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The Cold War:
THE POLITICS OF BEING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE A VISUAL ART SPACE

[2003]
### Contents

List of illustrations iii
Acknowledgements vii
Abstract viii
Introduction 1

Chapters

1. Literature Review 13
2. Stop Me from Falling Down: Painting from the 1960s and the Expansion from the Canvas to the Architectonic Support 38
3. Objects, Subjects and Contexts: Towards a Specific Object for a Specific Place, Space and Time 61
4. A Place Apart: The Creation of Environments Through Installation Art, Performance Art, Happenings and Earthworks 103
5. One Place After Another: The Museum as a Palace in the Sky 133
6. Reinvigorating the Open Plane: Public Art, Location and Placement 160
7. I Was Not Made for These Times: Architecture and Spatial Articulation. 182
8. No Man’s Land: Inter-Disciplinary Activity and the Act of Collaboration 210
9. Conclusion: A Change Is Going to Come - The Development of Symbiotic Spaces 234

Bibliography 241

Appendix A Interview with Olivier Mosset 255
Appendix B Interview with Stephen Bram 260
Appendix C Interview with Sol LeWitt 267
Appendix D Interview with Lawrence Weiner 272
# List of Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fig.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fig.1</td>
<td>Arakawa and Madeline Gins, <em>Landing Sights/End of Spacetime</em> (1994)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.2</td>
<td>Jan van der Ploeg, <em>Grip</em> (1997-2002)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.3</td>
<td>Jan van der Ploeg, <em>Grip</em> (1997-2002)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.4</td>
<td>El Lissitzky, <em>Proun Room</em> (1923)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.5</td>
<td>Kasimir Malevich, <em>Black Square</em> (1915)</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.6</td>
<td>Alexander Rodchenko, <em>Pure Colours: Red, Yellow, and Blue</em> (1921)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.7</td>
<td>Vladimir Tatlin, <em>Monument to the Third International</em> (1921)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.8</td>
<td>Kenneth Noland, <em>An Half</em> (1969)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.9</td>
<td>Frank Stella, <em>Express of India</em> (1968)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.10</td>
<td>Barnett Newman, <em>Oement I</em> (1948)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.11</td>
<td>Frank Stella, <em>Portrait Series</em> (1963)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.12</td>
<td>Ellsworth Kelly, <em>Blue Red Rocker</em> (1963)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.13</td>
<td>Ellsworth Kelly, <em>White Curve Vevey</em> (1990)</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.14</td>
<td>Daniel Buren, <em>Photo-Souvenirs: Points De Vue Ou Le Corridorscope</em> (1983)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.15</td>
<td>Niele Torini, <em>Le Coin du Miroir, Dijon</em> (1983)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.16</td>
<td>Daniel Buren, <em>Within and Beyond the Frame</em> (1973)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.17</td>
<td>Daniel Buren, <em>With and Beyond the Frame</em> (1973)</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.18</td>
<td>Gunther Forg, <em>Wall Partition</em> (1986-93)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.19</td>
<td>Ellsworth Kelly, <em>Yellow Curve</em> (1990)</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.20</td>
<td>Carl Andre, <em>Equivalent VIII</em> (1966)</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.21</td>
<td>Andy Warhol, <em>Brillo Boxes (Soap Pads)</em> (1964)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.22</td>
<td>Donald Judd, <em>DDS 46</em> (1964)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.23</td>
<td>Rachel Whiteread, <em>Table and Chair (Clear)</em> (1994)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.24</td>
<td>Dan Flavin, <em>untitled (to Jan and Ron Greenberg)</em> (1972-73)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.25</td>
<td>Marcel Duchamp, <em>Fountain</em> (1917)</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.26</td>
<td>Tony Smith, <em>Die</em> (1962)</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.27</td>
<td>Daniel Buren, <em>Photo-Souvenirs: Poncutuations, Statue/Sculpture</em> (1980).</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.28</td>
<td>Frank Stella, <em>De La Nada Vida a La Nada Muerte</em> (1965)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fig.29</td>
<td>Donald Judd, <em>untitled</em> (1968)</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 30  Carl Andre, 8 cuts (1967)  78
Fig. 31  Donald Judd, DSS 41 (1963)  80
Fig. 32  Donald Judd, Untitled (1966)  82
Fig. 33  Donald Judd, artillery shed (with 100 works in mill aluminium) (1980)  83
Fig. 34  Donald Judd, artillery shed (with 100 works in mill aluminium) (1980)  83
Fig. 35  Richard Serra, Kitty Hawk (1983)  84
Fig. 36  Robert Morris, Floor Piece (1968)  87
Fig. 37  Sol Le Witt, Modular Piece (1966)  88
Fig. 38  Richard Serra, One Ton Prop (House of Cards) (1969)  90
Fig. 39  Richard Serra, Splashing (1969)  91
Fig. 40  Richard Serra, Tilted Arc (1981)  93
Fig. 41  Tadashi Kawamata, Roosevelt Project (1993)  93
Fig. 42  James Turrell, Hover (1983)  98
Fig. 43  Richard Serra, Torqued Eclipse (1983)  99
Fig. 44  Richard Serra, Fulcrum (1986-87)  99
Fig. 45  Daniel Buren, Photo/souvenir: Travail in situ (interior) (1969)  105
Fig. 46  James Turrell, Wedgework IV (1974)  106
Fig. 47  Rachel Whiteread, House (1993)  107
Fig. 48  Richard Wilson, 20/50 (1987)  107
Fig. 49  Gordon Matta-Clark, Splitting (1974)  108
Fig. 50  Robert Smithson, Spiral Jetty (1970)  108
Fig. 51  Walter De Maria, The New York Earthroom (1977)  109
Fig. 52  Kurt Schwitters, Merzbau (1923 -1933)  112
Fig. 53  Stephen Bram, Apartment, Prahran (1997)  112
Fig. 54  Gordon Matta-Clark, Office Baroque (1977)  113
Fig. 55  Piet Mondrian, Salon de Mme ...a Dresden (1926)  114
Fig. 56  Michael Heizer, Double Negative (1969-1970)  121
Fig. 57  Richard Long, A Line in Scotland, Cul Mor (1981)  122
Fig. 58  Nancy Holt, Sun Tunnels (1973 - 1976)  123
Fig. 59  Walter de Maria, Lightning Field (1977)  123
Fig. 60  James Turrell, Air Mass (1993)  126
Fig. 61  Michael Heizer, Isolated Mass/Circumflex (1968)  127
Fig. 62  Frank Lloyd Wright, Guggenheim Museum (1943-59)  135

