THE ART & LANGUAGE GROUP: 1966 to 1973

by

DAVID BRIAN MITCHELL
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Department of FINE ARTS

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

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The history of Post-Object art can be dated from about 1966. The term Post-Object describes two classes of art activity: Post-Minimal and Conceptual. Post-Minimal art (i.e., Earthworks, Bodyworks, Process, and Systems art) derives from the phenomenological interests of some of the major Minimalist figures (i.e., Morris, Andre, leWitt, and Smithson). Conceptual art, stringently defined, entails the use of word language to state artistic intentions.

By 1969, many of the more progressive Conceptualists in America and England became associated with the "Art & Language group" (hereafter cited as A & L). This group published Art-Language—The Journal of Conceptual Art.

An analysis of A & L has had to deal with various historiographical problems. These include: the lack of historical perspective; the failure of contemporary art writers to produce a sensible critical-historical framework; the unintelligibility of A & L writings.

This study refers to the art-works and articles produced by the members of Art-Language's editorial board (i.e., Atkinson, Bainbridge, Baldwin, Hurrell, Kosuth, Parn and Ramsden, and Harrison. The discourse that was carried on by these eight individuals is analyzed with reference to a four-phase developmental model: "early" (c.1966-8); "insular" (c.1969-70); "transitional" (c.1970-1); and "pluralistic" (c.1972-3).

A & L contended that the condition of Post-Object art enabled art theory and art criticism, as well as art-object production, to be viewed as art-making. In order to understand this notion, one must be first acquainted with the relationship between Post-Object art and Modernist art. In the course of its historical development, Modernist art shifted the creative (i.e., active, central) sector of art-making from the role of object maker to
the role of critic. The Modernist conception of art is a highly self-referential one. Post-Object art, in particular A & L, developed this insular conception of art to its ultimate conclusion.

In this sense, A & L's "early" work with theoretical art-objects and theoretical frameworks is discussed in the context of both traditional art-making, and Post-Object art-making. Then, A & L's position vis-à-vis Post-Object art is clarified with reference to the criticisms the group levelled at this wider community. These criticisms are interpreted historically as polemical writings which served to establish A & L's priority within the Post-Object domain, and prepare the ground for the subsequent production of a general Post-Object theory of art.

The group was familiar with the methodology of Analytical philosophy and sought to employ this knowledge to construct a rational "art-language". This notion was developed in the "insular" phase according to a positivistic viewpoint that was originally suggested by Kosuth. In the course of this programme though, difficulties were incurred and the group was forced to gradually relativize its viewpoint.

During 1970 and 1971 (i.e. "transitional" phase), A & L's inquiry shifted from its self-referential position towards an analysis of the dominant force in contemporary art—Modernism. The group felt that Modernism could be effectively described with reference to Richard Wollheim's "Physicalist" theory. They further suggested that Modernism could be interpreted as a reductive extensional logic based on Wollheim's Physicalist principle. Wollheim suggests that a Physicalist theory coordinates the entire development of Modern art history. In response to this contention, A & L used T.S. Kuhn's theory of Paradigms (developed for the History and Philosophy of Science) to
characterize Modernism as the established sector of a wider "Material-Character/Physical-Object Paradigm of art."

In 1972 and 1973 (ie. "pluralistic" phase), A & L became conscious of contemporary developments in Linguistic philosophy, and accordingly accepted "contextual analysis", or "pluralism", as "their viewpoint". This analytical stance enabled them to investigate the Material-Character/Physical-Object Paradigm in the context of contemporary culture. This investigation revealed the ideological background of this paradigm, and outlined some of the reasons why this phenomenon had become entrenched in the contemporary art community.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Object art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historiographical problems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scope and structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>THEORY AS ART-MAKING</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Art as language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Modernist criticism as art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>IDENTIFYING ART-WORKS: EARLY WORK</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Morphological strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functional strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theoretical frameworks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>ART &amp; LANGUAGE AND POST-OBJECT ART</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dematerialization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Duchamp and Post-Object art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General criticisms of conceptualism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>ART CONCEIVED FROM A RATIONAL POINT OF VIEW</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Artificial languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kosuth's positivism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructing a rational &quot;art language&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-Minimalism as a phase sortal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>THE MATERIAL-CHARACTER/PHYSICAL-OBJECT PARADIGM</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physicalism and Modernist art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kuhn's paradigm model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The MCPOP and &quot;internal&quot; questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>PLURALISM - THE ART &amp; LANGUAGE VIEWPOINT</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contextual Analysis or Pluralism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contextual Analysis of the MCPOP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** | 115
The text content is as follows:

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION
1966 can be singled out as the year in which the first inroads into Post-Object art were made. This general term describes a host of diverse artistic activities whose only common factor seems to be their desire to "question" art through means beyond those provided by traditional art-object production. It is possible now, with the aid of slight retrospect, to distinguish two general kinds of artistic activities which fall under the basic term Post-Object art: Post-Minimal art and Conceptual art.

Post-Minimal describes all of those artistic groups and movements that seem to have derived their inspiration from some of the "post-esthetic" interests of a few of the major Minimalist figures (i.e. Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, and Robert Smithson). Although much of this so-called Post-Object activity continued to actually employ physical objects in some fashion, it must be understood that the primary intentions in each case were with "non-stable, non-material, and non-formal processes and procedures", not exactly housed within these respective physical objects. In such a situation, physical objects merely provided the focal point for a phenomenological experience on the part of the "spectator". Post-Minimal "art-works" entail the experiential involvement of both artist and spectator over a certain time duration. Post-Minimal art includes such areas as Earthworks, Bodyworks, Systems and Process art.

The term Conceptual art has been regularly used to refer to much Post-Object art that is actually of the Post-Minimal variety. In its stringent sense though, Conceptual art only refers to those art-works which employ
word language to communicate artistic intentions. Many of the artists involved with this kind of activity became connected with the Art & Language group in the later sixties.

This analysis of the Art & Language group (hereafter cited as A & L) has had to deal with a number of historiographical problems. The first of these concerns the lack of historical perspective that is associated with all studies of such a contemporary nature. This problem has been complicated though, by the fact that Post-Object art as a whole has suffered from extreme inaccessibility on the part of the art journalists. An historical analysis of a single sector of Post-Object art has been therefore made doubly difficult, since journalists have failed to provide an intelligent critical-historical framework for this entire period.

The critical responses to Post-Object art have generally appeared on a continuum ranging from total inaccessibility to outright alarm and negation. The fact that this new art activity concerns itself with the issues which cannot be reduced to the descriptive comments of perusing critics has not prevented such journalism from being taken seriously. The few writers who have been conscious, though, of some of the implications of Post-Object art have reacted against it strongly, denouncing it as antithetical to the fundamental nature of art.  

Those writers who have been sympathetic to Post-Object activity have provided as many stumbling blocks to its historical analysis as have their negative counterparts. These "sympathetic" critics have also evidenced varying degrees of inaccessibility to the priorities of Post-Object art. This has resulted in a confusion over both terminology and personalities.
First, words such as "object", "concept", "information", and "dematerialization" were so frequently ill-defined and misused as to deny their possible usefulness. Secondly, there was little attempt by the organizers of exhibitions and anthologies to separate different tendencies according to the stated intentions of the artists involved. Most of the popularization of Post-Object art was the result of the journalism and exhibitions produced by Lucille Lippard, John Chandler, Germano Celent, and Seth Siegelaub. All of these groupings seemed to have been motivated by a desire "to expose the chaotic network of ideas in the air, in America and abroad" at any cost. Consequently, differences were brushed over and diverse varieties of Post-Object art were presented uncritically en-masse in order to increase its media shock value.

The best writing on Post-Object art has been done by some of the artists involved. Some of the articles by Robert Morris, Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson, and A & L were aimed at laying out some general principles for the creation and evaluation of Post-Object art. In retrospect, one recognizes that these articles provide the most accurate information on the developing character of this art.

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A & L was a community of conceptual artists that published *Art-Language - The Journal of Conceptual Art* from 1969 to 1973. Within this journal appear some of the best writings on Conceptualism, Post-Object art in general, and the development of the post-war American mainstream. In accordance with the
general critical response to Post-Object art, A & L was usually villified or completely misconstrued. The following are a few of the critical declarations. Lucille Lippard writes —

For all their distaste for formal or "esthetic" or "reactive" art, it seems to me that A & L's work in itself constitutes a kind of formalism, inasmuch as it approaches given conditions analytically (what is more "esthetic" than "an inquiry into the nature of art" ...); as well as reactively, inasmuch as words, thought, tortuous systems are their material, and they emphasize this material and its inherent properties as much as say, Carl Andre emphasized his.

Bruce Boice remarks —

...is the art framework itself art?...this is essentially the question posed by Art and Language... (they) seem to want to go further than the question and assert not only that the art theoretical framework is art, but that it is the only significant art. Here we have as self-referential a system as any system is likely to get; this amounts to saying that all that is significant within the scope of the art framework is the framework itself, which is to say that the framework is a framework only for itself.

James Collins states —

Art-Language's intentions ... are fairly clear ... the group exemplify the confusion that "art discourse" is not only more important than, but can actually take the place of art objects...

... Terry Atkinson's early editorial (ie. for Art-Language) in 1969 asking "Can this editorial come up for the count as a work of art within a developed framework of the visual art convention?" rather than being taken as a Dada gesture of some wit has been taken deadly seriously by art theorists. The number of artists trying to prove it can, increases daily.

Without bothering to answer these criticisms in a step-by-step fashion it will be shown in the course of this paper how each of them is unfounded.

A valid criticism that has been made of A & L writings concerns the actual difficulties a reader encounters in his attempt to read these texts. From the first, one becomes aware of the virtual unintelligibility of the language used in these writings. The following is a typical example of
their prose —

One might argue that the criteria of adequacy of nomological implication admit that the inapplicability of an antecedent does not entail the applicability of other elements on the grounds of construct implication. It's easy to effect a translation from the construct situation (say) to a physiognomic one of observables (where, in some sense "observability" is a theoretical necessity). But it would be naive phenomenalism to insist. (Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin). 13

An ardent reader might imagine that this language gap could be repaired by familiarizing himself with some of the outside readings that inform A & L texts. Unfortunately though, one will meet difficulty in this endeavour as well, since many of the articles written prior to 1971 fail to include the bibliographic references which would facilitate their translation. In order to establish the methodological background for these early articles, one must collect all of the bibliographic references that are made available, and then quantify these in order to identify the popular A & L sources. It should be easy to understand why so many of the art community — artists and critics alike — considered following this journal "too much like hard work".

One who is sufficiently familiar with the background sources of A & L will invariably criticize the way this group has actually used language.

Bruce Boice writes —

For all their insistence on philosophical sophistication and rigorous logical analysis, Art & Language on the whole is a philosophical mess. In philosophy, failure to clarify ordinary language is unthinkable... It is curious to notice that the philosophical writings which are constantly referred to and are the source for much of the writings of Art & Language are not at all difficult to read. The reason is fairly simple: the philosopher's problems are difficult enough without his willfully compounding and obscuring them. 14

Actually, the philosophical texts by such figures as Rudolf Carnap and W.V.O. Quine read a good deal easier than some sections of Art—Language. This is not:
to say that the concepts employed by A & L are more complex, but rather that they are overcomplicated by unnecessary "gothicisms".

These are some of the problems that this study has had to deal with. To compensate, one first discovers the specific import of A & L writings by translating them in terms of their background philosophical sources. The art historical context of A & L activity is then recognized through general readings in Post-Object art and in the post-war American mainstream development. This paper outlines what seems to be the major pattern of A & L discourse as it evolved from 1966 to 1973. This thesis provides a general framework for subsequent interest in these writings, and also suggests some historical guidelines for approaching the "no-man's land" of Post-Object art.

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This paper does not refer to the intentions of every article produced by the A & L community. The scope of this study has been limited to the discourse that was carried on between members of the journal's editorial board. In retrospect, it seems that this sector of the A & L community was the active dominant core.

The Art-Language Press was founded in 1968 by Terry Atkinson, Michael Baldwin, David Bainbridge and Harold Hurrell. The first issue of the journal appeared in May of the following year. In the summer of 1969, Joseph Kosuth was contacted in New York by Terry Atkinson and invited to become the journal's "American Editor". Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden began contributing to the journal.
in 1970 and became members of the editorial board in 1971. Burn and Ramsden had collaborated on projects from the mid-sixties onward and in 1970 had formed with Roger Cutforth, "The Society of Theoretical Art and Analysis" in New York. Also in 1971, Charles Harrison, the assistant editor of Studio International was invited to act as General Editor for the Press. This paper only refers to articles written by these eight individuals.

This study does not concern itself with the writings of the rest of the A & L community. Within this body it is possible to distinguish two sub-groups. The first of these includes those individuals who contributed only one article to the journal (e.g. S. McKenna, Victor Burgin, and B. Bihari). These writers are relatively unimportant since they usually wrote from a unique point of view, and did not relate their article to the central A & L discussion. The second excluded group includes Graham Howard, and the three individuals who originally edited Analytical Art -- Philip Pilkington, David Rushton, and Kevin Lole. The articles by these individuals are not considered in this paper because they are of an extremely analytical nature, and because they prolonged an interest in the method and language of analytical philosophy long after the editorial board had moved their discussion further afield.

In considering the discussion that was carried on by the editorial board, it would be helpful to see this on-going process in some kind of structured pattern. Thus, for the sake of analysis, the larger period 1966 to 1973 can be sensibly divided into four developmental phases: "early" (c.1966-8); "insular" (c.1969-70); "transitional" (c.1970-1); and "pluralistic" (c.1972-3).
In the "early" phase (c.1966-8) those artists who were later to form the editorial board of Art-Language were working in separate camps. The founding editors of the Press (ie. Atkinson, Baldwin, Bainbridge, and Hurrell) were acquainted with each other in Coventry, England in 1966, but working in two separate teams. At this time, Bainbridge and Hurrell were working together on "sculptural devices" that entailed concepts taken from technological and cybernetic manuals. These artists became interested in the interrelationships between art-objects and spectator experience at this time. This interest was to guide much of their subsequent work. Although these artists began to posit the hypothetical, or theoretical existence of their "sculptural devices" in written articles from 1967 onward, they also continued to construct actual physical models until at least 1971.

Atkinson and Baldwin, by contrast, were collaborating in a direction similar to the ones followed by Burn and Ramsden, working together in New York, and Kosuth working there on his own. Each of these five artists had originally produced physical art-objects, but from 1966 onward began positing their "art-works" in word language form instead.

In 1967, Atkinson and Baldwin made yet another conceptual shift in their work when they began to posit the theoretical frameworks upon which theoretical art-objects could potentially be supported. This intentional shift also occurred, again quite independently, in the work of Burn and Ramsden, and Kosuth in the following year.

Thus, by 1968, five of the seven subsequent editors of the journal had moved beyond their early concerns with the positing of theoretical art entities, and had begun investigating the mechanics of constructing frameworks that would clarify the "existence" and intentional value of these theoretical
art-objects. This interest is what correlates many of the articles that appeared in the first few issues of the journal. During this "insular" phase (c.1969-70), it occurred to these artists that by investigating the nature of theoretical construction in reference first to their own work, they were, by implication, helping to provide some general theoretical orientation for the entire domain of Conceptual art. Appropriately, a number of articles written during this phase are concerned with the nature of the Conceptual art community and offer criticisms and prescriptive notions to guide this contemporary art arena.

Several articles written during this phase were aimed at clarifying the intentions of their earlier art-works (i.e. 1966-69). This was felt to be necessary since A & L believed that every critical account of their work that had been produced had simply missed the point. A reading of A & L work must necessarily begin with the articles written in this phase and then proceed either forward or backward in time.

The years 1969 to 1970 are described as an "insular" phase since the discourse carried on between the active core of A & L withdrew gradually, at this time, into a self-referential position. These artists became either preoccupied with describing their own work, or interested in fashioning Conceptualism as a self-sufficient, hermetic artistic realm. Most of the articles produced in these two years are coloured by positivistic notions.

In the "transitional" phase, beginning some time in 1970 and extending into the next year, there occurred a careful examination of A & L's theoretical position as it had evolved to that point. In particular, the notion that art might be viably viewed from a rational positivistic stance was re-evaluated for its actual usefulness. Several ideas related to this general notion were then followed through to their logical conclusions. As a result of this
inquiry, several earlier A & L conceptions were discarded, and the discussion began to open outwards towards greater contextual relevance. These years, therefore, involve a difficult transition between two very different viewpoints. This transition cannot be seen to follow any logical pattern; rather it is an awkward process characterized by a certain amount of false starts and conceptual muddling.26

In 1971, the journal's editorial board reached its final form. This situation permitted these individual's to collaborate more effectively on a number of shared problems. This open discourse caused these artists to suspect that they shared similar ideological intuitions. This suspicion directed their inquiry toward some kind of general consolidation. Thus, in the course of 1972 and 1973, or "pluralistic" phase, these artists developed an "A & I" or pluralistic viewpoint. During these years, various theories from disciplines outside of art theory were tested as possible aids in determining the historical context of both Conceptualism and the post-war American mainstream.27

The four phase developmental model that has been outlined should serve to guide an historian through a first reading of Art-Language. Since many of the writings produced by A & L are not readily available, numerous quotations are included in this paper. In respect to each major problem issue, care has been taken to choose those quotations that would be most accessible to an uninitiated reader. Several bibliographic references have also been included so that an ardent reader might follow A & L's discussion of a certain problem in the actual texts themselves.
1. This date was chosen by Lippard for her bibliography for Post-Object art: Lucille Lippard, Six Years: the Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 (New York: Praeger, 1973), (hereafter cited as Lippard, Six Years).


3. This term was suggested to me by David Cottington. The term is also used by Burn and Ramsden in: Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden, "Some Questions on the Characterization of Questions," Art-Language 2-2 (Summer 1972): 10, (hereafter cited as Burn and Ramsden, "Some Questions").


