abrams, 1994), pl.148, unpag.
Figure 48  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, *Five Easy Pieces*, didactic panel, from the exhibition, *Europa/America*, Venice, 1976. From *Europa/America*, ed. Franco Raggi (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), p. 113.
Figure 49  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, *Five Easy Pieces*, didactic panel, from the exhibition, *Europa/America*, Venice, 1976. From *Europa/America*, ed. Franco Raggi (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), p. 117.
Figure 50  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, *Five Easy Pieces*, model of House VIII, from the exhibition, *Europa/America*, Venice, 1976. From *Europa/America*, ed. Franco Raggi (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), p. 118
Figure 51  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: Peter Eisenman, *Five Easy Pieces*, didactic panel, from the exhibition, *Europa/America*, Venice, 1976. From *Europa/America*, ed. Franco Raggi (Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1978), p. 115.
Figure 52  This figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. The illustration removed is: *Artforum* 9 no.5 (January 1971), pp. 58-59. From “Jackson Pollock’s Drawings,” by Rosalind Krauss.
Works Cited


Buchloh, Benjamin, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson. “Joseph Beuys at the


Flavin, Dan. “… on an American artist’s education…” *Artforum* 6 no.7 (March 1968): 28-32.


Frampton, Kenneth. Review of *Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation*, by Charles Jencks


Friedman, Milton. *There’s no such Thing as a Free Lunch*. LaSalle IL: Open Court, 1975.


Goldberger, Paul. “Should Anyone Care about the ‘New York Five’? ...or about their Critics the ‘Five on Five’?” *Architectural Record* 155 (February 1974): 113-6.


Greider, William. *The Education of David Stockman and Other Americans.* New York:


Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. The Structure of Behavior [1942]. Translated by Alden L.


Mirowski, Philip. *Against Mechanism: Protecting Economics from Science.* Totowa NJ:


Oppenheim, Dennis. Interview by Joan Simon. In *Gordon Matta-Clark: A Retrospective,*


Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. Gordon Matta-Clark : One for all, all for One : Eine Ausstellung Zur Unterstützung Des "Fonds Gordon Matta-Clark, Zentrum Für