iv
Fig.63 Dan Flavin, untitled (to Tracy, to celebrate the love of a lifetime) (1992)
Fig.64 Dan Flavin,Untitled Marfa (2000)
Fig.65 Mary Miss, Field Rotation (1980-81)
Fig.66 Frank Gehry, Guggenheim Bilboa (1998)
Fig.67 Daniel Buren, Colour-Transparency: cabanes eclatées no 26A and 26B (1998)
Fig.68 Olivier Mosset, Untitled (1970)
Fig.69 Olivier Mosset, Circles (1966 – 1974)
Fig.70 James Turrell, Space that Sees (1993)
Fig.71 John Chamberlin, Chamberlain Building (1983)
Fig.72 Claus Oldenburg & Cootje van Bruggen, Monument to the Last Horse (1991)
Fig.73 Vito Aconci & Aconci Studio, Screens for a Walkway between Buildings and Buses and Cars (1996-2000)
Fig.74 Joseph Beuys, 7,000 Oaks (1982)
Fig.75 Lawrence Weiner, Smashed to Pieces (In the Still of the Night) (1991)
Fig.76 Krzysztof Wodiczko, South Africa House (1985)
Fig.77 Richard Serra, Shift (1971-72)
Fig.78 Claus Oldenburg, Clothespin (1976)
Fig.79 Tadashi Kawamata, Work in Progress in Zug (1996 –1999)
Fig.80 Richard Serra, Street Levels (1986 – 1987)
Fig.81 Jeff Koons, Puppy (1995)
Fig.82 Richard Serra, Tiled Arc (1981)
Fig.83 Vito Aconci, New World Trade Center (2002)
Fig.84 Jorn Utzon, Sydney Opera House (1957-1973)
Fig.85 John Pawson, Faggionato Apartment, London (1999)
Fig.86 Kerry Hill, Ooi House, Margaret River (1998)
Fig.87 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Seagram Building, New York (1954-58)
Fig.88 Gerrit Rietvald, Shroder House, Utrecht (1923-24)
Fig.89 Gordon Matta-Clark, Circus or The Caribbean Orange (1978)
Fig.90 Melvin Charney, Les Maisons de la rue Sherbrooke (1976)
Fig.91 Frank Gehry, Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles (1987-2003)
Fig.92 Sol LeWitt, All Combinations of Arcs from the Corner and Sides, Straight Lines, Not-Straight Lines, and Broken Lines (1973)
Fig.93  Jorge Pardo, *4166 Sea View Lane House, Los Angeles* (1999)  203
Fig.94  Gordon Matta-Clark, *Conical Intersect* (1975)  203
Fig.95  Toyo Ito, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion* (2002)  208
Fig.96  Claes Oldenburg & Coosje Van Bruggen, *Binoculars* (1981)  212
Fig.97  James Brearly and Stephen Bram, *warehouse conversion Prahran, Melbourne* (1999)  213
Fig.98  Stephen Bram, *UNTITLED 3 POINT PERSPECTIVE* (1998)  213
Fig.99  Gilbert and George, *The Singing Sculpture* (1973)  214
Fig.100  Christo and Jean-Claude, *Wrapped Museum of contemporary Art, Chicago* (1969)  214
Fig.101  Theo van Doesburg, *Design for a hall in a university* (1923)  223
Fig.102  James Birrel, *small power generating substation* (1957)  226
Fig.103  Gordon Matta-Clark, *Office Baroque* (1977)  229
Fig.104  Krijn De Koning, *Centraal Museum, Utrecht* (1999)  229
Fig.105  Vito Acconci & Steven Holl, *Storefront Renovation* (1993)  229
Fig.106  Nonda Katsalidis, *Richmond Silos, Melbourne* (1997)  230
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Abstract

The thesis proposition is that many artists and architects continue to work within set guidelines, conventions, or protocols established in the Modernist era. From this claim the question is raised: What are the implications of stasis in the nominated fields? Subsequently, should the influence of historical movements, styles, or tendencies, be re-evaluated when it is clear that leading practitioners working within particular fields have been profoundly influenced by shared conceptual concerns? This questioning of a lack of interdisciplinary activity, suggests that further research is necessary within an investigation of collaborative systems. Moreover, instead of a late twentieth century deliberation on the condition of stasis, the argument will show how in post twentieth century terms the development of a conceptual critique of a range of practical engagements has generated a widening of discussion; on the interdependence of art and architectural methodologies in particular.

Therein, the thesis examines perceived boundaries existing between architectural and visual art practices. Central to this research project is an investigation of the development of minimalism and conceptualism in the 1960s and 1970s, when the political, economic, and social climate of the period influenced the restructuring of American art. The evolving issues developed in the thesis include spatial construction, minimalist painting and sculpture, architecture, museum practices, and the implications of a shift away from the museum as ‘primary site’ to ‘environmental practice’: through earthwork projects, and most importantly collaborative ventures between artists and architects.

Through this examination of specific individuals and their activities, the overall aim of the thesis is to show how they developed work within a broader scope that conceptually and artistically crossed boundaries. Even though, the practitioners considered in the thesis generally did not consider themselves participants of a group, or, movement, they have nevertheless provided a seminal influence on various art movements since the 1960s. In summary, in using interviews as the ‘primary’ research tool, the thesis demonstrates that whilst working in different disciplines, these individuals utilised shared conceptual concerns and in doing so, produced evidence of an interdependent approach to both contemporary art and architectural concerns.
Introduction

...does every art require another supplementary art to provide for its interests, and that another and another without end? Or have the arts to look after their own interests? Or have they no need either of themselves or of another?¹

The aim of this paper is to show that although artists have a history of collaborative processes amongst themselves, the collaboration of artists with architects has been minimal in the twentieth century. The research is concerned with shared processes between art and architecture, and the practices that engage with an expanded field of research beyond the private gallery or museum. It is important to recognise that art and architecture can co-operate, and even though they are often deemed to be separate disciplines, similar problems and issues are inherent within both. This research paper investigates the relationships between the constructed environment and space organisation, and the ways in which the two disciplines relate to each other. The focus is on painting, sculpture, installation art, museums, architecture, public art, and collaborations. Within these disciplines there are people who have concerns that are related to the development of collaborative practice through similarities within materials and spatial invention, and showing examples of their practice or work is the best way to discuss these connections and concerns. The goal of the research is to break through traditional concepts and existing boundaries, and to raise questions about the lack of collaboration between architects and artists.

Space and its relationship within visual arts and architecture is the main area of focus, and the research demonstrates the linkages that occur between the disciplines, both within theory and within the environments in and for which they are produced. The research demonstrates how artists have developed from the traditions of both painting and sculpture towards more spatially concerned activities that deal with broader issues relating to public, private, interior and exterior spaces. Within this practical and theoretical discussion about spaces, artwork and buildings, the constant that emerges is the particular relationship between work and space. Within the Modern movement this relationship takes on a new dimension, with the evolution of the framed painting into the painting as an object (the wall, the architecture becomes the frame) and the removal of sculpture from the plinth. This transforms the space into a constituent component of the work of

art. It is from this perspective that the demands on quality with regard to materials, light, proposition, intention, are defined. It is also from this point that the development of a working criticality between architecture and art can be developed, as is demonstrated in the chapter on collaboration, through examples of successful and unsuccessful collaborations and the advantages and disadvantages that have resulted from these encounters. The artistic movements and collaborations of the 1960s and 1970s are specific areas of focus, as they show a redefining of art and architecture and the transformation of artists and spatial demarcation intersecting at this time.

Even though there can be difficulties in linking art and architecture, as each has its own history within a broad history2 there are a number of common issues which occur in both criticism and theory. Although the heroic period of Modernism stands out, it is relevant to look at the art movements of Suprematism in Russia, De Stijl in the Netherlands as well as the State Bauhaus, Weimar, Germany, which are also relevant as they provide a meeting of art and architecture. This meeting forms part of the dynamics of building, urban design and social debates.