5. For example see: Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," Artforum 5 (Dec. 1968); and Collins, "Things and Theories."


The group that published Analytical Art seem to have been similar to the New York based "Society of Theoretical Art and Analysis" which consisted of Ian Burn, Roger Cutforth, and Mel Ramsden. Both groups represented extremely analytical sectors of the conceptual art community. Shortly after these groups declared their existence they were absorbed by the more dominant journalistic body--A & L. Burn and Ramsden became members of Art-Language's editorial board in 1971. Pilkington and Rushton are mentioned as part of this board in the final issue of the journal.

17 See footnote #26.

18 This discussion does not refer to Charles Harrison since he did not practice as an artist.

19 This term is used by Bainbridge, Hurrell and Atkinson in reference to these art-works.

20 For biographical information on Atkinson, Baldwin, Bainbridge, and Hurrell see: Harrison, "Art-Language," pp.69-70.

21 For example: David Bainbridge and Harold Hurrell, Loop (1967).


It should be noted that although Bainbridge and Hurrell continued to construct physical or theoretical art objects during this phase, they were also collaborating on some of the general group statements such as "Status and Priority" (Jan. 1970). Their "sculptural devices", such as *ML, Lecher System* and *Ingot*, also provided the focus for a certain amount of *A & L* discourse during these years.


Another factor that leads one to suspect that some general re-examination was occurring at this time, is the fact that there was a pause in the group's publishing history during 1970 and 1971. The first three issues of the journal in May 1969, Feb. 1970, and June 1970. These issues were greatly supplemented by regular outside publications in *Studio International* and a number of their own limited printings. The next issue of *Art-Language* (i.e. after June 1970) did not appear until one and one-half years later (Nov. 1971) and perhaps only two outside articles could possibly be dated to this interim period. These are: Ian Burn and Mel Ramsden, "Excerpts from the Grammarian," (1970), in Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (New York: Dutton, 1972); and David Bainbridge and Harold Hurrell, "Handbook to Ingot," (1971), in Atkinson et al, *Dumont*. The exact month in which either of these two articles was published was unavailable.

As the central core of *A & L* was opening its discussion of art to include other frames of knowledge at this time, several of their compatriots (i.e. particularly Pilkington, Rushton, and Lole) continued to work within a more hermetic framework which was hopelessly obscured by the language of Analytical philosophy. Consequently, several criticisms were levelled at this sector by the editorial board at this time. See: Michael Baldwin, "A Note on Conceptual Claromania," (1972), in Atkinson et al, *Dumont*; David Bainbridge, "Fraxissectomy and Theorycraphy," *Art-Language* 2-3 (Sept. 1973); and Michael Corris and Mel Ramsden, "Frameworks and Phantoms," *Art-Language* 2-3 (Sept. 1973).
Chapter II

THEORY AS ART-MAKING
Why would a group of artists refer to themselves as the "Art & Language community" and maintain that their written work was of a valid art nature? What does it mean to conceive of art-making that uses word-language as its means — that is, what does art-as-language entail?

Before one considers how it might be possible to use words to make art, one would first admit that it is possible to approach the concept of art from a linguistic viewpoint. This kind of access is one that is used in a number of introductory manuals to studio work and visual appreciation. It also provides a methodological stance for such scholarly theories as Panofsky's Iconological model for Art History and the numerous writings by the post-war school of Analytical Philosophers of Art (ie. Arnold Isenburg, Morris Weitz, J.A. Passmore, etc.). The notion, then, that art might be considered from a language point of view, is not in itself new, though prior to the mid-sixties it was not associated with art-making. Each of the areas that utilized this vantage point could be described as playing an interpretive, or "supportive" role in regards to the more "central" or "core" concern of actual art-object production.

From about 1966 onward, a host of artists in America and abroad began to employ word language, either by itself, or connected in some way to some external state of affairs. On Kawara's "messages", Sol leWitt's "plans for possible art-works" and Ian Wilson's "dialogues" are only three examples of the ways that artists were using language at this time.

Those artists who were later to form the Art-Language group began to
Introduce language into their art activity at least as early as 1966. At first, it seems their language usage followed the more dominant patterns established in Post-Object art. Bainbridge's and Hurrell's "sculptural devices" were occasionally posited in word form in order that their interest in spectator-process would be made explicit. It was hoped that such a ploy would short-circuit the perennial attempts of critics and spectators to approach art-works through aesthetic-object frameworks. This idea of using words to describe an actual or possible event, rather than objects, was one that was used by a number of Post-Minimalists including Morris and leWitt. The strategy was a good one but it underestimated the grip that the perusal technique had on art audiences. One artist was said to have remarked in exasperation that it was like trying to teach a dog to fetch a stick — the dog keeps looking at your finger. The introduction of piles of dirt, documentary photographs, clumps of turf and even words themselves into the gallery space did not discourage many spectators from approaching this new activity from a traditional stance.

Concurrently, Atkinson and Baldwin, Burn and Ramsden, and Kosuth were using words to describe entities which were being held out for "art-hood" or art-object recognition. This idea of simply naming some new art entity is a ploy that originates with Duchamp and one which I shall describe in more detail later in this paper. At this point, though, it can be noted that the strategy of simply positing some actual or theoretical entity as an art-work is one that was used by a number of Conceptual artists including Robert Barry and Jan Dibbets. A & L artists can be distinguished from the Conceptual crowd, though, in 1967 and 1968 when they began to investigate the
nature of theoretical frameworks which could be seen to both support and
generate possible Post-Object art activity.

Now, before one considers the specific problem of whether Post-Object
entities could be valid members of the class of Art-Objects, one should
first investigate a more general notion. That is, how could it be construed
that the theoretical activity of this group is any different from the tra-
ditional role of theory in the art domain? In what way could theorizing be
seen to be performing those tasks one usually associates with art-object
making? To understand the notion of "theory as art-work" one must first
be conscious of how the traditional character of the art community was
changed during the course of post-war American art.

In the traditional art community (ie. Post-Renaissance) the production
of art-objects has been referred to as art-making, or art practice. This
role has been considered the central creative core of this community, while
other sectors have existed in order to interpret art-making. These other
"support" sectors have attempted to communicate the intention within phy-
sical art-objects into word language. Each of these sectors though, has
stood in a different relationship to the central core.

In history, art theory and criticism actively communicate with the art-
making "core". Art theory seeks to provide a body of doctrine or rules
which can characterize the general artistic aims of any particular style or
movement. Art theory is usually addressed to artists alone. Art criticism,
by contrast, speaks to both artists and viewing public. Criticism tries to
"correct" art-making by continually bringing it into a closer dialogue with
its underlying general theoretical principles. Criticism also seeks to
translate the intentional value of particular art-works into word language
for the sake of art audiences. The fact that critics have performed these
two intermediary roles is an indication of the specialization in the tradi-
tional art community. Critics have been deemed necessary since it has not
always been exactly clear what each sector of this community have been
talking about, at any particular time.

Other "support" sectors include Aesthetics, Philosophy of Art, History
of Art, and Sociology of Art. These differ in kind from art theory and art
criticism though, since they do not directly interact with the actual proc-
ess of art-making. These sectors relate to the creative core of the com-
munity in a detached, analytical fashion. Art-objects and art-making is to
these "support" areas, as Nature is to the scientist.

The traditional model of the art community underwent some basic changes
in the development of the Post-War American mainstream. To understand this
situation one must be familiar first with the most dominant of the Post-
War "schools --- Modernist, or Formalist Art.

Formalism as a tendency describes a way of approaching modern art that
is first associated with the names of Roger Fry and Clive Bell. Formalism
as an artistic style or school, however, was given its theoretical formul-
ation in the mid-1940's by Clement Greenberg. Basically, the theory is
developed from the central notion, that each recognized art medium (ie.
painting, sculpture, etc) must express its intentions within the honest
or actual physical limitations that this medium entails. Thus, for example,
if painting entails placing colours or dyes on or in a flat support, it is
essential that the components of this physical support (ie. the shape of the frame and the two-dimensionality of the picture surface) be referred to explicitly in any composition. If these two components are to be illusionistically "denied" or de-emphasized by an artist, this is only permissible through using the honest means of abstract form or abstract colour. Representational pictoral forms and the universe of ideological "baggage" that they invariably imply are believed to have no rightful place within a painting. Rather, these traditional aspects are viewed as detrimental to the progress of painting since they lead painters and viewers away from discovering the separate language of painting. Traditional aspects then, prevent one from becoming aware of the unique existence of a painting, since they always make one think about "something else" besides the painting-as-a painting.

Greenberg began to apply this theory in the 1940's in his articles in the Nation and Partisan Review to point out who he felt were the significant figures in American abstract art - the members of the subsequent "New York School". He continued to champion these artists (particularly Pollock) throughout the fifties, though at no point could it be said that his writings were elucidating the true nature of Abstract Expressionism. Greenberg's type of analysis was simply not geared to discuss anything but "formal" issues in art-works. Consequently, the Existential and Surrealist background of Abstract Expressionism, was never dealt with in these writings.

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, a new mainstream school grew around the figure of Greenberg. This Modernist or Formalist school included: painters such as Morris Louis, Frank Stella, Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski; the sculptors David Smith and Anthony Caro; and the jour-
nalists Michael Fried, Kenworth Moffet and John Elderfield. At this time, Greenberg's theory was formalized, and directly adopted by the major painters involved in this school. The Modernist theory seemed to provide a model whereby abstract art could continually evolve and discover its own nature.

Modernist art was levered into the prior position of the early 1960's mainstream largely due to Greenberg's great influence in art critical sectors. His popularity was certainly not ungrounded. Greenberg had developed probably the most successful critical method for the analysis of abstract art. As opposed to the bulk of earlier criticism, Modernist journalism describes its intentions in a clear and coherent fashion. It is understandable how a vast number of art journalists, not ostensibly Formalist ones, were influenced by the high standard of intelligibility that Greenberg had established in the discipline of art writing. This wide critical appeal underlies the reason Modernist art achieved such a dominant position in the history of the Post-War American mainstream. Perhaps no other school, not even Abstract Expressionism, established itself so solidly in the art community. Backed by the most intelligent and articulate writers, Modernist art was able to quickly pervade the various sectors of this community — the galleries, the schools, the journals.

One of the key features of Modernist art history is the growth in status of the critical sector during the early 1960's. Traditionally, art critics have only enjoyed relatively small audiences of artists and spectators — they have been listened to by only the few who have been willing to listen to them. There have been occasionally a few powerful critical personalities in history, such as Ruskin and Baudelaire, who have wielded their influence
to instate those artists they felt worthy of recognition. It would not be possible to say though, that these critics determined the actual character that art was to take in any period or style. However, this kind of powerful influence can be attributed to the Modernist critics. These critics attained this position as a necessary implication of the degree of abstraction employed in Modernist art.

If one considers the entire history of Twentieth century abstraction - in all of its diverse styles - one could generalize that a viewer familiarized with the fundamental ideas associated with a certain style would then be able to proceed to reasonably interpret paintings of this respective style. Thus, if one pointed to Neo-plasticist, Surrealist or Abstract Expressionist paintings, if a viewer was familiarized with some of the ideas of Theosophy, Freudian and/or Jungian psychoanalysis, and Existentialism, he would be able to offer a fair estimation of the intentional nature of each of these paintings. This generalization takes for granted that this viewer has some understanding of the formal devices of painting. This would enable him to describe how such-and-such an idea achieved its form-in-painting.

The interpretive approach just described cannot be used, though, for Modernist artworks. This is because Modernist art is not associated with any external ideologies; it is only concerned with the process of its own self-referential development. A viewer, therefore, cannot search for icons or signs within a Modernist painting to clue him into some outside frame of reference - since no signs are offered. Neither can he make a formal "aesthetic" assessment of a certain painting, and hope that such a reading will help him understand the painting's "intentions". Modernist painting entails an enormous gap between the intention of art-works, and their acces-
sibility by viewers. Certainly the art-works still offer simple sensual pleasure, but one has to trust the Modernist critics for a proper assessment of their intentionality.

A critic understands the significance of a particular Modernist painting by knowing how that painting involves itself with the art historical process or discourse that Modernist painting entails. Modernist critical judgements are therefore not "aesthetic" or arbitrary but reflect keen art historical consciousness. The Modernist art theory suggests the parameters by which a mainstream discussion can first begin, and then proceed indefinitely. Paintings can achieve significance if they can introduce subtleties or new directions into this on-going discussion. The critic, in the arena of Modernist art, does not perform his traditional roles of translating theory and art-works to the artists and public. A Modernist critic actually determines the developmental course of the mainstream through his writings. Artists are still producing objects within this system, but these are produced in response to the art historical discourse that is being carried on by the critics themselves. Of course, artists could choose to ignore this critical discourse, but then they cannot hope to achieve "status and priority" within the art community and the annals of art history.

In this light, one can recognize how the creative role in this contemporary art community resides in the critical sector. Thus, Modernist art entails a drastic change in the nature of the traditional art community. Modernist art can be viewed as shifting the creative sector of the community from the role of artist-as-object-producer to critic-as-concept-formulator. In this situation, paintings and sculptures (ie. the traditional art-objects) are
merely the raw materials available to the critic out of which he can fashion his discourse, or contemporary art-objects.

Now the fact that so many artists abandoned their traditional role as object makers in the mid 1960's generally remains a mystery. One of the more popular interpretations is that Post-Object art amounts to a heroic resistance to the materialist-capitalist nature of the contemporary art community. This can be recognized as a fallacy by viewing the clever documentation strategies that were designed by Post-Object artists, for, among other ends, to keep themselves exhibiting and selling "something".

An alternate suggestion would be that the more astute Post-Object artists had recognized the creative-shift that the Modernist school had achieved. These artists would have realized that physical object production would remain creatively bankrupt, at least for some time, due to the pervasity of Modernist criticism throughout the art community. They would have also realized the possibility that artists could infiltrate the sectors of art theory and art criticism and begin to produce art-works from this position, likely for the first time in history. Although artists in history, such as Leonardo, Durer, and Reynolds, had delved in the sector of art theory, they did so with a traditional consciousness of these separate roles. Prior to the mid 1960's no artist (except perhaps Duchamp) would have imagined that art theory could be offered with no interest whatsoever whether physical art-objects would be constructed according to these principles.

Paradoxical as it seems, Modernist art - the arch defender of the physical element in art-works - prepared the ground for the possibility of Post-Object art. Naturally, Modernist critics have not referred to their activity
in these terms, but then neither have they admitted to the coup d'etat that they achieved in the art community (i.e. criticism determining art inquiry).

In Post-Object art the artist is offered the option to "work" from various positions within the traditional art community. He may choose to continue to fashion actual physical objects or posit their actual or hypothetical existence in word form. If he decides to describe the intentions within his own work, or the work of some of his Post-Object colleagues, then he can be regarded as "doing art work" from a critical stance. Atkinson writes:

That some of the more recent work has carried with it a firm determination by the artist that the artist should hold the middle ground is not based primarily upon a traditional hostility toward the function of the critic but rather, evidence of the artist's radar developing and evolving into scanning new areas which challenge the old functional patterns and structures of the art society. It means not only that much of the critic's role is redundant, as the two have served to complement each other, whether in an abrasive or sympathetic conjunction. Not only is it difficult to see where artists are not in the critical role but by parity of reasoning it might well become difficult to see where the critic is not in the artistic role.

The domain of Art Theory is also considered open to artists-at-work. In the "Introduction" to the first issue of Art-Language Atkinson discusses Conceptual Art (his statements are valid for Post-Object art as a whole) as a situation in the art community when the creative core is permitted to freely annex the activities of its support areas.

The development of some work by certain artists both in Britain and the U.S.A. does not, if their intentions are to be taken into account, simply mean a matter of a transfer of function from that of artist to that of art theoretician, it has necessarily involved the intention of the artist to count various theoretical constructs as artworks....
...What is surprising is that although the central core has been seen to be an ever evolving language, no account up to the present seems to have taken up the possibility of this central core evolving to include and assimilate one or other or all of the support languages. It is through the nature of the evolution of the works of "conceptual art" that the implicated artists have been obliged to take account of this possibility. Hence these artists do not see the appropriateness of the label "art theoretician" necessarily eliminating the appropriateness of the label "artist". Inside the framework of "conceptual art" the making of art and making of a certain kind of theory are often the same procedure.

Now that one understands what it means to "make art" from a position other than that of the art-object producer, one can proceed to consider the actual character of A & L theory-cum-art-work.

2. Panofsky's tri-strata iconological model could be described as a structural linguistic point of view.


6. Actually, Modernist painting seems to have followed the parameters established in the critical discourse more closely than Modernist sculpture.


9. See page 44.


Chapter III

IDENTIFYING ART-WORKS: EARLY WORK
In the "Introduction" to the first issue of *Art-Language* Atkinson stated that the group intended to describe the nature of the contemporary art community in as clear and coherent a fashion as possible. From their point of view, much speculation on art was plagued with conceptual muddles, question-begging, and a general misuse of language. They were conscious of the widespread use of metaphor in art discourse, and spent a certain amount of time in their early articles poking fun at this usage. These artists were not interested in discussing art in poetic and metaphoric ways since they were conscious of the pretention and mystification that is usually involved in this popular approach to art. By contrast, A & L writings are informed by the rigid language of Analytical philosophy.