It is obvious that with the technological advances of today, architects, designers and urban planners are able to construct spaces in a ‘virtual space’ through the use of computer software such as ArchiCad. This is a technique of construction that does not make a physical mark on our urban environments. Protracted debates have marked the shift from philosophy to the science of space, and this can be seen as an important movement in the evolution of Western thought. This evolution has created a foundation from which to raise issues such as analysis of social space, and it involves questions of symmetry versus asymmetry, of symmetrical objects and the objective effects of reflections and mirrors.3

Social space is a complex series of spaces and entails many disciplines working within it: architects, urban designers, city planners and artists. Thus it is hard to define an essential element that binds this space. The result has been a broad proliferation of areas of research accompanied by an appropriate language and knowledge. Our personal account of space is directly linked to what we believe it to be. Because of its history, space has many internal logics. Thus it is necessary for the mental space of the individual to decide what that space means to them.

---

Not so long ago, the word ‘space’ had strictly geometric meaning; the idea it evoked was simply that of an empty area. The general feeling was that the concept of space was ultimately a mathematical problem. To speak of ‘social space’ would have sounded strange. Today, space is considered an object, not just a subject that can be theorised. A number of architects and artists have been influenced by, and based their work around, various spatial concerns and the differing senses of space. Examples include constructed space by U.S. conceptual and performance artists Bruce Nauman and Vito Acconci, natural space by U.S. earthwork artists Dennis Oppenheim, Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer, body space by U.S. installation and performance artists Simone Forti, Trisha Brown and Yvonne Reiner, spectator space by U.S. conceptual, installation and performance artist Dan Graham, and work presented as a critique of private and public space by French conceptual artist Daniel Buren. Yet new concerns are continually being explored, the most noticeable as we move into the twenty-first century being cyberspace. Arakawa and Madeline Gins are two Japanese artists/architects whose work, such as Landing Sights/End of Spacetime (1994) (fig.1), has become increasingly focused on this new space.

Fig.1

Space is what remains between objects. It can be a necessary element of the object, while at the same time being the reason for the object’s function. Space means more than a theoretical explanation. It is a medium which has physicality, and to acknowledge the presence of space is a step towards it becoming more than an abstract notion. The notion of space with its many possibilities and meanings is fundamental to our life and our notion of existence. In history space has been something to fight over, to discover, to explore, to look at, to engage with and to modify. With its potential to expand in all directions and to be a receptacle of things, it enables a huge area for discourses to be set up, and related problems can be identified and considered by individuals or groups. It is within this space that architecture and art come together, and out of this collaboration a productive dialogue can be developed.
Both public and private environments are spaces which people need to control. The house is the best example of the need to control space. People are given the option when buying a home of which space best suits their needs. Space is therefore seen as something psychological. People need what they term ‘their own space’. People talk about ‘children needing space to grow’ and they speak of ‘intrusions into personal space’, which is something that is partly physical but mostly psychological by nature. The fence can be seen as a boundary that separates the idea of ‘mine’ and ‘yours’, providing the possibility of control over one’s own space. Space has relevance to the individual ‘captured by each autonomous instant by perceptions unique to each instant’.4

What one forgets, when looking for a definition of space, is that there is no real universal meaning, and because of this it is difficult to accurately define space without generalising. This paper explores the physical and social spheres in which we live. It seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice in art and architecture, and to broaden possible avenues of investigation for an ongoing collaboration between the two disciplines. If space were something that engulfed everything, would it not be logical to think that it is the common element that links everything together? It can be the thing by which objects refer to each other. Our response to these objects within the environment is also a response to their space, which gives it relation and meaning.

From Swiss concrete artist and architect Adolf Loos’ architectural theory and design of the 1920s to that of Dada and avant-garde art (Spatialist movement in Italy) of the 1920s, to site-specific work of the 1960s and 1970s, there are recurring relationships of spatial investigation and demarcation. Continual investigations by both artists and architects within history are present to remind us that spatial concepts have been created through both disciplines. Throughout history, art and architecture have dealt with similar issues of spatial demarcation and invention. Through their overlapping concerns it has been shown, through movements such as De Stijl, Russian constructivism and the Bauhaus, that the work and conceptual content produced is encouragement enough to integrate more and more artists and architects within our built environment. This integration could facilitate a synthesis of our urban environment, and could enhance construction and conceptual development of our interior and exterior spaces.

The paper will also research and discuss the methodologies, processes and intentions related to the collaboration of art and architecture. This introduction presents an overview of the thesis, outlining the foci of the chapters and explaining the logic of their development.

The purpose of Chapter Two, ‘Stop Me from Falling Down’, presents an investigation of painting from the 1960s and its expansion from the canvas as its traditional support to the architectonic support. The chapter discusses painting in relation to this shift: from a painting with its depiction of spatial relationships in the traditional art of the easel, to work produced directly in an architectonic field. The chapter focuses on the geometric abstract artists of Europe and especially the U.S. Certain practitioners from the early twentieth century are discussed in light of their influence on the 1960s painters, such as Russian constructivists Kasimir Malevich and El Lissitzky. Their work demonstrates an opening up of the gallery, from a place to hang paintings on a wall to a site of spatial exploration through wall paintings and works which relate to their site. Thus the space for painting has opened up, and the field of activity is not limited within the frame of the canvas but occurs within a diverse and changing built environment.

From an historical view the chapter also focuses on individuals from the 1960s to the present who have developed and expanded their work within a broader architectonic frame, such as the French conceptual artists Yves Klein and Buren and the Dutch artist Jan van der Ploeg. Their practice best represents the methodology of how a painting has moved from being executed on canvas to being a wall work.

The practitioners in ‘Stop Me from Falling Down’ were selected on the basis that they continually reevaluated the developmental nature of their practice and the expansion of painting into an immediate architectonic realm. The act of painting has unique problems within it relating to the concrete reality of a painting as an object, such as spatial demarcation and visual representation. By moving beyond the frame into the architectural space, the positioning of painting at this moment is one of redeveloping its contextual position within a world of hybrid experiences.

The reinvention of painting, which is now located in an architectonic field, enables a sense of building or construction to take place. Considering painting through spatial concepts related to architectural concerns and terms enables it to be opened out, allowing a greater opportunity for development. The theoretical discourse on abstract painting and its expansion from the frame to
the frame of the architectural support is an attempt to link painting to a positive developmental practice. Artists represented, even though working within an architectural environment, still have their practices imbedded in their initial intentions and concerns as painters. However, in expanding their practice they can play an active and positive role in the development of our built environments.

Chapter Three ‘Objects, Subjects and Contexts’, is concerned with and explores how sculpture evolved from the support of the pedestal or plinth to deal directly with space and the representation and presentation of such work. The artists and works explored have demonstrated a critical shift in sculpture since the 1960s. Certain practitioners have continually redeveloped and negotiated a particular space. Through the co-existence of works of art and site-specificity, new experiences of sensory perception have taken place. The predominant focus in this chapter is the work of the minimalist movement of the 1960s, as it provides the best examples of work which was able to develop the organisation of space in and around the art object.

U.S. minimalist artists Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Carl Andre, and Dan Flavin exemplified the shift in methodologies of particular artists from the 1960s. As well, the Swiss concrete artist/architect Max Bill, whose declaration in 1968, ‘less is more’, is a focal point for not just this chapter but also the entire research.

Chapter Three also demonstrates that an important role of minimalism was the opening out of the gallery space into a site of exploration and also a space of invention, within itself as an object. This occurred not only in the gallery and museum space but also within the wider community. Minimalism represents a convergence of strategies which, when applied to our built environment, can bring about a synthesis between our various spaces that are constructed and the spaces left between these constructions.

The work and the practitioners discussed in Chapter Three have been able to redevelop existing relationships within the architecture and visual art object. The aim is to show that the minimalist art movement can be seen to have a direct link with the coexistence of spatial development within sculpture and architectonic construction.
Chapter Four, ‘A Place Apart’, attention to the creation of environments through installation art, performance art, happenings and earthworks. The aim in this chapter is to show how artists or painters, and sculptors in particular, have moved beyond the confinement of the autonomous object within space and thus have developed a new criticality towards the expanded field of the site. Site-specificity within such work has allowed the work to be continually re-evaluated through the viewer-participant having an active role in the work’s inherent processes. The intention is to chart, discuss and debate certain installation and site-specific practices and to provide a framework that encourages a rethinking of our varying urban and natural spaces.

The chapter focuses on particular practices from the 1960s to the present which have articulated exchanges between the work of art and the places in which its meanings are defined. U.S. earthwork artists Smithson, Walter De Maria, James Turrell and Heizer are highlighted, as their practices exemplify the development that has taken place from the object sitting in a gallery to an object as environment. These individuals, after initial minimalist periods, progressed towards earthworks or Land Art. As well as U.S. artists, certain European artists are discussed including English artists Richard Wilson, Rachel Whiteread, whose installations also continually re-addressed the notion of ‘site’ through their work.

The chapter also deals with the shift from the private gallery or museum as an isolated entity to a place of active participation and experimentation, which led artists to move from the museum space to the outside environment. It is shown that the discourse of the work of art has expanded beyond its own physical presence. At this point architecture, the site, and viewer participation all became determining elements when it came to defining the work of art.

Distinct methodologies of work, from minimalism to Land Art, happenings and performance show interventions into urban spaces, gallery sites and published material. The aim in the chapter is to show through the presentation of work that elements of site-specificity not only are a set of critical terms and a mode of work, but are also a way of characterising the places and spaces they reflect upon. Whether it was through the physical manipulation of a house by Gordan Matta-Clark or in Smithson’s land projects, the artists discussed have continually explored the nature of the empty building which housed the work, or the museum, as a cultural institution. In doing so the work and individuals discussed in this chapter reveal an ability through all the interventions to provide our built and natural environments with a new identity within each project.
Chapter Four also demonstrates how individuals have continually addressed specific concerns relating to spaces and the various politics each environment entails. It is also demonstrated that siting art in 'real' places can be a means to extracting the social and historical dimensions of places, to variously serve the intentions of an artist, as well as to fulfill the needs of an ever-changing and expanding urban environment. Installations and land projects enable the public to assess what we have done in our urban and natural environments; in turn, such working methods and projects create a widespread effort to reestablish our relationship to our varied spaces.

Chapter Five, 'One Place After Another', explores the space of the museum from the 1960s to the present as a space in which artists and architects have collaborated. The aim is to analyse processes of production involving meaning and value, mechanisms of exclusion and the clash of interests. Through examples of practitioners within both visual art and architectural discourse, it is shown that since the 1960s museums have been viable spaces for activity. Yet still to be achieved is a conjoining of the needs of the artists and their intentions with those of the architects and governing political, cultural and social agencies. The possibilities of artists being able to produce museums and museums being built for the permanent display of particular individual art works are also discussed.

Certain artists and their practice have been chosen because of the role they have played in reconfiguring the role of the museum space in the installation and reception of artwork. Such work takes into consideration the place (the architecture) in which the work comes to rest (develops) as an integral part of the work in question, and all the consequences such a link implies. The intentions of like-minded individuals such as U.S. minimalist, conceptual and earthwork artists De Maria, Mary Miss, and Donald Judd, as well as U.S. architect Frank Gehry and Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, demonstrate a greater understanding and awareness of the projects that have been and are being undertaken in relation to a museum context.

A further aim of this chapter is to explore how the museum as a site has shifted from a space where artists wanted to show work which in many instances became autonomous amongst all the other objects on display, to a place which, from the 1960s to the present, has become a site of exploration occupied by various visual, theoretical and intellectual activities. These activities have in turn yielded a far richer understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional
significance of the works presented and the ways in which they are conceived, presented and discussed.

Chapter Five, shows through projects and individuals, that the most important, successful areas are those which develop more ‘evolved museums’. These are museums that are concerned with permanent sites for the production of artwork, which also provide opportunities for like-minded individuals across disciplines to work together to produce projects. The aim is to present possible areas of investigation that could be undertaken through the collaboration of artists and architects in relation to the production of museums and exhibition spaces.

In Chapter Six, ‘Reinvigorating the Open Plane’, investigates public art and the location and placement of such work within an urban environment. The aim is to demonstrate the importance of artists who have undertaken work in the public sphere, and to emphasise the experimental nature of their practices within the public environment. The outcomes of projects undertaken entail ideas, concepts and production which are directed at an active audience.

The chapter also examines the practice of individuals who were working within a gallery system but who began moving into installation, earth and public art, such as Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko. Focus is also placed on public projects and artists from the U.S. such as Lawrence Weiner, Dennis Oppenheim, Judy Chicago and Walter de Maria. These individuals exemplify a methodology that moves outside the confines of the architectural framework of the museum to work directly with a natural environment, political, social, environmental, and cultural concerns which play an active role in their work and the space it inhabits.

The aim, through researching different working methods and reigning tenets from the 1960s to the present, is to create a concrete dialogue about our built environments and to show that within the public realm many varied disciplines come together. Thus it is feasible to consider that if public art is essentially artwork placed within an environment which is architectural, then artists and architects should be encouraged to work together in the development of projects.

Visual artists of varying backgrounds and perspectives are presented in this chapter because they are working in a manner that resembles political and social activity but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility. It is through these strategies that a new or alternative methodology may be presented which connects certain practitioners such as artists and architects. By bringing them
together, a distinct model is developed of an art whose public strategy of engagement is an important part of its aesthetic language.

In the end, the merit of a single and particular work in and of itself will not be the sole concern, but rather the aim is to envision a new form of society, encompassing shared projects in which others who are not artists, working in different manners and places, are invited to participate and collaborate with architects and artists. The chapter aims to produce an incorporated set of philosophies and working methodologies which aid in and contribute to a larger socio-cultural agenda within our built environments.

Chapter Seven, ‘I Was Not Made For These Times’, explores architectural concerns through individual as well as collaborative projects, and the articulation of space. The aim is to consider and explore how spatial articulation and the development of more conceptually based projects has become central in the development of architecture. By engaging historical issues and figures in architecture, consideration is given to the spaces that architecture constructs and the critical references of architecture to social, political, economic and cultural concerns.