Those artists who eventually formed the editorial board of *Art-Language* had begun to read Analytical philosophy as early as 1966. When the journal began publication in 1969, each of these individuals was writing in a style infected by this philosophical method. This is not to suggest though, that these artists were actually doing Analytical philosophy of art at this time. Actually, they were simply applying some of the notions developed in this philosophy in their own work. From 1966 onward, they had been borrowing principles from this philosophy to articulate some of their own "early" theoretical art-works. In 1969 and early 1970, *Art-Language* articles reveal that these artists were still just becoming acquainted with this kind of philosophical method.
If one quantifies the bibliographic references that are available in their articles published prior to 1971, one recognizes that these artists were familiar with some of the major texts produced in Analytical philosophy up to about the mid-1950's. It is quite understandable that these artists should have familiarized themselves with this school of philosophy by first reading "older" publications, since these provide the basic reference texts for the study of rational languages. It is virtually impossible for anyone to follow the developments in contemporary Analytical philosophy unless he is already acquainted with the existent methodology of this school.

The Art-Language group's early readings in Analytical philosophy would have familiarized them with the mechanics of constructing rational language systems using the tools of symbolic logic. These skills were not implemented towards fashioning a rational "art language" until 1970, though. In the first articles of a general nature, such as Atkinson's "Introduction", and Kosuth's "Art after Philosophy", the viewpoint is more an observational one, than an analytical one. These articles involve a basic stock-taking of the contemporary art community, and describe what A & L feel are some of the major functional patterns of this society.

The first major problem area that was singled out by the group was the issue of how art-works are identified. This issue has been considered incontrovertible by most art theoreticians and aestheticians, and consequently begged. Traditional art writing takes it for granted that one knows an art-work when one sees one -- and thus generalizes without examining this pre-
supposition.

If this notion is incontrovertible, then that would suggest that the process whereby art-works are recognized as such, must be a straight-forward affair. Thus, if art-works are readily identifiable, it must be because they share some universal characteristic which could be described as "artness". Unfortunately though, no consensus exists concerning the nature of this fundamental attribute of art-works. For example: Croce described art in terms of the artist's experience; the Formalists (i.e. Bell, Fry, and Greenberg) described art in terms of the physical stimulus; and the phenomenologist Ehrenzweig described art in the terms of an experiential situation or event. It can only be concluded that "artness" is a substance that is relative to the particular theoretical framework upon which certain art-works rest and derive their sense. That is, identifying art-works is a process that is relative to those conventions that define art-ness. Burn and Ramsden write:

Amongst the earlier contentions of the conceptual cum analytic work was that no object contains any "magical" artness which may be said to individuate it as an art-object. Given that there are no such determinate characteristics within an art-object and that, furthermore, the puzzle is how such and such an art-object is picked out as an art-object, then the area of attention must, arguably, shift away from the object itself. Individuation might then be held to come about by falling back upon various contextual and behavioral prescriptions since they provide the bases for individuation and must be known prior to individuating activity.

Consequently, a certain number of early Art-Language articles were directed towards describing the traditional and contemporary strategies that have evolved whereby objects have been constructed, in order that they are recognized as art-objects. In "Introduction", Atkinson describes two
traditional art identity strategies:

The question of "recognition" is a crucial one here. There has been a constantly developing series of methods throughout the evolution of art whereby the artist has attempted to construct various devices to insure that his intention to count the object as an art-object is recognized. This has not always been "given" within the object itself. The more recently established ones have not necessarily, and justifiably so, meant the obsolescence of the older methods. A brief account of this series may help to illuminate matters further.

1) To construct an object possessing all the morphological characteristics already established as necessary to an object in order that it can count as an artwork. This would of course assume that such established categories (eg., painting, sculpture) had already evolved through a period in which the relevant rules and axioms had initially to be developed.

2) To add new morphological characteristics to the older established ones within the framework of one object...where certain of the morphological characteristics of the object could be recognized as the type criterion for assigning the objects of the category "painting" and other (newer) ones grafted onto them could not be so easily placed.

Morphology, in its general sense, refers to the study of structure or form. In regards to art-objects though, morphology refers first, to the physical definition that characterizes each specific art class (eg., painting - paint or dye placed on or in a flat support surface); and secondly, to the internal form language, or stylistic morphology that is evident in any specific art-object.

According to Atkinson's first morphological strategy, all that is basically required for an artist to produce art-objects is that he work within a traditionally recognized medium, according to a conventional stylistic language that has been generally accepted. This, of course, is the most typical and efficient art-identity strategy operating in the history of art.

An artist may however, choose to reinterpret the existent morphological rules laid down for his medium - in either of the two levels that have been
outlined. Thus, according to Atkinson's second morphological strategy, an artist may either revise the physical parameters of a traditional medium (eg. the introduction of papier colle and collage into painting), or revise the internal form language of a specific medium. In the latter case, the revision might involve either a mere reinterpretation of some of the existent grammatical rules (eg., Neo-Impressionism's restructuring of Post-Renaissance illusionistic means), or the construction of a totally new grammar for the respective medium (eg., Cubism's revolution of Painting's grammar).

Morphological strategies, thus, involve the process whereby objects are recognized as art-objects according to some visual criteria. It should be understood that this individuating activity is more pertinent to both the artist and critic than subsequent inquiry concerning the relative visual "quality" of the respective art-object. The two morphological strategies outlined have been used to individuate all traditional art-objects and most Modern ones as well. But Modern art is also associated with a very different kind of art-identity tactic - the functional kind.

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Functional strategies are associated with an art-object's conceptual, rather than visual nature. "Conceptual" here does not refer to artistic intention or content in the usual sense. Invariably, the content involved
in most art-objects refers to areas of knowledge outside of the domain of art proper. "Conceptual" is used here to describe the capacity of an art-object to directly "question" the nature of art. A conceptual, or functional strategy is one that presupposes that art can be conceived as a separate unique domain of knowledge. In logical terms, the conceptual character of an art-object is its propositional value in terms of "art's language". Conceptual art-objects are designed to question an existent conception of art, or posit further hypothetical conceptions of art.

A & L felt that Marcel Duchamp was the first artist to work in the functional rather morphological mode. In "Art after Philosophy" Kosuth states:

The function of art, as a question, was first raised by Marcel Duchamp. In fact it is Marcel Duchamp whom we can credit with giving art its own identity...The event that made conceivable the realization that it was possible to "speak another language" and still make sense in art was Marcel Duchamp's first unassisted Readymade. With the unassisted Readymade, art changed its focus from the form of the language to what was being said. Which means that it changed the nature of art from a question of morphology to a question of function. This change - one from "appearance" to "conception" - was the beginning of "modern" art and the beginning of "conceptual" art.

The Readymade suggested "questioning art" as a new strategy for identifying art-objects. In "Introduction", Atkinson describes the Readymade Strategy:

3) To place an object in a context where the attention of any spectator will be conditioned toward the expectancy of recognizing art-objects. For example placing what up to then had been an object of alien visual characteristics to those expected within the framework of an art ambience, or by virtue of the artist declaring the object to be an art-object whether or not it was within an art ambience. Using these techniques, what appeared to be entirely new morphologies were held out to qualify for the status of members of the class "art-object".

On one hand, the Readymades questioned the relationship between Aesth-
tics (ie. the perusal technique) and art. These devices did not challenge the validity of Aesthetics directly, but were aimed at questioning the limits of this conception of art. The Readymades were objects that fulfilled the minimum morphological requirements of the class "sculpture". They were placed in a gallery ambience to suggest some "new" possible members for the class "Aesthetic art-objects". This strategy therefore, was directed towards testing the ability of the Aesthetic-perusal framework to expand beyond its traditional limits.

The Readymade strategy, or Duchamp device, also questioned the priority of technique in regards to art-making. Duchamp felt that technique could be considered redundant to the actual process of creating art-objects. The central notion of art-making, he suggested, was the concept of artistic choice. Thus, any object, fabricated by hand or machine, could become an art-object through a declarative act on the part of an artist. Duchamp asserted that the decision making process was prior to technique in his newly posited art framework.

The Readymade strategy was returned to currency in the art community in the 1950's through the activity of Robert Rauschenberg. In 1953 he took a deKooning drawing in his possession and erased it. He then exhibited the result as Erased deKooning - R. Rauschenberg. In 1961 he was invited to exhibit at a portrait show at the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris. He sent instead a telegram which read - "This is a portrait of Iris Clert, if I say so". These works reveal a wholesale usage of the declaration strategy.

From 1966 onwards, the Duchamp device was employed by a host of Post-
Object artists to condition critics and spectators to approach their unconventional materials (e.g. earth, water, rocks, etc) as possible art-objects. Needless to say, the device was slightly strained at this time through its widespread usage.

By contrast, some of the early projects by A & L tried to expand the sense, or usage, of Duchamp's ready-made strategy. For example, one of these projects was associated with Crane — a functional crane constructed by Bainbridge in the summer of 1966 at St. Martin's School of Art in London. Crane was commissioned by the Camden Borough Council and installed as a "plaything" for children in one of the borough's public parks in the fall of that year. At that time, Bainbridge and Atkinson began a series of assertions which declared the art or non-art status of Crane during any specific time duration. These Crane Assertions both convert the Duchamp device and expand it to include a time framework. Atkinson writes:

The Crane can in some ways be seen to entail an opposite 'direction' to that entailed in (say) the Bottle Rack: the "Bottle Rack" manufactured in a nonart mass-production area and admitted into an art area by virtue of Duchamp's act of placement...: the Crane manufactured in a high art environment...and dispatched "out-into" the not-art environment. But the Bottle Rack and the Crane shared certain characteristics, which was that the intention of the artists has to be precisely specified by the artist through schema external to the object itself...

Both the Bottle Rack and the Crane are small and mobile enough to allow this placement-identity system to be feasibly attached to them; the Crane with its shifting context had, as and inevitable by-product, brought up the question of an object's temporal characteristics (i.e., theoretically its membership of the class "crane and not art-object" ended when its membership of the class "crane and art-object" began — a series of phase sortals (i.e., temporal frameworks) built up as the Crane was theoretically converted and reconverted again and again.

In "Introduction", Atkinson discusses another kind of functional strategy
that can be used to confer art-status onto particular objects. This is
the process of declaring theoretical entities, rather than visual objects
as viable art-objects.

The first three methods use a concrete existential object, the
latter simply a theoretical one. This factor of "use" is important
here. The existential object upon which the "content" of No. 4
(i.e., theoretical art-objects) is formulated (i.e., paper with print
upon it) is not the art-object, the art-object is not an object
that can be directly perceived, the "object" component is merely
specified. \textsuperscript{12}

Perhaps the first time that a non-perceivable entity was singled out
as an art-object was in 1961 when Yves Klein held his "Empty Gallery Show".
The implication here was that if some of the Readymades could be understood
to rely on art gallery ambiances for their art-status, then one might logi-
cally single out this ambience itself as an art-object.

In Atkinson and Baldwin's Declaration Series (1967)\textsuperscript{13} the question of
what kinds of "non-art" ambiances can be theoretically declared as art
ambiances was brought up for investigation. One of the entities, for
example, that was given a declared art ambience status was the county of
Oxfordshire. One of the concerns in this series, as with the Bainbridge/
Atkinson Crane Assertions, was to describe entities such as Oxfordshire,
in temporal, as well as spatial terms.

Atkinson and Baldwin carried the notion of declaring certain entities
as art-objects more analytically afield than Duchamp. In Air Conditioning
Show (1966), the body of air in a particular gallery space was singled out
for art-status, while in Air Show (1966), a column of air (one mile square
by one mile high) of an unspecified location, was likewise singled out.
One of the main intentions associated with both of these entities was to
make it clear that they were as "real", and therefore as worthy of artistic interest, as any visually perceivable entity. Atkinson and Baldwin discuss this problem in "Frameworks" -

A conceivable persistent objection that there has so far been no indication that one is concerned with anything other than "fictional entities" (in so far as it doesn't seem to matter if that's what they are), whereas paintings, sculptures, series of numbers etc. on boards etc. are "real" things - concrete entities - offering actual, concrete experiences etc., can be answered not only by the evincing of at least possible instrumental tests etc. or by bringing in "imaginability" criteria: When a statement is made, to the effect that, say a sculpture is made of "real" gold, or that it's "real" solid etc. there is an implication that it's not made of an imitation, or that it's not defective in some way etc. Something like that can be said of the things in a framework (eg., "Air Show") but not about the things themselves - it's said of the concept of the thing: the question as to whether or not one can say something is "real" here is not one that comes up naturally; the circumstances in which the question might arise would be those in which one is looking for concept defects (eg. being fictional).

The objector would just be asserting that these "things" don't occur in the series of...(perceptual perusal situations).

The question of how one identifies the certain entity is one that is brought up in "Air Conditioning Show". In "Air Show" a number of mechanical instrumental tests (eg., volume, temperature) are suggested to the per-user so that he might locate, and ascertain the existence of the named entities. These tests are suggested since it is felt that the art community will be as cautious and sceptical regarding the existence of theoretical entities (ie., those that are not directly perceivable) as the philosophical community has been. These tests thus provide the means whereby these entities can be analogously detected by observers. They analogously describe the entity in question, since one is only offered the results of an interaction between a "thing" and a machine - in the terms of that machine. The use of analogous detection devices to prove the existence of theoretical entities is referred
Several Art-Language "sculptural devices" employed the technique of "deferred ostention" to extend the domain of art-objects into various non-perceptual realms. In *Lecher System* (1970), for example, some of the characteristics of an electromagnetic field (i.e., its current antinodes) were made "viewable" through the use of a light bulb "detection device".

A & L artists investigated the nature of theoretical art-objects to keep the notion of "conceptual" or "functional" art developing beyond the first positions established by Duchamp. In the late 1960's a number of artists began positing theoretical art-objects. A & L artists can be easily singled out from this larger group though, by the care and stringency with which they approached this activity. Their judicious approach reflected their desire to avoid the pitfalls of metaphoric art activity.

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A & L's early interest in theoretical art-objects was eventually superseded by an interest in the theoretical frameworks upon which each of these entities rest. This is an understandable development since anyone interested in dealing with non-perceivable entities in a rational fashion will soon find it essential that he describe the conceptual frameworks whereby an observer can come to know these entities. The fact that such entities are non-perceivable makes it impossible to directly describe them, and
senseless to simply name them. Simple nominalization, however, effectively describes the character of many conceptual art-works.

Theoretical frameworks are language systems or models which are used to analogously describe states of affairs in the "real world". From a rational point of view, the construction of such models is the only way one can first describe, and then proceed to understand, the nature of reality. Basically, a framework is a systematic construction that articulates a certain domain of concepts. That is, it is the structural relations that coordinate a given set of concepts.

When Art-Language artists began positing frameworks instead of theoretical art-objects, they began actual theoretical work. It has previously been described how the nature of the contemporary art community could permit such theoretical work to be viewed as art-making. The first frameworks that were posited by A & L artists in 1967 and 1968 were of a limited nature. These served to familiarize these artists with the mechanics of framework construction.

The frameworks that were posited by Kosuth and Ramsden, for example, in 1968, were sets of thesaurus categories. Their interest in these works seems to be with the semantical relations that hold between words. Lippard has suggested that Kosuth's interest in particular, might have been inspired by readings of Wittgenstein (ie., "Philosophical Investigations"). This idea, however, remains a speculative notion. Kosuth's own series of "Thesaurus Categories" follows his earlier series of dictionary "Definitions":

From the Definition Series -

\textit{universal}, a. (ME. and OFr. universal; L. universalis, universal, from universus, universal, litl, turned into one;
unus, one, and versum, pp. of vertere to turn.)

1. of or relating to the universe; extending to or comprehending the whole number, quantity, or space; pertaining to or pervading all or the whole; all-embracing; all reaching; as, universal ruin; universal good; universal benevolence.

The universal cause
Acts not by partial, but by general laws.

—Pope.

From the Thesaurus Categories Series -

I. Matter in General
374. Universe
375. Materiality
376. Immateriality
377. Materials
378. Chemicals
379. Oils, Lubricants
380. Resins

The frameworks that were constructed by Atkinson and Baldwin in 1967 were concerned with the logical or analytical relations that exist between concepts. French Army is an example of this kind of framework -

French Army -- KEY: FA - French Army
CMM - Collection of Men and Machines
GR - Group of Regiments

Assertions. Explicata.

The context of identity statements in which CMM appears as a covering concept is a relativistic one. Identity is not simply built into that concept. The "sense" of identity is contrasted with the constitutive one...It's all in support of the constitutive sense that FA is the same CMM as the GR. The inference is that the FA is predicatively a CMM. The identity that the FA and the CMM have the same life history ... and in which case CMM fails as a covering concept.

Although the "French Army" framework relates to three specific theoretical entities (i.e., FA, CMM, and GR) it brings up a general concern related to analytical framework construction - the relationships between general covering concepts and specific identity statements. Issues of this kind were to determine the character of A & I discourse when the group subsequently attempted to lay out some general theoretical principles for Post-Object art.
For example see: David Bainbridge, "Notes on Ill," Art-Language 1-1 (May 1969). This article humorously describes a fictional situation in which an "alien", who is described as an intuitively reasonable individual, is introduced to the art community. The alien is unable to fathom any sense in this society since its "language" is clothed in metaphor.

Analytical philosophy has been the dominant philosophical school in this century. The following is a brief synopsis of its historical development. The first significant work was carried out in the Foundations of Mathematics by Frege (Sense and Reference), Russell and Whitehead (Principia Mathematica), and Wittgenstein (Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus). These individuals sought to "ground" mathematics by reducing it to the form of an extensional logic. In the twenties, "The Vienna Circle", or "Logical Positivists" extended the British work in an attempt to produce a unified "artificial" language for scientific discourse. This activity was accompanied by a number of critiques which sought to sweep the halls of philosophy clean of nonsensical domains as metaphysics, aesthetics, and ethics. The Logical Positivist's programme to construct a unified scientific language diffused in the 1930's when it was found impossible to produce a "Verifiability Principle" on which to axiomatically build their logical language systems. At this time the work of Tarski in semantics became widely influential. Tarski's ideas caused Carnap, perhaps the major exponent of "artificial" language, to develop a weaker "Verifiability Principle" for his theories. This tendency to relativize logical languages became widespread, and was also accompanied by a growing interest in the character of "natural" languages. Wittgenstein's later work (Philosophical Investigations) is a popular example of this general interest. In the 1960's, the tendency towards relativistic methodologies was accelerated, especially in the work of Kripke (Ontological Relativity and Other Essays). Analytical philosophy also began to be influenced by Carnap's work in Linguistics (Syntactical Structures) at this time.


Harrison, "Art and Language," P.A. 2


12. Ibid., p. 16.


17. Ibid., Six Years, p. 176.


Chapter IV

ART & LANGUAGE AND POST-OBJECT ART
Growth in the Modern art community usually follows a recognizable pattern. In the beginning, a few artists who are dissatisfied with the condition of status quo contemporaneous art activity suggest a few new directions. Soon, a large number of individuals respond to these early alternatives and a revolutionary camp is set up. In time, a journal is created which begins a series of polemical attacks upon the status quo, hoping to dislodge it from its position. This journal also serves to articulate the general aims and parameters of the new avant-garde. In the course of this activity, individuals begin to come into focus as a central core becomes established within this new art movement. This is the typical process that avant-garde art movements have followed in this century. This process is recognizable in the development of such movements as Surrealism, Vorticism, and Futurism.

Seen in this light, when Art-Language - the Journal of Conceptual Art began its publication in 1969 it seemed to be following a well-worn historical path. The journal sought to establish more effective communication between the more "analytical" sector of Post-Object art. In the course of a few issues, those artists who discovered that they were working in a similar vein in this new art domain became associated with the editorial board. Historically, the implication is that these same individuals had established the most progress as artists-working-with-concepts in their community.

 Appropriately then, a number of early Art-Language articles criticize what A & L believed to be some of the naive notions that had been entertained
in regards to Post-Object art. One of these criticisms, that has already been mentioned, concerns the general disinterest on the part of "sympathetic" critics and exhibition organizers to distinguish basic differences in Post-Object art as a whole. Another criticism, again previously mentioned in this paper, entails the widespread misuse of terms such as "object", "concept", and "information" on the part of critics. Of all these misused terms, perhaps "dematerialization" received the most currency. This term can also be associated with a certain amount of conceptual muddling on the part of critics and artists alike.

The notion of dematerialization in the art domain originated in the Lippard and Chandler article "The Dematerialization of Art" (1968). This essay reported on the growth of Post-Object art and indicated what the authors felt to be the fundamental motivation of this new kind of art. In their minds, the common factor in much of the new work was a desire on the part of artists to retract step-by-step from the production of concrete physical art-objects.

The visual arts at the moment seem to hover at a crossroad which may well turn out to be two roads to one place, though they appear to have come from two sources; art as idea, and art as action. In the first case, matter is denied, as sensation has been converted into concept; in the second case, matter has been transformed into energy and time-motion.

In retrospect, these two sources can be redefined: "art as idea" describes the popular notion of Conceptual art; "art as action" describes the interest in human and natural processes and systems which underlies most Post-Minimal art.

But what exactly does the concept of dematerialization entail? In response to Lippard and Chandler's article, A & L wrote a letter to Lippard in which the concept of dematerialization was clarified:

Matter is a specialized form of energy; radiant energy is the only
form in which energy can exist in the absence of matter. Thus when
dematerialization takes place, it means, in terms of physical phen-
onema, the conversion... of a state of matter into that of radiant
energy; this follows that energy can never be created or destroyed. 2

In the case of Post-Minimal art, it is difficult to construe where
some kind of matter transformation process is occurring. One can only
imagine that Lippard and Chandler were alluding to the documentation strat-
egies employed in this kind of art. That is, documentation, in the form of
films, photographs and word descriptions, was used by Post-Minimal artists
to describe some actual or possible event which might be phenomenologically
experienced (eg. R. Smithson's film - "The Spiral Jetty"). Documentation
enabled viewers to taste some of the experiential flavour of events that
in some cases could not be staged within a gallery environment. It was
also hoped that documentation would short-circuit any number of possible
misleadings on the part of perusal critics, and enable artistic intentions
to remain clear and unequivocal. It is meaningless though, to imagine
that some kind of dematerialization is occurring either in the actual art-
works (eg. M. Heizer - 20,000 tons of earth displaced) or in the process
of recording these "works" in some kind of encapsulated form.

It would be likewise nonsensical to imagine that Conceptual artists
were involved with dematerializing their art-objects. After all, what
kind of entities were these artists positing? They were not fictional
things - "unicorns" - or "non-entities", but as "real" as any others we
know. Thus, in the letter written to Lippard, A & L states:

All the examples of art-work (ideas) you refer to are, with a few
exceptions art-objects. They may not be an art-object as we know
it in its traditional matter-state, but they are nevertheless matter
in one of its forms, either solid-state, gas-state, liquid-state. and
it is on this question of matter-state that my caution with regard to the metaphorical usage of dematerialization is centred upon. Whether for example, one calls Carl Andre's "substance of forms" empty space or not, does not point to any evidence of dematerialization because the term "empty space" can never, in reference to terrestrial situations, be anything more than a convention describing how space is filled rather than offering a description of a portion of space which is, in physical terms, empty. Andre's empty space is in no sense a void.

The fact that some Conceptual artists singled out entities that are not visually perceivable under normal circumstances does not indicate that some process of "dematerialization" was involved. It simply points out that these artists were suggesting that the domain of "art-objects" might be extended to include non-visual entities. This declarative activity was not motivated by a belief on the artists' part that there is something inherently more interesting about non-visual entities. This activity was merely a ploy which enabled these artists to question the relevance and necessity of visual factors to art and its objects.

Dematerialization, then, is a fallacious notion in regards to Post-Object art, though it caused a fair degree of critical confusion. In "Art after Philosophy", Kosuth remarks

"Conceptual Art" is often considered as a tendency...In this case it is an attempt to detect stylehood. In assuming a primary cause-effect relationship to "final outcomes", such criticism by-passes a particular artist's intents (concepts) to deal exclusively with his "final outcome". Indeed most criticism has dealt with only one very superficial aspect of this "final outcome", and that is the apparent "immateriality" or "anti-object" similarity amongst most "conceptual" works of art. But this can only be important if one assumes that objects are necessary to art - or to phrase it better, that they have a definitive relation to art. And in this case such criticism would be focusing on a negative aspect of the art.

A & L felt that this "dematerialization" confusion was also communicated by the critics to a number of artists who were interested in working in
this new Post-Object "style" It might be possible to interpret several Post-Object projects, such as Michael Heizer's Double Negative (1970), as being concerned with some kind of "dematerialization" process. It would appear that a number of artists and critics "sympathetic" to Post-Object art were unable to transcend the traditional visual mode of thinking about art-objects. For these individuals, who continued to work within their traditional art community roles, the concept of "dematerialization" provided an "aesthetic" creed for Post-Object activity.

A number of early Art-Language articles were also directed toward putting Duchamp's contribution to Post-Object art into proper perspective. These critiques were deemed necessary since A & L believed that Duchamp's legacy had grown to mythic proportions in the course of Post-Object art's development. Consequently they felt that Duchamp's relevance to this kind of art had been misconstrued by the many artists and critics who had treated him as a cult figure.

A & L singled out Duchamp's work with his Readymades as that segment of his artistic activity that is relevant to Post-Object art. It was contended that his early work as a painter, and his later projects such as The Large Glass were unrelated to the historical tradition of "functional" art.
Previously it was mentioned how numerous Post-Object artists simply borrowed Duchamp's "ready-made strategy" as a "magic wand" to confer art status on their many "conceptual" objects. Many of these art-works appear poetically evocative but fail to make any relevant contribution to the development of Post-Object art. Consider for example, the following art-works that were exhibited at the 557.087 show in Vancouver in 1970.

**All things I know but of which I am not at the moment thinking - 1:36 P.M.; 15 June 1969, New York** (Robert Barry)

**Instead of making any art I bought this television set. - "The Rubens" A65071 Space Command 600 Remote Control** (R. Berthelme)

**Live in your head** (Keith Sonnier)

**No information available** (Steve Kaltenbach)

In "art-works" such as these, the Duchamp device became worn thin through such simplistic usage. In the minds of some A & L artists, this device had become a "lazy-man's attitude" ever since the time of Rauschenberg.

The "Portrait of Iris Clert" et famille are very old. It reflects among others the view that "what we have we hold": an anarchic blow, at artistic jingoism. It ends up itself as jingoism. The point in this context is that there is no assertion as avant-garde as "this worthless scrap of paper etc. is a work of art and what is more I intend to sell it". One is much more like everyone else. The questions which the above assertion seems to indicate are neither raised nor answered.

By contrast, A & L artists responded to the Readymade strategy as a departure point for further functional art activity. In such works as Bainbridge/Atkinson Crane Assertions, Atkinson/Baldwin Ox fordshire, and Ramsden Six Negatives, the Duchamp device-as-technique was transformed into Duchamp device - as material. In "Read Premises", Burn explains this transformation -
Having no visual art-interest in itself, a ready made is still apparent and conspicuous, that is, it is a positive object, however, by using it as a situation or context for another system, the ready-made (as an object) is reduced to ready made material, i.e. something to be used, a site or location.

The question then, was not how one might use the technique but rather, what other functional art possibilities could be developed beyond the limitations of this technique.

A & L also stressed that the Readymade strategy, within the context of Duchamp's intentions, was only fashioned to function in the realm of physical art-objects. When A & L artists began first positing theoretical art-objects, and later theoretical frameworks, they had progressed beyond Duchamp's "conceptual" scope. Atkinson writes -

The whole emphasis of the "Frameworks" writing was upon how things were singled out rather than what was singled out. For us the concept of the "ready-made" had been applied to its limit. It entailed of necessity, if it was to be at all a coherent strategy, the obsolescence of the traditional "ready-made" concept and the employment of new concept. ...Duchamp first applied the ready-made concept in the realm of observable entities; the questions he raised were belonging to the series "What kind of objects can count as art works?". "Crane", "Oxfordshire Show" etc. closed out the concept in the material realm context. The 1914 "ready-made" concept is now a defunct tool. It cannot penetrate the domain discussed above; it was never fashioned to do so. In the light of the problematic case of conceptual art as it has developed over the past three years, Duchamp's vision can be seen to be a painfully limited one, the poetic devices he has fallen back upon since he first used the "ready-made" concept (eg., "The Large Glass") only serve to illustrate this point the more clearly.

A & L also levelled some general criticisms at Post-Object artists. Many of these artists were characterized as producing mindless novelty.
projects that were levered out into the art domain entirely upon the Duchamp device. A & L contended that the roots of Post-Object art lay in the works of a few artists originally associated with Minimalism (ie., Andre, Morris, leWitt and Smithson). From an A & L point of view, many Post-Object artists seemed guilty of parasitically reworking some of the early positions that these "Minimalist" figures had developed. Atkinson criticized these artists thus—

...the systems that most of the younger artists are into were closed out by the older generation by 1966; the apparently interminable embellishment of the themes of differences between solid-state and gas-state and liquid-state objects and stuffs, of assertions of employment of gravity and energy, of possible psychological entities held out to count in the same way that material objects are held out to count in the art-object domain, of half-baked notions concerning time, are lip-service to the metaphor-operator in art, and indeed clear evidence of the potency of this operator.9

Seth Siegelaub once suggested that there was something inherently superior about ideas in comparison to physical objects.10 A & L contended that comparisons between the relative superiority of Post-Object materials and traditional art materials was ridiculous. They emphasized that all of these "things" are meaningless in themselves and only take on some relevance, or sense, within some specific contextual framework.

In this vein, A & L criticized many Post-Object projects for failing to clarify their context. When Post-Minimal artists began introducing their strange new materials into gallery ambiances, a problem of critical inaccessibility resulted. Later, when Conceptual artists used word language to communicate their intentions, this problem of accessibility became acute for viewers accustomed to rely on physical objects as interpretive "touch-stones". A & L stressed that an artist's decision to work
in the Post-Object realm carried with it some necessary responsibilities. Since no critico-theoretical framework had been established in this artistic realm, it was essential that an artist work simultaneously as artist-critic-theoretician to build his intentions clearly into his projects. Lacking this kind of careful constructional practice, a Post-Object piece would be unable to enter into any wider discussion with other Post-Object projects.

Now, one might resent the notion that general artistic discourse or mainstream traditions are essential components of art's condition. The difficulty with this kind of stance is that one finds oneself defending a condition of ignorance. If works of a particular art "movement" are unconcerned with directing themselves toward some general on-going development, then they remain isolated exclamations. Several members of A & L remarked--

It is pretty obvious that for a concept to be regarded as operable then it must have some range of application in the appropriate context (i.e., Post-Object art). If every hypothesis etc. which employed or applied it were a category mistake, (i.e. contextually incorrect) then apart from just syntactical application, it would not be considered as of any cognitive value.

Most Post-Object projects were simply declared, or nominalized, without any thought to greater context. Consequently, they quickly faded into the realm of non-sense after their novelty had worn off.

"Conceptual" projects were further criticized for sloppy constructional practice. These works supposedly deal with ideas or concepts but they rarely reveal any intelligence in regards to the way ideas might be composed. A & L emphasized that compositional principles are as valid in conceptual art works as they are in traditional ones. Eradicating compositional principles in either sphere reduces the respective art works to a non-sensical position
in regards to what they communicate to viewers. A & L contended that many Conceptual art works could be viewed as poorly constructed - built without plans. Atkinson argues -

Contrary to leWitt's contention that "most ideas that are successful are ludicrously simple" within the field of conceptual art work, I would be prepared to argue that the concept of a conceptual art presupposes an awareness of many previous layers of art activity, and consequently, as meticulous an analysis as we can muster is a useful tool in reducing the clumsiness of constructs in a loaded area, also, that the framework that holds and forms significant works of conceptual art is necessarily complex if it is to be coherent, and that these works are therefore structured through a correspondingly complex and expanded method.

Most of these criticisms were of a general nature, though occasionally some personalities were singled out as examples of poor Post-Object workmanship. In "From an Art and Language Point of View", Atkinson singles out a couple of works by Robert Barry for investigation:

"Everything in the subconscious, perceived by the senses but not noted by the conscious mind, during trips to Baltimore, during the Summer of 1967"...
"All the things I know of which I am not at the moment thinking - 1:36 p.m.; 15 June 1969 New York."

Atkinson subjects these two assertions to a lengthy analysis which fails to uncover any coherent sense in either of them. He suggests that Barry's careless practice is a typical attitude in the Conceptual arena.

Some readers might have construed that the A & L was trying to force its Analytical philosophical method upon all work carried out within the Conceptual domain. This, however, was not the case. The point that was being made was that all Conceptual art-works must involve some intelligible theoretical frameworks to articulate their specific asserted concepts. These frameworks need not be explicitly stated alongside their respective concepts, though it should be possible for a viewer to work, with fair
accuracy, via induction from the specific concepts to their respective frameworks. If this criteria was met in Conceptual art-works then they would approach the condition of genuine concepts. That is, they would be genuine inasmuch as they were epistemologically adequate (ie. one could point to the knowledge foundations upon which each specific concept rested). In regards to the actual nature of these frameworks themselves, the A & L was not demanding that they be purely linguistic ("analytical"), simply that they be coherently fashioned. To clarify this position, Atkinson, for example, chose a definition of "substance" given by the phenomenologist P. Thevanez and discussed how clearly the concept had been composed:

...any usage of the concept of substance must, to avoid naivete, attempt to make a coherent context for the concept. I do not at all agree with Thevanez here, but his usage is up for the count because he has put in the work for his usage of substance ....It maybe that conceptual artists see the necessary obscurantism and smoke screen in artistic interpretations of existentialist and phenomenological doctrines. But Thevanez, for example, has written an extended document here, he is not using a two or three line nominative method, which plainly, is an inadequate technique for setting up the appropriate contexts for the uses of such a problematic concept as that of substance.

All of these criticisms could be viewed as therapeutic suggestions for the production of sensible Post-Object art-works. They can also be interpreted as indicating that A & L was trying to establish its priority within this new artistic field. These criticisms of 1969 and 1970 are made without reference to any established critical-theoretical model for this new domain. They might be viewed, though, as clearing the ground for the potential construction of such a general theory.
During 1969 and 1970 the group appeared to be involved in consolidating its position in the Post-Object realm prior to general theoretical activity. They contended that the Post-Object practitioner must necessarily conceive his activity from a combined artist-critic-theoretician position. In such a situation where the artist works self-sufficiently, the traditional role of critical intermediary was ruled out as superfluous. One might describe the condition of A & L during these years as "insular" - or hermetic. That is, a number of individuals began to close the doors of their domain to outside interference so that a separate discussion might be carried on. This discourse concerns the question - "What is the nature of art in the Post-Object situation?" This discussion is also implicated in a more general problem - "What is the nature of art?".

The tendency of A & L to develop a self-referential position at this time, effectively widened the gap between their work and viewer accessibility. The group seemed to have developed a notion of art activity even more elitist than the existing Modernist view. Modernist art-works at least offer some kind of visual entertainment to "illiterate" viewers. A & L's stringently produced Conceptual works, on the other hand, offer no accessibility what-so-ever to the uninitiated. Kosuth remarks:

The audience of conceptual art is composed primarily of artists - which is to say that an audience separate from the participants doesn't exist. In a sense then art becomes as "serious" as science or philosophy, which don't have "audiences" either. It is interesting or it isn't, just as one is informed or isn't.
FOOTNOTES


3. Ibid., p.43.


6. Atkinson and Baldwin, "Frameworks," p.44.


10. According to Atkinson: Ibid., p.146.


13. Atkinson writes--

"Hence there is Weiner and Kuebler and Long and DiBotts, Baxter and Serra and Flanagan and Saret, Nauman and Oppenheim and Hutchison and Reiner, et al, et al, all working in the wonderful new expanded range of material and method and technique, with rope and sand and earth and lead and twigs, and the countless..."
other myriads of materials, assertions about uses of energy (Richard Hamilton's assertion of Duchamp seems to offer a precedent here), about "things made of energy" (Robert Barry), about uses of gravity, assertions claiming to be working with time, techniques using tides, using the United States Mail Service, claims from a multitude of artists to be working with and using all manner of things, indeed so many claims that I wonder if this worldly plenum of ours is such a fertile realm, then we artists should perhaps hold a harvest festival of thanksgiving both for the fertility of the material realm and for the indomitable green-fingerness of our creative selves."