In this chapter the aim is to demonstrate that as certain architects and participants from other disciplines have continually evaluated the architectural discourse through projects, they have been able to raise questions relating to the nature of space itself. The discussion takes into consideration the place (the site and architecture) in which a work comes to rest (develops), and the integral parts of such work, which question both spatial design and felt response.

A further aim of the chapter is to encourage the production and conceptualisation of varying spaces through the collaboration or involvement of artists within the design and construction process. To show that the architectural concerns of enclosing and delegating space are similar to those of minimal artwork and practices; thus new methodologies and projects could arise from more interaction between the two disciplines, as they share starting points of production and conceptualisation. The 1960s and 1970s period of visual art is archetypal for the melding of architectural and artistic concerns by U.S. artists such as Judd, Dan Flavin, Turrell and Matta-Clark.
The goal for Chapter Seven is to demonstrate that professionals from various communities and countries could, would and should be given more opportunities to produce architecture in varying locations.

Chapter Eight, ‘No Man’s Land’, investigates interdisciplinary activity and the act of collaboration. The chapter explores the collaborative relationships between artists and architects, demonstrating that they have similar disciplinary activities that lie within both private and public space. The focus of the chapter is to give broader definitions and outlines, and then define them by the works that have been produced in relation to collaborative projects.

Within the collaborative paradigm certain individuals are discussed independently, as through their personal methodologies they have produced important areas of research for the collaboration of art and architecture. In setting up the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas, U.S. minimalist sculptor Donald Judd has created a framework and place for an ongoing dialogue about art and architecture. A place where ideas concerning art and architecture are combined facilitates a blurring of both disciplines and allows a freedom in conferring methodologies. Specific projects by Gehry and Herzog and De Meuron are also discussed, as these architects acknowledge influences from artists they know and work with, either through collaborative involvement or through friendship and association. Also, the collaboration of Melbourne contemporary artist Stephen Bram and Melbourne architect James Brearly is studied.

The goal for the chapter is to present two working methodologies that occur in the collaboration of art and architecture. The first is the way art is often set within the environment of building or the topography of place; the second is work which combines both place and work, establishing an immediate point of reference. For artwork to be completely synthesised with its setting or space, it must become (or the artist must become) a principal designer or developer of that space. In such cases there should be no difference between the architecture and the artwork— or more between importantly between what is decoration and what is essential.

The ultimate aim in this chapter is to show that even though the distance between the oeuvres of artists and architects may seem apparent, there is common ground which they share. Through projects where individuals are invited to work equally with each other, within either an architectural or artistic framework, a level of healthy activity can be achieved. Such collaborations enable individuals to pose questions and challenges for other disciplines, at the
same time resolving problems within their own discourse. As a result artists, in particular, should be invited to participate more readily in the design and construction of spaces, whether on a conceptual or physical level. Instead of our urban environments being considered a space in which artists and architects rarely work together, such as ‘a waste land’ or ‘no man’s land’, the thesis aims to show the positive paradigms which result from individuals being given opportunities to work collaboratively. Such opportunities would lead to more diverse and positive artwork and architecture, but would also serve to integrate the two more successfully, allowing a complete synthesis between the artwork and the architecture.

The research operates through a lineage of working strategies, starting at painting and gradually working through disciplines that have succeeded traditional models of production. The areas of focus, such as sculpture, installation art and site-specificity, public art, museum practices and architecture, through development and invention within each subject, demonstrate that an ongoing site of exchange, interrogation and investigation has occurred from the 1960s to the present through the collaboration of artistic and architectural concerns. The aim is to not propose who is right and who is wrong, but to rather demonstrate that the context of a work is an essential part of that work; thus if the work is to become more synthesised with our urban environments, artists must be given greater opportunity to construct the spaces that house the work.

For the past forty years, artists of varying backgrounds and perspectives have been working in a manner that involves and engagement with political, social and private spaces. These individuals have developed distinct models for an art whose public strategies of engagement are an important part of its aesthetic language. The source of these artworks structure, is not exclusively visual or political information, but rather an internal necessity of the artists in conceptualising the work in relation to its site, audience and temporality.
Chapter One

Literature Review

Nicolas Calas. Art & Strategy, Artsmagazine, Vol.43, No.5, March 1969

'What else is “strategy” as meant by Coplans but a substitute for the romantic notion that art is for art’s sake?'

If strategy were to become the criterion for appraising macrostructure (the variations, within and between series), the work would have to be calculated much the same way players calculate moves in a game of chess. By implication, art would no longer be viewed as a language whose rules are invented as we go along, but as a game whose moves we make in accordance to the situation confronting us. But the artists of the 1960s had all conceptual frameworks that were planned out from the start. The investigation of what the minimalist were doing, was focused around the new materials and new ways of representation, that they were undertaking. Firstly within a production and exhibiting system, but also in regards to the conceptual frameworks and possibilities of such work being able to be used in the inception of further fields of disciplines.

At the start these concerns may not have been so prevalent however, as time went on they of course began to look into different avenues, for example U.S. minimalist Donald Judd shifting towards a total architecture, with his furniture and building designs, restoration and redesign of Marfa, Texas. The relationships between site, volume and environment, become a central focus for U.S. earthwork artist Robert Smithson and as a result he shifted his practice from inside the gallery into the more immediate landscape for the siting of his earthworks. U.S. installation and earthwork artist James Turrell had also amalgamated his practice within a more immediate response to and production of space, for example Roden Crater, Arizona desert and the creation of the viewing platform.

Calas believed that ‘what these artists at the beginning were looking at was the actual idea of the object as volume, the object and at once autonomous of its site but at the same time aware of its
placement.' It is through their ongoing dialogue within the work but also the relationship that work had to both its environment and also other discourses such as architecture.


'To attempt to endow a decade with a style of its own is a game we can all play but if we are to do more than exercise our native prejudice we must base our views on some objective foundation.'


Heath raises the issue that does art have to be exhibited, preferably in a museum to endorse its credentials as art and later perhaps in some private commercial gallery? The relationship between the museum and the avant-garde dealer has been a close one in every capitalist country in recent years. However wasn’t the idea of earth art of the 1970s trying to beat an economic and political gallery / exhibition system. The idea that such systems were based in shallow economic substance, rather than the continued development and investigation of the artist who were on their own personal quest or vision regardless of any accolades or groupings. Maybe Donald Judd going to Marfa, Texas can be seen as a way of moving his practice forward. Or, more importantly, such spaces allow a more active engagement with work, which may not be able to be built in a gallery or city.

Heath believes that obviously certain accolades come with financial gain whether minimal or maximum and this in turn frees up an individual to consider grander plans or more established projects. But surely these would have been plans, which would have been inevitably attempted just at a later date. When a movement comes along everything gets swept up in the hysteria including those people/work, which may have needed time to develop.

Donald Judd's use of commonplace subject matter (the focus on material qualities); its use of painterly means (the optical description of appearance); its use of spontaneity (the elevation of the sketch to high art); its use of serial order (the syndrome of a painting a day) can be taken not simply as the formal means for providing an expressive experience, but regarded instead as the necessary components of a 'felt state of mind', intuited as a self supporting world view. Art in any media boiled down to what it does in the experiencing of it, creates itself through relations, proportions. The quality of art depends on inspired felt relations or proportions than on anything else.