--Ibid., p.144.

14 This title was probably inspired by the title of W.V.O. Quine's influential anthology: W.V.O. Quine, From a Logical Point of View (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953).


16 Lippard criticized A & L from this position: "Does art fundamentally opposed to A-L's ideas have to "stand up to an analysis" on A-L's grounds? Is A-L justified in raking anyone else over the coals for lack of clarity?" ---Lippard, Six Years, p.151.

17 Burn and Ramsden discuss the need for "epistemic adequacy" in Conceptual art-works, in one of their later articles (1971)---

"Many of the problems have been promoted by analytic vagueness. Calling for a criterion of epistemic adequacy, one might have a strong basis for disputing the kind of knowledge we (traditionally) associate with artworks. Such information as is given in this connection (ie. given by artists, critics, etc.) will likely have little chance of measuring up to such a criterion. This could be formulated thus: the analysis must be given in terms pointing to the usual method of coming to know (or verifying) that which is being analysed applies in the given case. This emphasizes the methods by which we know rather than merely presuming that such knowledge is granted."


19 Kosuth, "Introductory Note," p.104.
Chapter V

ART CONCEIVED FROM A RATIONAL POINT OF VIEW
The question — "What is art?" — is one that is invariably begged in any discussion "about art". From a rational point of view, however, if the term **art** signifies anything at all, then it will be possible to describe what this state of affairs amounts to.

Consider how a rational program develops this notion. First, it is contended that if the term **art** signifies something, then this is because there is a language operating in the art society which enables its practitioners to both recognize **art**-objects, and interpret their intentions. Burn and Ramsden write —

...it is tenable to suggest that no **art**-object can itself qualify as a sign of "art". In which case **art**-objects must be signified by falling back upon the norms and prescriptions of a known language and, since they are designated from this language, one picks the objects out through that language, (and not by suddenly being struck dumb by whatever usage that language may have been put to).

The possibility that the art community is linguistically structured does not, however, motivate a rationalist to attempt an immediate description of this language system. Rationalism does not proceed by immediate descriptions. For example, the scientific enterprise does not first assume that nature **has** a structure, and then proceed to directly describe what this structure amounts to. The problem in regards to nature and art is that if these two domains do in fact have structures (ie. language), they are covert ones - shrouded in mystery.

Analytical progress in both the scientific and art domains is effected by creating theoretical models which are hoped to be as close in **analogue** form as is possible to their natural counterparts. In the Tractatus,
Wittgenstein describes this analogical condition of theoretical models in the terms of logical "pictures" of reality:

2.11 A picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence and non-existence of states of affairs...

2.12 A picture is a model of reality...

2.15 Pictorial form is the possibility that things (i.e., the objects of reality) are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture...

2.18 What any picture, of whatever form, must have in common with reality, in order to be able to depict it - correctly or incorrectly - in any way at all, is logical form, i.e., the form of reality.

A & I felt that the concept of art might be sensibly "pictured" by a rational, or artificial language. One develops this notion along these lines: if art does entail a covert "art language" which could be referred to as "A"; then one constructs an artificial language - "A_1" - which one asserts to be the overt counterpart of "A". "A_1" is constructed in such a way that it can describe situations occurring in the actual art community (i.e., in which "A" is operating) as clearly and consistently as possible.

It would be helpful to digress at this point to describe the nature of logically constructed theoretical models, or artificial languages. In the course of this century, Analytical philosophy has expended a tremendous amount of energy constructing these logical systems. The Logical Positivist sector of Analytical philosophy, in particular, spent years trying to construct a unified artificial language for scientific discourse. That is to say, they tried to reduce all scientific methodologies to the form of a single concise and coherent language. This effort eventually floundered over epistemological issues. It was discovered that it is one thing to produce a totally consistent language, and yet another to prove
whether this system accurately describes certain states of affairs in the real world.

What in fact, do artificial languages describe? Consider for example, the nature of perhaps the oldest and most popularly known artificial language – Euclidian geometry. This language was created to describe the nature of physical space. Common sense would suggest that most theoretical models are constructed to enable men to characterize objective states of affairs such as physical space.

Euclidian geometry is founded on a few, seemingly self-evident, first principles or axioms (eg. "axiom of the parallels" – through a given point there is one and only one parallel to a given straight line, that does not go through the given point) and transformational rules, or rules of logical inference (eg. "Hypothetical Syllogism" – Given: $S_1$ implies $S_2$; $S_2$ implies $S_3$. Then: $S_1$ implies $S_3$). The Euclidian system in its entirety is developed by applying the transformational rules to the axioms in order to logically deduce more complex statements. Every statement composed in the language may not be a logical extension of one or more of the axioms. It is possible though, to test the truth value (ie. necessary, contingent, or impossible) of these statements by reducing them to see how they correspond in form to the basic axioms. After the process of reduction (simplification) those statements that correspond under certain conditions to the axioms, are referred to as contingent or possible. Reduced statements that never correspond to the axioms are referred to as contradictions. Those statements that reveal themselves to be identical to the axioms under all conditions are referred to as tautologies or analytical propositions. All analytical statements in an artificial language like Euclidian geometry
are essentially equivalent despite their apparent differences in form. Statements proven as necessarily true or analytical are henceforth referred to as theorems. These theorems can likewise be used to test the truth values of subsequent statements composed in the language. Over the course of history, the self-evident axioms of Euclidian geometry have become regarded as laws since the theorems they generate seem to accurately describe the nature of physical space.

Actually, though, Euclidian geometry only describes physical space according to one particular viewpoint, or convention. This language can only describe real space according to the limitations that are set by its own concepts. These concepts or theorems are in turn limited, or bound, by the basic decisions that were made in defining the system's fundamental axioms and rules. The system cannot describe anything beyond those conditions that it was created to describe. Once one recognizes that there are situations in physical space that cannot be accurately described by Euclidian geometry, then one might wonder how many other logically self-consistent languages might be constructed to characterize physical space.

Euclidian geometry is the most familiar geometrical system to laymen, but to a mathematician, it is but one of an infinite number of geometries. The Euclidian system is recognized as the geometry of "zero-degree curvature". This geometrical system occupies the fine position between an infinitude of positively and negatively "curved" spatial geometries.

Mathematics is concerned with the construction of rationally consistent symbolic languages - it is not concerned with epistemological issues as well. A geometrician, then is concerned with the logical coherence of his spatial
systems; but he is not concerned with the problem of deciding which of these mathematical systems actually describes physical space in a particular context. That is a functional problem which is more properly the concern of Physics. Concerning this issue Hans Reichenbach writes:

...common sense is convinced that real space, the space in which we live and move around, corresponds to the axioms of Euclid and that with respect to this space a is true, while not-a is false. The discussion of this statement leads away from mathematics; as a question about a property of the physical world, it is physical question, not a mathematical one... After the discoveries of non-Euclidian geometries the duality of physical and possible space was recognized. Mathematics reveals the possible spaces; physics decides which among them corresponds to physical space.5

Contrary to common sense, then, artificial languages, such as Euclidian geometry, do not accurately describe states of affairs in the real world. The only thing that these systems definitely describe is their own natures. The recognition that all artificial languages are fundamentally self-referential has been one of the significant achievements of Analytic philosophy. This recognition came about as a result of the difficulties that were met trying to epistemologically link artificial languages with the real world.6 This awareness was implicit as early as the Tractatus, however. Wittgenstein recognized that since logical systems only accepted analyticity or tautology as the criterion of certain truth (ie. true in every case), then these systems in their entirety would be of a tautologous nature. Artificial languages do not function to "picture" the world, they only reveal their own structure.

In regards to these artificial language systems, then, the question - "How could this language function?" (ie. What "real" states of affairs could it describe?), always necessarily follows the question - "How is this
language constructed?" A theoretician cannot build utilitarian aspects into a logical system; he can only construct his system to describe the greatest possible number of matters in as simple and consistent a fashion as possible. Since artificial languages are basically tautologous, the truth of them is revealed from an examination of their methodological structure. The truth of a certain language is not checked by comparing that language with conditions in the real world. It can be understood, then, that any number of logical or illogical theoretical models are available to characterize a particular domain (eg. art). It is usually the case, though, that the choice of a particular model is made according to practical considerations. One generally chooses that model that most efficiently describes, and inductively predicts, situations within the domain in question.

Art in history has been associated with a number of "functions" (ie. decoration, materialistic wealth, ideological image (eg. religious, socio-economic, political etc.) etc.). Theories of historic art must necessarily be constructed to describe these functional states-of-affairs.

According to the Modernist view (ie. Greenberg et al) Modern art (c.1870 +) has generally been less involved with the functional "baggage" of historic art and more involved with the notion of art as a self-sufficient
activity. From a Modernist viewpoint, artistic activity has become an increasingly self-conscious process in the last one hundred years. Supposedly, the development of Modern tradition has involved progressively lifting off the "veils" that have hidden the true nature of art in history.

The element of insularism, or self-sufficiency, in the art community probably reached its most extreme level in the character of A & L activity in 1969 and 1970. In this situation, art-making was reduced to an esoteric discussion carried on between a few participants, with no audience at hand. Within this discourse, Joseph Kosuth was the first member to begin general art theorizing from a purely logical point of view.

Kosuth believed that Conceptual art activity would lead artists to recognize the actual nature of art - "art's language". This language, he contended, was a self-referential artificial system. From such a stance, Kosuth suggested that the "artness", or art value, of any art-work, could be described in terms of a logical proposition. The art value in art-works would thus be equivalent to new theorems or definitional statements, in "art's language". He states -

...Works of art are analytic propositions. That is, if viewed within their context-as-art-they provide no information whatsoever about any matter of fact. A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that that particular work of art is art, which means, is a definition of art. Thus, that it is art is true a priori. Indeed, it is nearly impossible to discuss art in general terms without talking in tautologies-for to attempt to 'grasp' art by any other 'handle' is to merely focus on another aspect or quality of the proposition which is usually irrelevant to the art work's art condition.7

To speak of art-works as analytical propositions - true a priori -
is to logically imply that an artificial "art language" is already in existence which articulates these art-works. That is to say, there is presently a logical language operating in the art community that entails a set of basic axiomatic principles and transformational rules. It is these rules and axioms which enable new analytical statements to be composed in this language.

This "art language" could conceivably be extended indefinitely. Artists extend this language by framing new analytical propositions. Although this system can be understood to have a capacity for growth, (i.e. extension), its basic structural relations, however, will remain static. A system maintains a static structure by closing its domain (e.g. the art domain) off from outside interference. When the parameters of a certain domain are closed it becomes impossible for a member of that domain to ever interact with a member of some external systematic entity. Kosuth was convinced that the actual art domain was unconnected to external states of affairs -

...The validity of artistic propositions is not dependent on any empirical, much less any aesthetic, presupposition about the nature of things. One is concerned only with the way (1) in which art is capable of conceptual growth and (2) how his propositions are capable of logically following that growth.

In other words, the propositions of art are not factual, but linguistic in character - that is, they do not describe the behaviour of physical, or even mental objects; they express definitions of art, or the formal consequences of definitions of art. Accordingly, we can say that art operates on a logic. For we shall see that the characteristic mark of a purely logical enquiry is that it is concerned with the formal consequences of our definitions (of art) and not with questions of empirical fact.

One might wonder what it is about artificial languages with their closed domains that is so appealing to the rationalist mind. The answer
to this question is that these entities provide an element of certain truth that is not found elsewhere. Statements made in an artificial language can be tested for their truth value within the methodological limits of that language. One need not bother consulting external frames of reference. Some statements can be composed that will be true under all possible circumstances – these are referred to as analytical propositions.

Propositions which cannot be proven necessarily true (i.e., like analytical propositions), are referred to as synthetic propositions. There are two classes of these propositions. The first class includes those statements which are of the first order variety in logical language. A statement of this kind forms the foundation of a rational language. Since such a statement is presupposed by its respective language, the truth value of this statement cannot be checked within the language that it generates. Moreover, if this language is not held to describe certain states of affairs in the real world, then it will be impossible to test the truth value of its first principles.

The second class of synthetic propositions includes those factual statements which are made in reference to conditions in the real world. The truth value of these statements is checked according to empirical tests. These tests involve either introspective analysis or technological testing procedures. The first of these tests is carried out by individuals who try to carefully record their personal sense-data. Necessarily, this process cannot guarantee complete accuracy since it is complicated by its solipsistic nature. The second process, machine
testing, was earlier described as "deferred ostention". The basic limitations of this testing procedure were also outlined at that time. Since both the testing methods available to empiricism cannot assign synthetic propositions the same certainty that is associated with analytic propositions, one can understand the appeal of the latter to rationalists.

In this sense, Kosuth describes art-works (ie. representational or abstract) that are concerned with situations in the external world as "realistic" art or synthetic art propositions -

The unreality of "realistic" art is due to its framing as an art proposition in synthetic terms... Realism's synthetic state does not bring one to a circular swing back into a dialogue with the larger framework of questions about the nature of art... but rather, one is flung out of art's "orbit" into the "infinite space" of the human condition......Because forms of art that can be considered synthetic propositions are verifiably by the world, that is to say, to understand these propositions one must leave the tautological-like framework of art and consider "outside" information. But to consider it as art it is necessary to ignore this same outside information, because outside information (experiential qualities, to note) have their own intrinsic worth. And to comprehend this worth one does not need a state of "art condition".

Kosuth was the first of the group to describe the nature of art as an artificial language. Some straightforward criticism could be levelled at the way Kosuth presents this notion in "Art after Philosophy" (1969). Kosuth deleted a necessary step in his art theorizing. His discussion of analytical art propositions presupposed a logical "art language" was already in existence. This system must be first present. If it is not present, how is one to know whether or not one's conceptual art-works have an analytical status? One can only know this by testing the truth value of one's propositions against the form of a pre-existent language structure. If one is not conscious of the parameters established by a
certain artificial language then it is likely that all of the conceptions of art-works that one is cautiously creating will be of a synthetic propositional nature. An artist's works may not be about the real world as such, but if he does not know the structure of "art's language", then his art-works cannot necessarily be about art, either.

Perhaps Kosuth was actually conscious of the structure of "art's language" but chose to cautiously evade reference to this pertinent information in his articles. It seems more likely though that his articles were inspired by some rationalistic infatuation with the concept of analyticity. This excitement would have motivated him to introduce the idea of art-works as analytical propositions, without first grounding this notion in some kind of general theoretical framework.

Kosuth's tautologies about art (eg. "Art is the definition of art") were inspired by Reinhard's earlier ones. One would construe that these tautologies serve to advertise the fact that both of these individuals had acquired some ultimate knowledge concerning the nature of art - "art's language". By themselves these tautologies have the same communicational effectiveness as metaphysical utterances. That is to say, they remind the initiated about something they've already learned. The question of how one actually learns the "art-language" is one that was avoided by both artists.
Despite its insubstantial nature, Kosuth's notion of art as an artificial language wielded considerable influence upon the developing A & L discourse. The other members of the group took this notion and tried to discover if it had any sensible grounds. The only way to discover whether art might be coordinated by an artificial language is to try and construct such a language system. This process involves a number of necessary steps. First, art is recognized as the most basic term or general covering concept in the proposed language. A number of sub-classes are then identified (eg. painting, sculpture) which are said to fall under art's reference. One then tries to define the limits of the domain over which the concept of art is said to range. This domain is necessarily the sum total of all of the domains associated with art's sub-classes. It is essential then, to define the relationship between the general covering concept art and those concepts which form the axiomatic basis of each of the sub-classes. Ramsden writes—

What is considered as applicable are the "core" areas; the arrangement of the sustaining concepts and the unity of the constructional principles determining the various classes within the art-area...Assigning definite positions and limits for some of the concepts (might)...lead to the determining of some of the boundaries of the art-area and a number of divisions within this area.

Logical theoretical models are always constructed from the most general concepts towards the most specific ones. Thus, if one desires to construct a rational "art language" one must first define the most general covering concept - art - and then indicate how this basic concept can be transposed into the more specific concepts that cover each of art's sub-classes. It is a valuable exercise to discover why rational languages...
must be constructed according to this process. For the sake of example, one might consider whether it is possible to construct a workable "art language" by first logically describing one of art's sub-classes, and then proceeding outwards in generality.

Consider, for example, how painting might be logically reduced. First one would formulate a basic morphological definition for painting: paint, stain, etc. placed on or in a two-dimensional support surface. Next, a vocabulary of pictorial forms (i.e. the objects of this painting language) would need to be specified. Then, a set of compositional principles (i.e. the transformational rules of this language) would be outlined. This vocabulary and set of design rules would enable painters to produce an infinite number of unique pictures (i.e. sentences). Few constraints would need to be placed on compositional principles; but it would be necessary to limit painting's vocabulary to non-representational forms. This decision would safeguard painting from the literal "baggage" that is traditionally associated with representational forms (iconographs). If painting is to be characterized by a logical language it will be necessary to rule out all information that points to external frames of reference. A rationalist would contend that these external frames have prevented painters in history from recognizing the actual language of painting.

It appears, then, that if certain arbitrary decisions were made, it would be possible to describe painting in logical terms. One might suspect that the other sub-classes of art could be likewise characterized. This presents a complex problem though: "How does one know how
many sub-classes are covered by the concept of art if one does not first have a definition which defines the limits of art's domain?" It would be possible though, to temporarily avoid this dilemma. One could continue to develop the theoretical process that is being described by simply singling out two sub-classes that are popularly associated with the concept of art - painting and sculpture - and then formulating how a general term art could cover and relate these two.

Although both painting and sculpture are held to be covered by the same concept of art, one understands that each of these sub-classes orders its own domain uniquely. That is to say, painting and sculpture will be associated with different morphological definitions (ie. sculpture - solid and spatial volume relations - static or kinetic; painting - (previously defined). Each of these definitions is a primary one, that is to say, they cannot be further reduced. These two definitions are also fundamentally different; neither of these will infer the existence or form of the other. Therefore, it will logically be impossible to frame a single morphological definition that could correlate the separate definitions that have been suggested for painting and sculpture.

Consequently, one understands why it is impossible to construct a logical "art language" by trying to generalize first upon the nature of any one of art's sub-classes, and then upon the nature of art itself. If a logical "art language" is to be constructed, it must necessarily be constructed according to the set process ascribed by logic. If the preceding sentence seems tautologous, then it may shed some light on the nature of logic as well.
If a concept of art is expected to logically cover certain sub-classes then it will be necessary to associate this concept with a definite description, or basic identity statement. A definite description of art would be a synthetic proposition (i.e. of the first class previously described) that could provide the basis for a logically constructed "art language". This identity statement would first state what the concept of art entails, and then specify the limits of the domain over which this concept ranges. Once such an identity statement is formulated it will be possible, with the aid of some rules of logical inference, to transform this general statement into the separate basic identity statements which cover each of art's sub-classes. These separate definite descriptions would then relate this general concept of art with the respective morphological criteria, rules and vocabulary that distinguish each of these sub-classes.

A definite description of art defines the manner whereby an "art-language" operates. Although this statement will contain morphological specifications, it will be primarily a functional definition. It is now possible to understand the significance of "functional" or "conceptual" art-works. Each of these works is a synthetic proposition, that offers the art community a potential first principle for an "art language". Each conceptual art-work suggests a new way in which the concept of art might be seen to function.
A & L understood that "conceptual" art-works are equivalent to first-order principles for possible art theories. They were also conscious, though, that a possible definition for art cannot become an actual definition by a simple act of declaration. The group contended that a new concept of art was not even worthy of consideration unless it was articulated by a general theoretical framework. This was essentially the criticism they levelled at much Post-Object art.

A & L had become involved in general theorizing in order to provide some viable foundations for Post-Object art. By 1970, they were conscious of the mechanics of general theorizing. They understood that a rational theory of art must be grounded on some kind of definite description. One possible definition scheme was suggested to the group, at this time, by the issues that Bainbridge and Hurrell had been working with for sometime. These two artists had been investigating a number of notions concerning spectator experience acquainted with their "sculptural devices". In general, their work seems to be a part of the larger scheme of Post-Minimal art. That is to say, Bainbridge and Hurrell's work seems to be involved in some of the major problem issues of Post-Minimalism.

A & L believed that it would be appropriate to try to ground a theory on Post-Minimalist issues. They suspected that a well-constructed theory cannot become an established theory of art simply because of the inherent beauty of its conceptual structure. They felt that a possible theory of art could not establish its priority within the art community unless it first appealed to a large number of practitioners who had become dissatisfied with the prospect of art activity within the present set of established parameters. A viable alternate theory would have to provide some relevancy and scope for art-making that could appeal to a number of
these "dissatisfied" practitioners. Post-Minimal art presented the

group with a viable alternate situation for general theoretical work.

In 1970, Post-Minimalism still existed in a pre-theoretical position.

Nevertheless, a large number of artists were interested in working within

its vaguely established guidelines.

It would be helpful to "digress slightly at this point in order to
describe the nature of Post-Minimalism. This art might also be referred
to as "Phenomenological art". since phenomenological notions appear to
play such a central role in much of this work. Those Post-Minimalists
who have written about their work, such as Morris and Smithson, have
occasionally made direct references to contemporary notions in Phenomen-
ology. Phenomenology is concerned with the nature of human awareness as
understood from a highly personal position. "Phenomenological art" there-
fore, is art that is interested in the personal experiences of individuals
in real situations. Phenomenology holds that human awareness is something
that exists in both space and time. Although this awareness occurs on a
fluid spacio-temporal continuum, it can be arbitrarily split into separate
sections for the sake of examination. Accordingly, Post-Minimal art-works
are events which are experienced in a certain environment over a particular
time duration. The participant in such a situational art-work might be the
artist, the viewer, or both.

It seems that the first artist to consciously think in phenomenolog-
ical terms was Robert Morris. In 1961, Morris produced several works
that single out his interest in the process of art-making as some-
thing that evolves in time. Two of these works are: Metered Light Bulb
a wooden board on which sits a light bulb, a switch and a meter, (when
the switch is turned on the bulb lights up and the meter records the duration of the "activated art-work" or "art experience"); and Box with the sound of its own making - a wooden box enclosing a tape recorder which continuously plays a three hour closed loop of the sounds that were produced while the box was being made. In the mid-sixties, Morris became involved in Minimalist sculpture. This shift in Morris's development has left most writers perplexed. Few writers have been able to construe the relationship between his early projects (c. 1961) and his Minimalist works.

Minimalism is essentially Modernist sculpture. This kind of sculpture employs the simplest formal devices (ie. rectilinear "box" shapes) in order to investigate the basis nature of sculpture. Elementary shaped objects are chosen since they are free of any figurative and expressional allusions. These "specific objects" (Judd's term) were intended to emphasize their existence as objects above all else. These shapes provide the basic building blocks, or vocabulary, for a pure sculptural idiom. Minimal sculpture entails the formal compositional relations that can be built up from these simple shapes. Minimal design is concerned with the environmental space that these shapes inhabit, as well as with the space that these shapes displace.

As a Minimalist, Morris seemed less interested in the formal design potential offered by this kind of sculpture, and more concerned with the effect that Minimal pieces had upon viewers. Morris recognized that many viewers who were unable to read Minimal projects in a formal design fashion seemed to experience a degree of uncertainty, or strangeness,
when confronted by them. These viewers seemed to experience the Minimal shapes not as simple objects, but rather as "things" imbued with a certain "presence" of their own. Sometimes these vague intuitions of "presence" were coloured by anthropomorphic overtones. In response, Morris began to interpret his Minimal objects as simply the focal points for spectator experience. He felt that these experiential situations do not occur immediately but happen over a certain time duration. Morris clarified in his articles that he was primarily interested in the experiential side of these "sculptural" projects. In time, he replaced the Minimal shapes in these projects with "Post Minimal" materials (earth, junk, etc.)

Bainbridge and Hurrell, were also interested in the notion of spectator-experience-as-art or "spectatorship". From 1967 onward, they constructed, or posited, electrical "sculptural devices" that were designed in such a way as to permit a certain element of interaction between the devices and their spectators. In this sense, these devices can be referred to as "open system" or cybernetic since the "spectator system" and the "device system" freely interact. These devices are similar in design to the projects constructed by Morris in 1961, and the numerous cybernetic projects created by Les Levine.

Post-Minimal projects in the form of boxes, junk, or electrical devices, were either actually constructed, or theoretically posited. Sometimes, the artists involved produced some interpretational writing to accompany their projects. It was hoped that this information might prevent viewers from trying to approach these projects solely in terms of the physical objects that were presented. Despite this additional inform-
mation, even sympathetic viewers tended to treat the physical criteria as primary, and the experiential criteria as secondary.

A & L felt that Post-Minimalism had suffered from critical inaccessibility because the contemporary art community had become conditioned to conceive art only in terms of physical objects. In their mind, contemporary art theory could be described as a substance sortal - that is a framework which is limited to the description of material objects.

Post-Minimal art, in general, is concerned with the notion that art-objects are events which exist in time as well as space. A & L felt that this kind of art could be alternately conceived as a phase sortal - that is a framework that articulates "temporal objects" or events. A & L write-

As our empirical experience stands it seems that we require the two identificatory concepts of 'substance' to denote a spatial entity and 'event' to denote a temporal entity. And yet it is possible to place ourselves in a theoretical position where the ramifications of such a question as the following one can be considered. Is the question of whether or not we assign an entity to the class 'substance sortal' or the class 'phase sortal' simply a question of how long we continuously observe it?......

Can we (and if so, how) discriminate between the material body named 'art object' and the event named 'art object'? ...... Does the word 'object' itself already contain, concealed, the type criterion we use to distinguish particulars?

... in context of art questioning our notion of 'substance' entails questioning our notion of art object. A theoretical spectator who sees time-slices rather than material continuants would hold out a marked contrast of viewing (perusing) process to that entailed in our present processes. It seems to have been blandly and numbly assumed that the emphasis in fine art practice will remain upon the ancient procedure of 'shallow' object making.19
In the "transitional" phase (c.1970-1971) several A & L articles discuss the notion of conceiving art in the terms of a phase sortal. These articles reveal a certain flavour of optimism. It might have seemed to the group at this time that since art is ideally an open concept it would not be too difficult to install an alternate theory in the art community. This possibility might have seemed fairly certain since so many artists were already working in a Post-Minimal fashion.

Eventually though, their discourse turned away from investigating the potentiality of art, to studying the actual reality of contemporary art. This shift in their discourse probably reflects an element of frustration on their part. It must have occurred to them, sometime in the course of 1970 to 1971 that despite the alternate theorizing that had been produced to date by themselves and others (eg. Morris), there seemed little chance that this new art conception would ever be installed in the art society. For some reason, it appeared that the status quo would continue to successfully ignore or rebuke this alternate viewpoint.


3. More will be said concerning the nature of bound concepts on page 93.


5. Ibid., p.219.


8. Ibid., p.88.


11. Atkinson writes — "Art after Philosophy"...is...an honest attempt to articulate a viewpoint of which, over the past 18 months or so, the art and Language artists have become increasingly convinced." Atkinson, "A & L Viewpoint," p.138.

12. Burn and Ramsden, "Notes on Genealogies," p.84.

13. Here is the same argument stated by Atkinson et al —
"The thing that does acquire some sort of privileged status is the highest genuine sortal concept (i.e. general covering concept) in any chain of restrictions appertent to it, which carries with it autonomous individuative capability sufficient to determine without reference to lower sortals the coincidence and persistence of conditions for any object covered by it. If sculpture might cross classify lump of stone, and say painting, then either the cross classification must be resolved in some one sortal classification, genuine and higher of both sculptured or lumps of stone, or sculpture has no classificatory purport at all. The only way this dilemma can be coped with is through judicious explication, and this is not settled, when someone denies that the cross classification can be resolved in the second aspect of the dilemma, by saying that SCULPTURE may be a concept which only becomes fully determinate as an individuative concept when one is told what sort of sculpture, e.g. lump of stone, or painting sculpture. And neither is it fully resolved... by pointing out that it is only in this way that high genera can be said to individuate individuals or give covering concepts for their identities."


14. This term was originally suggested by Russell - "We have then, two things to compare: (1) a name, which is a single symbol, directly designating an individual which is its meaning, and having this meaning in its own right, independently of the meaning of all other words; (2) a description, which consists of several words, whose meanings are already fixed, and from which results whatever is to be taken as the "meaning" of the description."


15. Phenomenology and Behaviorism are the two dominant schools in contemporary psychology. Behaviorism is philosophically aligned with Logical Positivism. This school of psychology has constructed a model of human nature based upon a set of basic behavioral patterns (i.e. stimulus-response patterns) which are logically extended. The major exponent of this school has been B.F. Skinner.

Phenomenology is philosophically aligned with Existentialism. The model created by this approach has emphasized personal experience. This school has dealt with such issues as consciousness, awareness, and creativity, which Behaviorism has necessarily neglected. Phenomenology was
originated by Edmund Husserl at the beginning of this century. Husserl attempted, with relative success, to describe the experiential world of the individual in rational terms. Since his time, Phenomenology has been associated with the more literary approach of Existentialism. One of the major exponents of this school has been Maurice Merleau-Ponty.


Another project of this same nature is Card File (1961). This work amounts to a card file which includes such entries as "Size," "Decisions," and "Mistakes." These entries refer to: the physical description of the file; the filing system; or the process whereby the art-work was made.

Atkinson uses this term to describe the primary intention in the Bainbridge/Hurrell models in: Atkinson, "Concerning Interpretation."


Previously (i.e. in the introductory chapter of this thesis) it was noted that there was a pause in the group's publishing history from June 1970 to November 1971. Conceivably, this pause reflects the frustration A & L must have experienced at this time.
Chapter VI

THE MATERIAL CHARACTER/PHYSICAL-OBJECT PARADIGM -
A & L made reference to Modernist art in their articles written from 1969 onwards. Kosuth, in particular, wrote extensively on the nature of this movement, and was probably the first member of A & L to recognize the important role that critics play in Modernist art. He referred to this style as "aesthetic art", and suggested that Modernism simply amounted to critics assigning value judgements to "dumb" physical art-objects. He states -

The artist's role is not unlike that of the valet's assistance to his marksman master; pitching into the air of clay plates for targets. This follows in that aesthetics deals with considerations of opinions of perception, and since experience is immediate, art becomes merely a human ordered base for perceptual kicks... thus paralleling natural sources of visual (and other) experiences... If aesthetics is concerned with discussion of perception, and the artist is only engaged in the construction of the stimulant, he is thus - within the concept "aesthetics as art" - not participating in the concept formation.¹

Kosuth's investigations of Modernism were not analytical, but rather polemical. He criticized the mainstream school as part of his campaign for Conceptual art's priority.

In late 1971, A & L began a careful analysis of Modernist art.² They understood, at this point, that Modernism was not grounded on aesthetic judgements but upon the theoretical model that Greenberg had constructed. They also recognized that Modernism was not restricted to the few critics and artists that were directly involved in the mainstream development, but was established as a general attitude throughout the hierarchy of the art society. In its general sense, Modernism had become
the reasonable way to approach modern abstract art. As a general attitude Modernism appeared quite harmless. A & L suspected though, that there might be some crucial factors associated with Modernist theory proper, that had become internalized, perhaps unknowingly, by the rest of the art society. A & L guessed that these factors motivated the art community to generally reject Post-Object art.

A & L felt that although Modernist theory was formulated by Greenberg, it was most clearly articulated in the writings of Richard Wollheim. Wollheim's view of Modernist art derives from his general theory of art.

According to Wollheim, the term art does not signify an open concept — that is a concept which is potentially available to any interpretational scheme. Wollheim does not give art a definite description, but suggests instead that art's domain is ideally coordinated by a set of universal attributes, or art qualities. This ideal structure of art is not however, reflected in the actual art community. From time to time in history, according to Wollheim, one of the universal attributes of art has become stressed as an identity statement or autonomy thesis by some faction in the art society. An autonomy thesis is the highest general covering concept in a certain theory of art. He writes:

‘...the relations that hold within a given set of concepts (eg. art concepts) are timeless...Nevertheless, these relations can at different periods...be thought or be felt to change, largely because the concepts themselves can be differently experienced. And by talking of a concept being differently experienced...I have in mind something of the following kind: that a part of the concept that had remained implicit becomes explicit, or a part of the concept that had seemed merely one part amongst others becomes dominant.’

5
In Wollheim's mind, the fact that art theory has undergone periodic restructuring is probably indicative of ideological conditions in the societies concerned. These historical redefinitions of art have supposedly had no effect on the "true" nature of art (i.e., art's set of universal attributes).

Wollheim states that one of the universal qualities of art is physicalism. This term refers to the notion of stating artistic intentions in response to the actual physical limitations set by each art medium. To show that physicalism is indeed one of art's universal attributes, Wollheim provides a few examples from the history of painting -

Take for instance, the emergence of the brush stroke as an identifiable pictorial element in 16th C. Venetian painting; the free sketching in of landscapes in the background of 17th and 18th C. painting; or the distinctive use of cropped figures placed against the edges of the support in late 19th C. Parisian art.6

Likewise, in the history of Modern abstract art, physicalism is regularly apparent, though not necessarily as the dominant artistic concern. Wollheim is conscious, though, that physicalism achieved the status of an autonomy thesis as a result of the dominance of Modernist art. In his mind, Modernism simply clarifies a theory of art which has determined the entire history of Modern abstract art.

...for the mainstream of modern art, the appropriate theory is one that emphasizes the material character of art, a theory according to which a work is importantly or significantly, and not just peripherally, a physical object. Such a theory, I am suggesting, underlies or regulates much of the art activity of our age...Within the concept of art under which most of the finest, certainly most of the boldest, works of our age have been made, the connotation of physicality moves to the fore...
A & L recognized that physicalism was the first principle, or basic axiom, of Modernist art. This notion generated a new conception on their part towards Modernism. They understood that art could be conceived as a logical system, if, and only if the term art was provided with a definite description. Physicalism is the definite description of Modernist art. A & L felt that Modernism had been developed as an extensional logic based on this premise.

A & L referred to Modernism as a logical monotheory, but did not attempt to describe how this art system had been extended over time. For the sake of example, though, it would be helpful to outline how such a conception of Modernism might be stated.