'A simple unadorned box can succeed as art by virtue of these things, and when it fails as art it is not because it is a plain box, but because its proportions or even its size are uninspired, unfelt.'


The words 'reductive' or 'minimal', are rather insulting in their implication of a final result that is less in quality than some earlier original. U.S. minimalist Robert Morris points out: 'Simplicity of shape does not necessarily equate with simplicity of experience.' Lippard prefers the word 'rejective' when discussing minimal art of the 1960s, which implies a process of elimination but not attrition or 'economy' – settling for less because it's cheaper esthetically or practically. The minimalist, it could be said, rather arrogantly rejected almost all the tenets of both painterly and 'post-painterly' abstraction, rather than paying them the compliment of reaction. It is however important to note that most of the Structurists (minimalists) were originally painters, and this can be seen as a natural shift the away from the illusionism of painting to a more direct engagement with space. Since most of the artists themselves are vehemently against interpretive readings of their work (and such readings would seem virtually impossible anyway), and since these artists include such articulate figures as ex-critic Don Judd, occasional writers Robert Morris, Dan Flavin and Robert Smithson, casual poets Carl Andre and Will Insley, it is necessary to view these artists in regards to what methodologies they were undertaking and the processes they were working within.
In the 1960s and 1970s the artists began to shift the boundaries in regards more importance being paid to what they wanted. The artists have had, for once a considerable amount to say about the way their work is annotated. The primary structure (a term intended far more strictly and cohesively than it has been used) does seem to have sprung more full-blown from the brows of its creators than is usually the case with contemporary art. This issue concerned mainly Judd and Morris since they were the first to exhibit such work – and was dismissed more lightly than it should have been. From this people were able to see the diversity of minimalism and look for new directions in their methodologies. From this practitioners such as U.S. sculptor David Smith and his minimal sculptures such as Die began to be presented. Also working within an absolutely structural idiom was U.S. minimal artist and architect Tony Smith, and his work was virtually unknown except for those who saw the ‘Black, White and Gray’ exhibition in Hartford, Connecticut, U.S. (1964). Also theorists such as McLuhan, Robbe Grillet, Wittgenstein, Beckett, Fuller, Borges and others provided fine points of departure for philosophising on the subject. The distance of all these figures from the field of art criticism was important and necessary, if minimalism was to be taken as literally as intended.

Group shows at the Finch College Museum, Park Place and A.M. Sachs, in 1966 (Donlad Judd, Sol LeWitt, Robert Smithson) and one-man shows by Sol LeWitt, Will Insley, Carl Andre, and John McCracken, shed further light on the subject – the Finch exhibition in particular was important because its theme was Art in Process, and its participants were largely Structuralists in inclination: Richard Artschwager, Dan Flavin, Paul Frazier, Donald Judd, Will Insley, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, and Robert Smithson. Through a heightened level of sensibly and being modestly installed, enabled the exhibition to have coherence and kept it from being just another group show of the period.


Large-scale object sculpture has abdicated the objective of art, which is the ambition for new structure in the most extended sense. Such an aim lies on the other side of either superficial newness for its own sake, or the permutation of desiccated modernist ideas. An important corollary to this issue is that certain types of art cannot be examined in isolation; indeed all art gains by being considered part of social, economic, political, literary, and geographic systems.
Without knowing where it comes from the work doesn’t necessarily know the concepts and intentions of the work. What is of concern in the work of the 1960s and 1970s as stated by Hobbs was the similar concerns and content which many practitioners had undertaken which produce similar styles of work.

It is interesting to note that the mutual interests which art and architecture do have, that it hasn’t crossed into a more commercial success. More commercial success is needed in regards to both artists and architects working together consistently on projects, instead of the usual one-off situation. The Donald Judd Foundation, Marfa, Texas, has every two years held a symposium on the issues of ‘Art and Architecture’ and ‘Art and Landscape’. The symposiums are attempting to bring together people whose concerns cross boundaries into other fields of inquiry, as well as the current work they are producing.

One can see in viewing art history that scholars may see through the function of cataloguing and describing an object, that it does not constitute knowing the object. History can be viewed as a believable fiction and the approximate truth; that art history can be creative and, in-fact, must be creative if it is to be intelligent; that one can only know art through a pacific context and through a particular interactive process that depends as much on the assumptions and limitations of the scholar as on the art considered. In the future, it is hoped, more interactive, relational studies will be made. Such studies will, of necessity, seek out new areas for investigation and turn into art certain peripheral works that have been regarded as more than engineering and less than art, such as aspects of city planning. This is discussed in the article ‘Robert Morris Keynote Address’ in, Earthworks: Land Reclamation as Sculpture. A Project of the King County Arts Commission (Seattle, Seattle Art Museum, 1979).


The De Stijl movement was first founded in 1917, and it has not been difficult to theoretically evaluate De Stijl aesthetics, or to relate the ideals of its members to their various achievements, after all it was a proselytising movement. Its members set out in the words of the first manifesto, to achieve ‘a balance between the universal and the individual’. Such a programme, involving
the practical achievement of a philosophical ideal, naturally required both justification and clarification. Every significant De Stijl gesture, whether in art, architecture or design, was explained and defended, either in the De Stijl magazine or in the numerous books and papers published by its protagonists. As such this should be viewed as a foundation from which further development within a synthesis of art and architecture can take place.


‘Coinciding with contemporary art, progressive industry is intensely concerned with reduction and abstraction.’

Meyer believes that abstraction no longer refers to reduction of form only, but to abstraction for its own sake. ‘Minimal artists did Minimal Art with non-minimal means.’ Using pliable instead of rigid materials, their oeuvres convey expressionism of sorts. At this stage of ‘relative minimalism’ one should beware of discrediting the awesome machine-made perfection of structural art as cold and ‘inhuman.’ It is precisely that flawless perfection which allows for omission of all unnecessary particulars reducing the object to its essence.

‘One tends to forget that idea is as human as emotion – and that the machine is but an extension of the human hand.’ Piet Mondrian

Minimalists displaced the authority of object-hood with less obvious and dramatic means than those espoused by either Destructionists or Funk Minimalists. Seminal figures in the field such as Dan Flavin’s light works destroyed the object’s objective boundaries, Sol LeWitt’s 3-D drawings outlined the gestalt of the non-existent object and Toni Smith’s *Die* caused the object to crumble under the weight of its own gestalt. The multiple sub-units of Carl Andre’s prefabricated modules usurped the authority of the total gestalt, and as early as 1962 U.S. painter Ellsworth Kelly and David Lee dealt with the possibilities of the divided object. Minimal Art is the only art form with object, which allows for immediate recognition, and radical abstraction in painting like much Minimal Art, favours introspection and contemplation.


The exhibition can be viewed as a ‘Production of Space.’ The exhibition can be categorized as a coming together of artists, architects, musicians and film-makers, and the intentions of the exhibition were to go beyond these categories and bring together different sensibilities and preoccupations, not in order to create false relationships between them, but as Goldberg states ‘to hold the ideas up to one another, as from a distance’, such as the exhibition series *Constructed Colour*, in Sydney 2002. In both exhibitions space became the common denominator after careful consideration of how this ‘concept’ was felt.