If Modernism is an extensional logic, then Modernist art-works would have the status of analytical propositions. All of these art-works, if they are Modernist a priori (i.e. necessarily true), would be essentially tautologous extensions of the physicalist premise. This does not imply, though, that every one of these art-works would be created in direct response to this first principle. Most of these art propositions would probably be created according to a process common to most extensional logics. The usual process entails: first, performing a number of logical transformations on the axiom (s) to produce a set of extended sentences, or theorems; then, choosing those sentences that seem to be the most useful in problem solving. Most problem work will respond directly to these sentences rather than the primary axioms. This work, referred to as explication, amounts to redefining popular theorems in new contexts.
The theorems of Modernist art would be those popular compositional solutions that were developed in response to the physicalist thesis. In the course of its history, Modernist art may actually have developed a stock repertoire of these interesting solutions. A list of these might include: Morris Louis's idea of staining the canvas in order to make his paintings more ideally two-dimensional; Kenneth Noland's creation of multi-coloured centralized images which maintained their gestalt despite their colouristic diversity; Frank Stella's employment of shaped canvases to intensify the interaction between "literal" (ie. support frame) and "depicted" (ie. pictorial) shape. Few Modernist paintings could be said to have introduced original solutions (ie. propositions) as significant as those few just described. The majority of Modernist paintings could be described as being produced in logical series. Each of these series has been extended by explicating a few of Modernism's popular theorems.

A & L felt that Wollheim's physicalist notion effectively described Modernist art, but they were uncertain whether this notion could be said to explain the entire development of Modern art. They felt that if Wollheim's conception of the Modern tradition could be analyzed, they would need to employ an historiographical scheme appropriate to
such a general task. In their minds, art history had not developed such a general scheme as yet. A & L discovered what they thought might be a viable method in T.S. Kuhn's paradigm theory, which had been developed for the History and Philosophy of Science.

Kuhn's theory, developed in the 1950's, was formulated to explain the manner whereby science progresses in history. Traditionally, scientific history has been conceived as a list of discoveries, inventions, and theories which are contended to form a natural linear progression. In his writings, Kuhn easily undermined his discipline's confidence in this model. He pointed out that since many important incidences in the traditional linear chain were not rationally connected, then they were unaccountable for by the traditional historic view of science.

Kuhn constructed an alternate theory which he hoped would explain the actual dynamics of scientific history. He suggests that science has not developed linearly, but rather in terms of separate general theories— or paradigms. Kuhn states that a paradigm is recognizable in history when the fundamental parameters of a certain discipline have been first formulated, and then presupposed by the majority of that discipline's practitioners. A list of easily recognizable paradigms includes:

Physics - Newton, Einstein; Astronomy - Ptolemy, Copernicus; Chemistry - Lavoisier; Electricity - Franklin.

Kuhn states that an infinite number of general theories can be constructed to describe the same "real" domain. Each of these theories will include fundamental assertions concerning the "true" nature of the
domain it describes. The individual who formulates such a theory may be conscious of the arbitrary nature of his theorizing. He may however, imagine that his theory is, in fact, a true picture of reality. In either case, he will be careful to explain how his model is epistemologically connected with the real world it supposedly describes.

When a discipline accepts a certain general theory as its paradigm, this means that it has excluded all alternative general theories that may be available. In this sense, the acceptance of a paradigm is a positivistic affair. Over the course of time, the fact that a paradigm is merely a conventional view of reality will become obscured. As a paradigm becomes increasingly entrenched in a discipline, possible knowledge will become construed as definite knowledge.

One of the areas of possible knowledge that becomes incontrovertible under a paradigm is ontology. An ontology is the domain of those things, or objects, to which a certain general theory has reference. If a general theory becomes established as a paradigm, then its respective discipline will be committed to an ontology when it asserts that the only genuine statements that can be made, must be made in the terms of a certain ontology.

Statements not formed in this fashion are rejected as meaningless.

A paradigm provides the practitioners of a discipline with set answers to fundamental issues such as ontology. Kuhn writes:

Effective research scarcely begins before a scientific community thinks it has acquired firm answers to questions like the following: What are the fundamental entities of which the universe is composed? How do these act with each other and with the senses? What questions may be legitimately asked about such entities and what techniques employed in seeking solutions? At least in the mature sciences, answers... to questions like these are firmly embedded in the educational initiation
that prepares and licenses the student for professional practice. Because that education is both rigorous and rigid, these answers come to exert a deep hold on the scientific mind.

When a paradigm has become established in a discipline, the practitioners of that discipline will not need to involve themselves with lengthy philosophical defenses of every new contribution that they offer. When a paradigm has become established, "normal" scientific work (i.e., the logical extension of the paradigm via theoretical analysis, and empirical research) can progress at a highly efficient rate. Kuhn writes —

One of the reasons why normal science seems to progress so rapidly is that its practitioners concentrate on problems that only their own lack of ingenuity should keep them from solving.

Occasionally though, in the course of routine work, practitioners will accidently discover situations which contradict some aspect of the established paradigm. When these contradictions — or anomalies (Kuhn's term) — come to light, the discipline usually responds by rejecting them as erroneous information. If a certain anomaly continues to reappear on a regular basis, then the discipline will re-examine its testing conditions. If this fails to explain the anomaly's existence, then some sections of the theoretical model might be reanalyzed, to check their constructional consistency. If the model is not found to be deficient however, then in most cases this enquiry will end at this point. The anomaly will simply be categorized as a special instance that the paradigm is not designed to explain.
The discovery of anomalies will encourage a few practitioners though, to question the general usefulness of the established paradigm as an interpretive model. Some of these individuals will even try to formulate alternate general theories for their discipline. In a period when anomalies are being regularly discovered the practitioner of a discipline will begin to lose faith in the established paradigm's ability to function effectively. If this condition accelerates, then eventually the discipline will experience a condition of crisis (Auhn). In this situation, a fierce struggle will ensue between the prevalent paradigm and each of the alternative models that are vying for its position.

The decision to invalidate an established paradigm is a complex matter. A viable alternative theory may not necessarily be that one that has been designed to explain the prevalent paradigm's line of business more effectively. It is often the case that a discipline will be generally skeptical concerning those issues which the prevalent paradigm had considered as pertinent. A discipline may also find it difficult to make general comparisons between the various alternate theories and the prevalent model. Each of these theories will be self-sufficient languages. Therefore, it may not be possible to translate the concerns of one of these theories into the language of another.

Finally though, one of the alternate theories will attract the majority of a discipline's practitioners to its side. This situation can be described as scientific revolution - or in the language of Kuhn - a paradigm shift.
Examining the record of past research from the vantage of contemporary historiography, the historian of science may be tempted to exclaim that when paradigms change, the world itself changes with them. Led by a new paradigm, scientists adopt new instruments and look in new places. Even more important, during revolution scientists see new and different things when looking with familiar instruments in places they have looked before.

The Art-Language group felt that Kuhn's model might provide some insight into the history of modern art. They understood that this model could not retain its status as a genuine theory if it was lifted out of its context and applied to another domain. The paradigm model was based on extensive research in scientific history, and was only designed to interpret this certain state of affairs. Applied to the art domain, Kuhn's theory has the status of an heuristic device - that is, it provides a helpful, though unprovable, guide to research. The group used Kuhn's theory, just as they had used Analytical philosophy, as a "ready-made" device to aid them in their investigation of art.

Wollheim states that a physicalist theory underlies the entire development of Modern abstract art. According to this view, Modernist art is simply the logical outcome of a larger process. If this was indeed the case, then A & L felt that the tradition of Modern abstraction might be aptly described in the terms of Kuhn's theory. Atkinson and
Baldwin elected to refer to this supposedly homogenous modern tradition as "The Material-Character/Physical-Object Paradigm of Art" (hereafter cited as the MCPOP). This title refers to Wollheim's statement —

...the appropriate theory is one that emphasizes the material character of art, a theory according to which a work is importantly or significantly, a physical object.

A & L suggested that if MCPOP had indeed become entrenched in the Modern art community, then it would be reasonable to describe this phenomenon in the light of Kuhn's notions regarding entrenched paradigms. For one, Kuhn states that entrenched paradigms are associated with "ontological commitment". A & L, likewise, suggested that the contemporary art society under a MCPOP had become committed to a physical object ontology. In such a situation, all genuine art-works must be framed in the terms of the material character of physical objects. This does not imply that all contemporary art-works need to involve themselves in the Modernist dialogue (ie. the logical extension of Modernism), but that they must be physical objects if they are to count as art-works. A & L felt that the MCPOP's ontological commitment was not confined to the arena of Modernist art, but had pervaded the entire contemporary art community. They believed that this ontological commitment was one of the reasons the art community had generally rejected Post-Object art.

A & L suggested that a few artists who were active prior to the mid-sixties (ie. the inception of Post-Object art) must have been intuitively aware that a paradigm was being established, or was already established in the art community. In "Some Post-War American Art and Art-Language: Ideological Responsiveness", Atkinson and Baldwin state that the work of
such artists as Pollock, Reinhardt, Johns, Judd, Morris, and Andre could be interpreted as reacting to a MCPOP. Atkinson and Baldwin fail to clarify this notion though with detailed examples in their article. For the sake of example, then, it would be helpful to try to apply their notion to Pollock, Johns and Morris.

Consider, for example, the large "drip" paintings that Pollock produced in the late 1940's and early 1950's. At this time, Greenberg (ie. spokesman for the MCPOP) championed these "drip" paintings for developing self-contained compositions that maintained all-over incident (ie. compositional weight). Greenberg believed that Pollock, in these paintings, had perfected earlier solutions in this formalistic problem area that were produced by the Analytical Cubists (ie. Picasso and Braque) and Mondrian. In contrast however, Harold Rosenberg suggested that "gestural" paintings, such as Pollock's "drip" paintings, do not comprise the totality of Abstract Expressionist artworks. Rosenberg felt such paintings were interesting only insofar as they documented an existential process on the part of the artist involved. In Rosenberg's mind, gestural paintings enabled their respective artists to involve themselves in a process of self-discovery. A Pollock art-work, in the light of Rosenberg's view, comprises both a physical object and an existential experience.

Consider the "flags" and "targets" that Johns produced in the 1950's. These paintings are fascinating examples of ambiguity. At first glance, they seem to fulfill the demands of physicalism, in regards to painting. That is, these paintings emphasize their physical supports' two-dimensionality and "literal" shape. Compositionally,
the flags and targets are equivalent to two design solutions that were subsequently developed by Noland (i.e. his "concentric rings" and "horizontal bands" series). However, the flags and targets are also abstract signs, and as such connote ideas beyond the reference of painting. Moreover, since abstract signs are, by definition, purely two-dimensional images, they express a painting's flatness in a conceptual manner which is simply unassailable by the mechanical strategies employed by Louis, Olitski, etc. (i.e. staining, spraying).

Morris, has previously been noted, used physical objects (i.e. cubes) in his Minimal projects as the focal points for spectator experience. His art proposition thus amounts to: (physical object + spectatorship).

A & L suggested these three artists had reacted to a MCPuP. The term "reaction", was used to mean that Pollock, Johns, and Morris were concerned with ideas in their work that could not be expressible solely in the terms of physical objects. However, each of these artists had employed physical objects as necessary components in their art-propositions. A & L suggested, therefore, that these three artists had questioned the validity of the MCPuP, in their work, from an internal stance.

A & L's notion of internal questioning derives from the writings of Rudolf Carnap. In "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology" he writes -

...questions of the existence of certain entities of the new kind within the framework; we call them internal questions; ...Internal questions and possible answers to them are formulated with the help of new forms of expressions. The answers may be found either by purely logical methods or by empirical methods, depending upon whether the framework is a logical or a factual one.
Internal questions have definite cognitive, or semantic, limitations. If an individual chooses to use a language "A" (e.g. abstract art) then the sense of every statement or question that he can construct in "A" will be necessarily bounded by the presuppositions that "A" entails. An internal question can be employed to suggest new statements in "A", or question the validity of such statements in terms of "A". It is logically impossible, however, for one to question "A"'s first order principles using the language of "A". Accepting "A" as a communicational tool means necessarily accepting those premises that make communication in "A" a possibility in the first place.

A & L were certain that artists such as Pollock, Reinhardt, Johns, Judd, et al. were concerned with ideas outside of physicalism. The group recognized though, why these "other ideas" never achieved much recognition and influence. They believed that in a society where art-object necessarily implies a physical object, those artists who produce physical objects automatically fall victim to deterministic interpretation by MCPOP writers.

...one simply cannot ask, with full force, a fundamental question concerning whether or not the E/MC/POP is either the best tool for extending the inquiry by making an object, insofar as making an object constitutes full-blooded subscription to the E/MC/POP. This in its turn presupposes that object-making is a superstructure and beyond law. One cannot even ask whether or not subscription to the E/MC/POP is essential in terms of making an object because the question is ruled out of court by the act of making an object.
The group suggested that if a MCPOP existed, it had become firmly entrenched and was impervious to virtually any critical attack. As long as the art community was constricted by a paradigm, or monotheoretical situation, A & L believed that there was no likelihood that mainstream art could freely develop. The group felt that it would be valuable to analyze the MCPOP to observe how it maintained its entrenched position in the contemporary art society. However, before this analysis can be considered, it will be necessary to outline the position from which this analysis was launched. One will first need to understand the ideological position of the group as it finally took shape.
1. Rosenth, "Introductory Note," p. 100.

2. The group's reinvestigation of Modernist art can be dated from November 1971—the date the journal resumed semi-regular publication. In this issue, the first discussion of Wollheim's physicalist theory appeared in: Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "La Pensée avec Images," *Art-Language* 1-4 (Nov. 1971).


4. Actually, it is difficult to imagine how Wollheim's theory functions in the abstract. To begin with, he asserts that art is coordinated by a set of universal attributes. This statement necessarily implies that the domain of art is a closed one. If this domain were not closed, then a given set of art attributes would not be able to maintain their universal status. Accordingly, A & L felt that there is a definite prescriptive element in Wollheim's theory of art. If the "language of art" is a timeless—essentially unchanging—system, as Wollheim says, then it would be possible to investigate the entire history of art to discover what in fact are the "universal" attributes and relations of this system. One of the implications of Wollheim's theory is that art-work cannot occur under some new concept which is not already recognizable in the history of art. Thus, the validity of Post-Object art is denied outright according to Wollheim's framework.

On this issue, Atkinson and Baldwin write—
"If(Wollheim's theory) is supposed to be retrospective, it's not so bad; we have been stuck with reism etc. Assume, however, for the sake of allowing (the theory) a prospect of interest that there is some predictive intent behind it... inductive generalizations (such as Wollheim's theory) are finally conventionalized and converted into analytic or definitive statements in virtue of extensive empirical confirmation. What we may have here is a law-like (theory) which has been immunized against possible future experience insofar as, if an experience does not fit it, so much the worse for the experience—rather than "so much the worse for the law-like (theory)."


6 Ibid., p.232.

7 Ibid., p.233.

8 See: Carnap, Meaning and Necessity, pp.7-8; and W.V.O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in Quine, From a Logical Point of View, p.25.

9 Quine describes ontological commitment in this fashion—
"The ontology to which one's language commits him comprises simply the objects that he treats as falling...within the range of his variables...a theory is committed to those and only those entities to which the bound variables of the theory must be capable of referring in order that the affirmations made in the theory be true."


11 Ibid., p.37.

12 Ibid., p.111.

13 The first mention of the term paradigm in the Kuhnian sense is in Atkinson and Baldwin, "MCP". However, there is no actual reference made to Kuhn's writings in this article. Kuhn is recognized as the originator of the paradigm notion, though, in a subsequent article: Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "Some Post-War American Art and Art-Language," Studio International 183 (Apr. 1972), (hereafter cited as Atkinson and Baldwin, "Some Post-War"). This article attempts to translate the sense of Kuhn's theory into the terms of the art domain.


16. Atkinson and Baldwin, "Some Post-War," p. 165. Note: E/M/C/POP stands for "The Essentialist/Material-Character/Physical Object Paradigm." The E/M/C/POP is equivalent to the W/P/POP.
Chapter VII

PLURALISM — THE ART & LANGUAGE VIEWPOINT
From 1956 onward, the equilibrium of a complacent art community was shaken by a series of Post-Object activities. According to A & L, Post-Object art can be viewed as a general reaction against an entrenched MCPOP. This reaction continued to intensify, so that by about 1971, it seemed that the art community might be approaching what Kuhn refers to as a "crisis" situation. Atkinson and Baldwin described the condition of the art society at this time in these terms:

...the present complex and expanded situation in art may well be more "irrational" than subscribers to the MCPO are prepared to admit as a "rational" mono-theoretical discipline (i.e. Modernist art) may be retained as verbal wall-papering, as a memorial to a neater time when the business of art could be run by following a few simple "rational" rules. The complex and shuddering business that has emerged throughout the forties, fifties, and sixties (i.e. the reaction to object production) may require a few decades more to become stabilized, that is, if the shuddering has not itself become autonomous.

If the art society was indeed approaching a crisis situation at this time, then following Kuhn's theory (i.e. as a heuristic device), this situation would be the prior condition for the appearance of alternate general theories of art. This crisis condition would eventually be alleviated when the art community effects a "paradigm shift", that is, acknowledges a new general theory.

A & L had no intention, however, of creating one more mono-theoretical art conception to replace the prevalent physicalist one. They felt that this kind of avant-garde behaviour would not solve the problems associated with the existing MCPOP. In their minds, any mono-theory would necessarily limit the potential scope of artistic inquiry.
Ramsden in collaboration with Michael Corris state -

Keeping art open to alternatives is a corollary of the learning situation - it doesn't mean we are searching for one true alternative or some kind of grand theory. The relation between an entrenched system and possible alternatives provides a model for possible action. You do not have to formalize a successor to the existing theory. Monistic systems whether they are entrenched or offer a new alternative are not useful.

The group felt that it would be relevant to make a general analysis of the MCPOP. This analysis was intended to criticize not the physicalist notion itself, but the idea that any monothetical could provide a viable situation for artistic activity. A & L was conscious that such an analysis could not proceed by "internally questioning" this paradigm. They realized that they could not first presuppose the language of the MCPOP and then proceed to question these presuppositions in that same language.