In architecture, recent discussions have been using as critical reference social, politico-economic and semi logical yardsticks. Space, after all is an inherent architectural principle, has however been reduced to a product of such discourses. Yet attempts are being made to question the nature of space itself, and it is an aim of such projects to make this work public architecture. In art, the lengthy debate on conceptual art seldom-included specific reference to the perception of space. ‘Art without Space’, ‘anything that exists has a certain space around it; even an idea exists within a certain space’ quoted by U.S. conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner. ‘Maybe we are just dealing with a space that is different from the space that one experiences when confronting a traditional object’ stated by U.S. artist Robert Barry, who went on to state ‘I use the word space in two specific senses; one, as an interest or subject matter of the work and, two.... the space as a condition for the awareness of the work.... by space I refer to the lack of space.’

‘You may not consider space an art material, but the fact that you are occupying a certain amount of space in a pure physical sense means that you are dealing with space whether you want to or not.’ Lawrence Weiner

The references are to recent work of selected artists only, and not to architecture. For such a comparative exercise would necessitate a lengthy analysis of the ways in which space has been considered in architecture. For example Oskar Schlemmer, working as a painter and theatre director at the Bauhaus, Weimar, Germany, during the twenties, theory and practice reflected a
puritan ethic. The essential investigation of his paintings, as in his theatrical experiments, was that of space: his paintings delineated the visual and two-dimensional elements of space. In his writings he clearly describes paintings as theoretical research.


Krauss believes that each art act in its turn is accounted for insofar as it deepens the logic of a particular formal convention, or as it supplants one convention with another, or as it attempts to transgress the notion of convention altogether. No matter what the stance of a given art toward or the acts that preceded it, the description of its meaning is generally entrenched within the hermetic logic of paternity. Of the sets of aesthetic that make up the history of modern art, as 'meaning in the present becomes a coefficient of the past; explanation is circumscribed by the profile of a historicist model.'


Minimal art of the mid-through late 1960s would seem to refer to the gallery's interior cube as the ultimate contextual frame of reference for the work. This reference was only compositional; in place of an internal compositional reading, the art's formal structure would appear in relation to the gallery's interior architectural structure. That the work was equated to the architectural container tended to literalise it. Neutral and objectively factual - that is, simply as material. The gallery functioned, literally as part of the art. The specific functional architectural elements of the gallery's interior prescribed meaning and determined specific readings for the art defined within its architectural frame, for example Dan Flavin's fluorescent light installations.

A gallery space is meant to appear neutral, the lighting, which creates this neutrality as much as the white walls, and at the same time is used to highlight and focus attention on the artwork on the wall or floor, is kept inconspicuous. Flavin's installations make use of this double functioning (inside and outside the gallery/art context). Flavin's arrangements of light fixtures in
a gallery depend contextually for significance upon the function of the gallery, and the socially determined architectural use of electric lighting. The architectural frame of the exhibition space functions only in situ and upon completion of the exhibition cease to function artistically. They take on meaning by being placed in relation to other works of art or specific architectural features in an exhibition space.

The Marfa, Texas site and its permanent works, are an important area of investigation as it focuses on the siting of a work within a particular environment, such as Flavin’s installation. Such a foundation enables work such as Flavin’s to have a total integration with the architectural space of the Marfa Buildings but also with the peripheral environment it is positioned within. Flavin’s lights radically disturb the other art’s functioning, for it is then unable to rely on the neutral white ground of the gallery walls. The effect is both constructivist and expressionist.

Just as art is internalised within society, the architecture, which displays it, is defined by the needs of society at large, and by art as an institutional internal need. Art as an institution produces ideological meanings and positions that regulate and contain the subjective experiences of the people placed inside its boundaries. Daniel Buren’s work and writing focus on the specific architectural/cultural function of the gallery in producing art’s institutional meaning. All institutional space provides a background having the function of inversely defining what it places in the foreground. The art gallery is an aristocratic relative of this conventional white cube. Its major task is to place the art object, and the spectator’s focused consciousness of it, at eye-level within the interior, and, in so doing, to conceal from the spectator any awareness of its own presence and function.

The Modern Movement in architecture is the history of two conflicting conceptions of the role of the architect. On one hand, the architect is seen as an engineer, on the other, as an artist. Functionalism, from the Russian Constructivists through Le Corbusier, culminating in the Bauhaus School of Walter Gropius, can be seen as a method of resolving this conflict as well as the contradictions between two bourgeois value systems: humanism and technological operational. The solution, as envisaged by the Bauhaus, lay in subjecting the architectural work and men’s needs to a “scientific” analysis in order to produce a functional system. Man’s needs were seen as social needs and were to be incorporated into a unified (total) formal (esthetic) program. An abstract language composed ‘scientifically’, like the basic elements of physics,
would be used to produce a materialist architecture built from a language of elemental, ideal forms.

‘Art/architecture was to be constructed of democratic, open modular units (in opposition to totalitarian blocks).’ Art/architecture, as pure technology, came to be identified with the earlier notion of ‘art for art’s sake’ as the Bauhaus architects saw the function of their architecture as the creation of a language of ‘it’s’ own. Architect Mies van der Rohe wanted to eliminate the distinction and contradiction between outside and inside, and so glass and steel are utilised as ‘pure’ materials, for the sake of their materiality. They read from inside out, making evident their functional construction, and the function of the building is expressed in terms of the structural.

The social function of building is subsumed into its formal disclosure of its technical, material and formal (self) construction. Van der Rohe’s buildings, through their transparency, incorporate the environment they are located within. Glass gives the viewer the illusion that what is seen is seen exactly as it is. Through it one sees the technical workings of the company and the technical engineering of the building’s structure. Its architectural façade gives the impression of absolute openness. In attempting to eliminate the disparity between the façade (which conventionally mediates its relation to the outside environment) and its private, institutional function, this type of architecture appears to eliminate the distinction between outer form and inner function.

The public building projects by U.S. conceptual artist Vito Acconci, and his projects for the restructuring or design of urban environments, and in particular the proposal for the redesign of the Twin Towers in New York city, which ironically enough was to rebuild them, was to effectively open the building up to the outside environment. Acconci’s redesign of the Twin Towers was to effectively blowholes through the building. That way the inside was out and the outside was in. There would be a total integration between the public space of the outside and the private space of the inside. The façade of the building was designed to confine and isolate the interior space of the building from the outside. This distinction allows the interior to function autonomously from any outside distraction. Yet Acconci’s have opened up the building to new uses. Reconfiguring and redesigning the existing functionality, the building integrates its external environment within itself.

The use of technology or technocratic bureaucracy by large corporations or governments is to try and impart their particular version of order upon society. They try to build bigger grander buildings to show off their great wealth. So architects are employed to build, within a notion of
grandeur. Are most of these buildings considered grand? Usually grand when applied to a building has a cultural or historical significance. In our ever-changing urban environments, buildings are erected and dismantled in the same manner as we change our clothes, which is one of constant shifts. So what you get is a fragmentation of styles concepts and techniques. So the question must be how is any building considered grand if its only significance is that for showing off wealth? Functionalist architecture and minimal art have in common an underlying belief in the Kantian notion of artistic form as a perceptual/mental ‘thing in itself,’ which presumes that art objects are the only category of objects ‘not for use’ objects in which the spectator takes pleasure without interest.