A & L understood that when one questions the validity of a certain language's first principles one is involved with "philosophical" questions, or external questions as Carnap calls them. External questions, unlike internal questions, do not presuppose a language's axiomatic premises. Instead, external questions place the premises of a certain language into the context of a second language that is semantically designed to make sense out of the former language's primary statements. This process, also referred to as contextual definition, or contextual analysis was originated by Alfred Tarski in Semantices. In reference to contextual definition Burn and Ramsden write -
Tarski showed that the words "true" or "false" cannot occur
in the object-language; these works will always require a
language of a higher order (ie. (n+1)th). This does not
mean that sentences in the primary language are neither
ture nor false, but that, if "q" stands for the sentence
in the primary language, then the sentences "q is true"
and "q is false" are occurring in the secondary language
...Though we can make assertions in the primary language,
we cannot say of the assertions that they are true or
false in this language.

Contextual definition involves taking the primary statements of a
certain language and discovering their sense by placing them into
the sentences of a wider language context. This notion caused a
major shift in the development of Linguistic philosophy in this cen-
tury. Contextual definition has influenced logicians from Carnap (ie.
his work in the 1940's) onward to think in terms of the sense as well
as the reference of their artificial languages.

Most of A & L's familiarity with the notion of contextual defi-
nition seems to derive from their readings of W.V.O. Quine. Quine
states the notion most effectively in his essay "Ontological Relativity".
This title aptly describes the idea of how contextual definition can be
used to discover the sense of a certain theory. According to Quine, a
contextual analyst never commits himself to the referential range of a
certain theory's ontology, but maintains a relativistic stance instead.
An analyst discovers the sense of a particular theory by placing it in
a number of background theories. Since many of these background theories
will be in turn committed to their own respective ontologies, the search
for a certain theory's sense, will cause an analyst to make several
retractions to what semanticists refer to as the deeper levels of language, or theory. Quine states -

The relativistic thesis to which we have come is this; it makes no sense to say what the objects of a theory are, beyond saying to interpret or reinterpret that theory in another...

According to Quine, investigating the sense of a theory "A" means investigating the ideology of "A". The ideology of "A" is the universe of theories to which "A" is bound. This universe includes all those background theories that "A" can be translated into. If "A" is logically structured, it may be possible to translate "A" into the terms of one of its background theories, provided this theory is also logically structured. This translation is effected by employing some kind of functional equation. However, the ideology of "A" will also include a number of background theories which cannot be connected logically with "A". The ideology of any theory, such as "A", is a "universe" or "space", which is not readily recognizable. Since an analyst can only intuitively sense the nature of ideological space, investigating the nature of ideology is a complex affair.

An analyst locates the background theories that comprise "A"'s ideology through a process referred to as theory trying, or mapping. This process involves trying various theories to observe how effectively they describe: the reference of "A"; and the ideology, or intuitional space, that "A"'s sense is felt to inhabit. Those theories that best perform these two requirements are referred to as the more interesting ones. Searching for interesting background theories, describes
the process of contextual analysis. This process investigates how any particular theory with its respective ontology, makes sense in larger frames of reference.

A & L referred to contextual analysis as **pluralism**. Baldwin, in particular, had begun toying with the notion of pluralistic art theory as early as 1970. By 1972, pluralism had become the A & L viewpoint. The group made it clear in their articles written in 1972 and 1973 that their pluralistic viewpoint was not "just one more great art theory", but rather an analytic technique. They emphasized that since pluralism does not constitute a theory, it cannot rule out the viability of other art theories (ie. by entrenching itself as a paradigm). A & L felt that since pluralism can be used to investigate the relations between ontologies (eg. art) and ideologies (eg. cultural) it could be used as an historiographical tool to describe the dynamic process whereby art develops and changes in history. They were also certain, that a pluralistic viewpoint could clearly describe the nature of an entrenched general art theory - the MCPOP.

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A & L suggested that: given a MCPOP exists; it would be interesting to observe how this paradigm maintains its established position in the contemporary art community. In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*...
Kuhn states that paradigms maintain their position by employing various entrenchment strategies. According to Kuhn, the practitioners of an established paradigm use these strategies to deal with anomalies and criticism that arise within their discipline.

One of the most effective of these strategies is ontological commitment. A & L recognized that in the art community, this device amounted to physical-object positivism. Under the MCPOP there exists a law-like statement that holds that the only real art-objects are necessarily physical objects, and therefore all artistic intentions must be framed in the terms of physical objects. A & L understood that this device had been employed to protect the MCPOP from various internal criticisms (eg. Johns, Morris, etc.).

A second entrenchment strategy that the group singled out was "ethical naturalism". This device is essentially a weaker form of positivism. Atkinson and Baldwin state:

"...the doctrine of ethical naturalism in art...asserts that we must believe in (subscribe to) existing norms (eg. a physical object ontology) because there are no better norms which we may find ourselves...(however)...if we are told to accept norms on authority because we cannot judge them, then neither can we judge whether the claims of authority are justified, we can never know whether we are faced by a false prophet."

A third device that they identified could be termed "the liberal fallacy". This entrenchment strategy is associated with the notion that artists are unique and free individuals. This notion originated in the Romantic era, but still remains generally accepted to this day. A & L observed with interest how status quo factions in both the art society and the larger community have used this potentially dangerous
notion toward their own advantage.

The general view of Western society holds that each of its members has the right to a free existence. This "self-evident" right is not intended to suggest however, that every individual makes a lifetime profession out of discovering what exactly it means to be free. This interpretation of the maxim would take no account of social and economic necessities. Nevertheless, in order to make it clear that individual freedom is both possible and desirable, the status quo has relegated a certain domain of the community as a "free" domain (i.e. the art sector). It is generally held that the possibility of individual freedom becomes actualized within this art domain. Artists are often regarded as serving as the symbols of freedom to a larger community.

The artist in Western society is sometimes held up as exemplar of freedom. The artist is most likely to be seen (as many artists see themselves) as a lonely frontiersman than as a member of a theoretically or ideologically linked community of practitioners. This is the Western artist's social contract and it is firmly implanted in the reality of the art society and society in general...

There is a lauded marriage between art and the individual. In such a situation the artist makes an image of the public world as a projection on an enlarged screen of the private rages, longings, fears, ambitions, which circumscribe him. There is a widespread public sanction of this overpersonalization, to the point where the resultant behaviour is exhibited as a paradigm for all practitioners of art, and as a romantic image for the rest of society.

It would appear that any individual is free to practice art, and that this practice functions in some fashion to make individuals conscious of freedom.

A & L believed that the Romantic notion of the artist had been transformed into a "liberal fallacy" by the status quo. They stated that the
notion of the artist as a free individual reveals itself as a fallacy when one is conscious of the actual condition of the contemporary art community. Artistic activity could promote freedom, but only if this activity was itself free - able to grow. However, when an art community becomes ruled over by a positivistic theory, then art inquiry necessarily becomes an atrophied process. A & L believed that in such a situation, mainstream artists are offered two options: acquiescence; or reaction. If they choose the former path of action, they render themselves socially ineffectual; if they choose the latter, they will be either ignored by the art society, or treated as novelty items. Either option makes a parody out of the Romantic image of the artist.

A fourth entrenchment strategy singled out by the group is the notion of specialization. It is possible that A & L became conscious of this device through their readings of Kuhn. According to Kuhn, specialization is one of the incontrovertible facts of contemporary existence. This process is associated with another modern axiom - the notion of constant unending progress. Efficient progress (ie. technological or artistic) is only possible in a society that separates its numerous functions into specialized domains. These separate "islands" can proceed with their respective inquiries at a high rate of progress, since they are left unconcerned with greater "worldly" matters. Some communication will occur between these separate disciplines, though this will generally be construed as unimportant. Since progress is only achieved through professional expertise, interdisciplinary activity will be viewed as "amateurish".
...specialization is a salient feature of most highly
developed disciplines. The problem is that when speci-
alization accelerates you begin to get an additional
demand for autonomy. As a result, although you may have
many different fields, each field is anxious to protect
its boundaries and objects from outside interferences...
In other words, we are confronted with institutions
that base their legitimacy on expediency (in the sense
that social possibility of conservation becomes a sur-
vival issue) and a set of norms which tend to exclude
items that do not mesh with the belief structure as
formulated (thereby effectively maintaining conservation).

A & L understood that when a discipline (eg. art) becomes spe-
cialized, the likelihood that practitioners of that discipline will ever
ask "external" questions is remote. These external questions include:
What are the presuppositions of the established theory? How does this
theory maintain its established position in the face of criticism? What
is the ideological background of this theory? The group felt that they
had supplied answers to the first two of these questions. They were also
certain that some light could be thrown on the third issue as well.

A & L felt that the MCPOP, in the guise of Modernist art, has con-
sistently held that it is ideologically innocent. That is, the contem-
porary mainstream is supposedly a specialized discipline unconcerned
with, and unaffected by, situations in the world at large. This main-
stream discourse is coordinated by a certain physicalist theory. The
entrenchment of this theory supposedly does not implicate the modern
mainstream in any larger ideological scheme.

From an A & L, or pluralistic viewpoint, the contentions of the
contemporary mainstream are fallacious. They understood that a discipline
can only exist separate from the world if it fails to touch the world at
any point. Such a condition is referred to as tautological, or self-referential. If a discipline's theory links with the world at even a single point, however, then that theory will necessarily be deriving its sense, relative to the world at large. A & L stated that the POP à la modernist art is necessarily part of the world since it enunciates a physicalist theory. They considered the notion that the sense of physical objects only exists within the art domain, a fallacy. Burn and Ramsuen discuss this fallacy in these terms:

What happens when you pretend to sever an organization from its socio-historical context is that there develops an arrogant indifference to the epistemological conditions which make knowledge possible in the first place. Also, you become party to (or victim of) the prevalent value system of the socio-historical circumstances that both produces and supports the "autonomous" positivism which is so assuredly believed transcendent.

14 The mainstream art community might have genuinely intended to exist ideologically innocent, but since it employs concepts and entities that exist in the wider society, it cannot free itself from the ideological connotations of that wider group.

A & L were certain that the mainstream art community was necessarily associated with the dominant post-war ideology. This ideology can be described as a body of ideas which fosters a condition of accelerated material capitalism. The success of this ideology is affirmed by the entrenched control of multi-national corporations. The group believed that according to such an ideology, it is both possible and desirable to apply every marketing strategy available to the art community. Within this market situation, Modernist art-works are ideologically appropriate inasmuch as they act as simple products that make no criticisms whatsoever
of the situation in which they are implicated. Ramsden and Corris write -

It isn't difficult to work out relations between the kind of value systems which govern the market system of those societies which support modernist art. Modernism, in leaving its ideology uncriticized suggests that even if it were implicated in some value system, it would be the true system and, therefore, uncontroversial. To pretend ideological innocence, to leave the ideology untouched, is to perpetrate that ideology and be subsumed by it.¹⁶

A & L felt that the entire system of entrenchment strategies that the status quo employed to obscure the ideological underpinnings of mainstream art, could be described as "mystification".

Many of the articles that appeared in Art-Language in 1972 and 1973 were concerned with: articulating a pluralistic viewpoint; and applying this viewpoint to the post-war mainstream. There were also a few suggestions that the group intended to produce an "Art & Language Textbook".¹⁷

This plan, however, was never actualized. A certain amount of groundwork was done in this area though, before the journal concluded its publishing career. In particular, there was regular mention of the group "trying" out various bibliographic schemes in an attempt to index the bulk of writings that they had so far produced.

The work which the group has been concerned with for nearly two years now is the Art-Language Programme Map. This amounts to an examination of what members have been talking about over the past five years... The attempt to sort out criteria, find some sort of framework for an index which makes sense, constitutes the Programme Map.¹⁸

This textbook, had it been completed, would probably have concerned itself with describing the historical development of A & L discourse, and outlining in detail the nature of their pluralistic viewpoint.
FOOTNOTES


5. In particular: Carnap, Meaning and Necessity.

6. Quine's writings are regularly referred to in Art-Language from 1970 onward.


12. Ibid., p.34.


These would include: advertisement (ie. creation of artificial need); investment (ie. speculation, holding property, etc.); and pricing tactics (ie. supply and demand games—in the art community these would be determined in response to the qualitative judgements of established critics).

Corris and Ransden, "Frameworks and Phantoms," p. 47.

This planned textbook is mentioned on two occasions: "...in the case of the "Textbook" text," — Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, "The Index," in The New Art, p. 16; and "...it is obvious that much more needs to be said about all this; the rather fragmentary character of the preceding remarks might only be remedied through the "formalisation" of the proposed Art-Language Textbook. In the long run, such a comprehensive project may be the only one that really counts." — Burn and Ransden, "Some Questions," p. 18.

Chapter VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
This concluding section first summarizes the A & L viewpoint in its final form, and then outlines some of the historical implications that have been suggested by this study.

From the beginning of their inquiry, A & L had hoped to dispel a number of fallacious notions that have been traditionally associated with art. In particular, they criticized the notion that holds that art is essentially undefinable and therefore only approachable through metaphor. A & L felt that since it is possible for a community to converse about art, and somehow manage to understand what it is that each other is talking about, then this indicates that a conventional "art language" must be operating in this community. It is this language that provides the coherency and meaning to the subject (ie. art) that this society is discussing.

Languages are either "natural" or "artificial". Natural languages are vaguely structured and derive their sense in response to cultural ideologies. Artificial languages, by contrast, are logically constructed upon a few axiomatic premises. Logical languages can theoretically exist in a purely self-referential state. If, however, such a language is held to have any intentional nature, then this meaning can only be located in contexts outside of the given language. Invariably, such a semantic search leads one to eventually consider the nature of cultural ideologies.

A & L suggested that there has not been one "art language" in history, but several. Morphology has not changed drastically in history, but A & L held that morphology does not determine the way "art languages" operate: for example, two different "art languages" (eg. Medieval, Renaissance) may share the same morphology. A & L maintained that "art languages" are deter-
mined by functional, or semantic concerns. The semantics of a particular "art language" is necessarily discovered in its respective contemporaneous ideology. Accordingly, major cultural shifts will be necessarily reflected in the semantics of the art domain.

The fact that there has been more than one "art language" in history, indicates that the term art ideally describes an open concept. In history, though, the term art has been predicated by various functional definitions. At any particular place and time though, the term art has usually been associated with only one established theory of art.

A & L held that the concept of art can theoretically be associated with a purely logical language, provided that a first order definition is supplied for the term art. They discovered that this potential situation had actually come into existence in the course of the post-war mainstream. In their minds, Modernism, the dominant mainstream "school", can be effectively described as an extensional logic grounded on a physicalist principle. Following this notion, one could attempt a deterministic interpretation of Modernist art-works.

The group contended that Modernism was actually part of a larger entrenched art paradigm, the MCPOP, that had evolved throughout the course of Modern art history. According to A & L, the MCPOP held that it was ideologically innocent, but contextual analysis revealed that it was, in fact, implicated in its society's dominant ideology. The group also described the major entrenchment strategies associated with this paradigm, and suggested that this established situation would persist in the art community at least for a few more decades.
The viewpoint developed by A & L suggests some interesting avenues for future investigation.

Consider first, the condition of art prior to the Modern period. From an A & L viewpoint, this art can be interpreted as a number of natural "art languages". According to this view, each of these languages functions to "picture" the ideology of its contemporaneous culture. This notion suggests an interesting research program. This is: it would be valuable to discover whether the model that Chomsky developed for the interpretation of natural languages (ie. the theory of Transformational Grammar) could be applied as a methodological tool in art history. Conceivably, this line of thinking could promote considerable progress in iconology.

Consider secondly, the history of Modern art. It is reasonable to suggest that much Modern art has developed within two mainstreams up to the 1940's. These are: an expressionistic trend—ie. art which seeks to express the inner world of the individual (eg. Expressionism, Surrealism); and a formalistic trend—ie. art which seeks to develop an "honest" self-sufficient language (eg. Cubism, Constructivism). Both of these trends have responded to cultural ideologies. Some styles, such as Constructivism, are associated with clearly outlined ideological programs (ie. utopian socialism), while other styles, such as Surrealism, are associated with ideological positions that are not explicitly formulated (ie. Surrealism).

In the 1940's, the major artists associated with these two mainstreams emigrated to New York. Subsequently, a school developed there (ie. Abstract Expressionism) which effectively synthesized the two major trends of Modern art. Abstract Expressionism is a balanced blend of the expressionistic and formalistic trends. When Modernist art eclipsed the New York school, though, the formalistic aspect became solely dominant.
Modernist writers produced a rationally coherent "art language" for the contemporary art community. This language was the first one in the course of Modern art history to become internalized by the art society as a whole. The dominance of Modernist art proves a significant historical point. This is: an "art language" will remain ineffectual unless it becomes generally accepted by its contemporaneous art community. In this light, one could interpret the intentions of such artists as Mondrian and Moholy-Nagy as linguistically naive. Each of these individuals created "art languages" which they hoped would communicate their "new visions" of society. In retrospect, one can understand that the art-works by these two artists were ideologically ineffectual since no general audience existed that was fluent in these respective languages.

According to the Modernist view, the dominant evolutionary force in Modern art history has been a desire on the part of artists to express themselves in a separate "art language". Necessarily, this desire has caused art activity to develop an increasingly self-referential position. Modernism reduced art-making to insular art discourse. A & L developed the modernist conception of art to its logical conclusions (c.1970). It seems, therefore, that A & L closed out what may be the major developmental pattern in Modern art history. If this is the case, then it will now be possible to attempt a general retrospective analysis of this tradition. This analysis could reexamine the standard mainstream interpretations from a contextual point of view. Conceivably, this investigation might cause some of the aspects of the Modern tradition, which are generally regarded as crucial (e.g. the Analytical Cubism of Picasso and Braque), to be accorded a more relative significance.
I BOOKS:

A) Art-


B) Philosophy-


II ARTICLES:

A) Art & Language


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B) General-