Minimal art and post-Bauhaus architecture also compare in their abstract materialism and their formally reductive methodology. They share a belief in ‘objective’ form and in an internal self-articulation of the formal structure in apparent isolation from symbolic (and representational) codes of meaning. Both minimal art and Functionalist architecture deny connotative, social meanings and the context of other, surrounding art or architecture. By the end of the war, three Bauhaus architects, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and Breuer, had immigrated to the United States and established themselves as influential teachers in large university architecture departments. They trained a new generation of American architects in ‘International Style’ of architecture. Mies’ classicism was based on an apparent trueness to materials (materials being seen for what they were, instead of disguised by the use of ornamentation) wedded to an idealised, ‘universal’ and highly abstract, notion of space. Used as an overseas branch office, the International Style building functions ‘ideologically as a neutral and objectified rationale for U.S. export capitalism, although it would like to be taken as merely an abstract (not symbolic) form.’

‘The American artists of the sixties and seventies have reproduced this pattern, becoming the cultural engineers of “International art”.’ Dan Graham

‘Revolutionary’ art is identified for historical reasons, with the Russian Constructivist period and the work of Russian artists and architects after the Revolution, being recontextualised to focus on real conditions and needs at the time; architects wished to purge personally symbolic (aristocratic – ‘art for art’s sake’) elements from the architectural language to functionalise and socialise the means of artistic/architectural production, such as the work of El Lissitzky.

‘American artists of a new young generation seems aimed at denying the emotionalism predecessors and glorifying the minimum – or pure nothingness.’

In 1913, Kasimir Malevich, placed a black square on a white ground, (which he identified as the ‘void’), created the first Suprematist composition. A year later, Marcel Duchamp exhibited as an original work of art a standard metal bottle-rack which he called a ‘readymade’. For half a century, these two works marked the limits of visual art. For, although superficially Malevich and Duchamp may appear to represent the polarities of twentieth-century art – that is, on one hand, the search for the transcendent, universal, absolute and on the other, the blanket denial of the existence of absolute values, this is incorrect as everything must have some form of value. Even when an object is conceived as not having a value it actually has a value by being devoid of one.

Rose believed that the concept of ‘minimal art’, which was applicable to the empty, repetitious, uninflccted art of many young painters, sculptors, dancers and composer’s working in 1960s, however essentially minimalism was more a name for the objects such as sculpture, than any type of collaborate movement. Painting was dealing with its own ideals of reduction and geometric abstraction.

Minimal art can be viewed as being as an inferior art form devoid of meaning, and that the resistance to a minimal form of artwork comes mainly from the spectator’s sense that the artist has not worked hard enough or put enough effort into his art. But, as Professor Wollheim points out, ‘a decision can represent work’. Considering as ‘minimal art’, art made from common objects that are not unique but mass-produced or art that is not much differentiated from ordinary things, he states that Western artists have aided us to focus on specific objects by setting them apart as the ‘unique possessors of certain general characteristics.’ Differentiating the art object as much as possible from the world of common objects was a way of insuring the uniqueness and identity of an art object, and its integration with its location. The space it makes for itself and the space made for it. Critic John Ashbery stated, ‘what matters is the artist’s will to discover, rather than the manual skills he may share with hundreds of other artists. Anybody could have discovered America, but only Columbus did.’
That the artist is critic not only of his own work but of art in general and specifically of art of the immediate past is one of the tenets of formalist criticism, the context in which U.S. critics and theorists Michael Fried and Clement Greenberg have considered reductive tendencies of modern art. Sensibility is developed when everything is eliminated. At first (young) we are like a sponge, open to everything. But as you develop you begin to pare down what is important. As you pare down, a small amount of detail becomes more concentrated and developed.

The content of a work, if we are to take the work at face value, should be nothing more than the total of the series of assertions that it is this or that shape and takes up so much space and is painted such a color and made of such a material. Statements from the artists involved are frequently couched in these equally factual, matter-of-fact descriptive terms; the work is described but not interpreted. Often, because they appear to belong to the category of ordinary objects rather than art objects, these works look altogether devoid of art content. Instead they turned to the static emptiness of Barnett Newman’s eloquent chromatic abstractions or to the sharp visual punning of Jasper John’s object-like flags and targets.

For the spectator, this is often all very bewildering. In the face of so much nothing, he is still experiencing something, and usually a rather unhappy something at that. Perhaps, what one senses is that, as opposed to the florid baroque fullness of the angst-ridden older generation, the hollow, barreness of the void has a certain poignant, if strangled, expressiveness. These were recapitulations of Malevich’s Black Square on White (or Ellsworth Kelly’s 1952 pair of a white square on black and black square on white). It was nearly impossible to pin down a specific image or sensation, except for the reaction that they weren’t quite what they seemed to be. That they had to be something more than what they were. So rather than guess at intentions or look for meanings, the intention is to try to surround the new sensibility, not to pinpoint it. As T.E. Hulme put it, ‘the problem is to keep from discussing the new art with a vocabulary derived from the old position’.

U.S. minimalists Carl Andre, Robert Morris and Dan Flavin have all used standard units interchangeably. The influence on such work can be seen to be from Russian constructivism and in particularly to Alexander Rodchenko. For the painters and sculptors who are being discussed here, they are aware not only of the cycle of styles but of levels of meaning, of influences of movements and of critical judgments. If the art they make is vacant or vacuous, it is intentionally so. The apparent simplicity of these artists’ work was arrived at through a series of complicated
highly informed decisions, each involving the elimination of whatever was felt to be nonessential. In the case of Judd’s, Morris’s, Andre’s and Flavin’s pieces its seems to have more to do with setting up a measured, rhythmic beat in the work. A repeated motif may take on the character of a personal insignia. To find variety in repetition where only the nuance alters, seems more and more important to the interest of these artists, perhaps in reaction to the increasing uniformity of the environment and repetitiveness of a circumscribed experience. Andy Warhol’s Brillo boxes, silk-screen paintings of the same image repeated countless times and films in which people or things hardly move are illustrations of the kind of life situations many ordinary people will face or face already.


‘We can speak of the internal architecture of a painting, or of any other work of art.’

The architecture of the work, the way in which it is constructed from its frame, the canvas and what is expressed on it (or beneath it), has not ceased to distance the work further from the architecture/place in which the work becomes known. Modern Art (in particular) is the history, recounted and repeated, of the internal architecture of the work, seen simultaneously as content and container. However, ‘the work of art only exists, can only be seen, in the context of the Museum/Gallery surrounding it, the Museum/Gallery for which it was destined and to which however no special attention is paid.’

Every history must take into consideration the place (the architecture) in which a work comes to rest (develops) as an integral part of the work in question and all the consequences such a link implies. It is not a question of ornamenting (challenging and reinvestigating the given space) (disfiguring or embellishing) the place (the architecture) in which the work is installed, but of indicating as precisely as possible and vice versa, as soon as the latter is shown.

Buren raises issues about exhibiting and the force-fed art that is given to us. An empty museum or gallery means nothing, to the extent that is can at any time be transformed into a gym or a
bakers, without changing what will take place there or will be sold there, in terms of works of art in the future, since the social status will also have changed.

A work taking into consideration the place, in which it is shown/exhibited, cannot be moved elsewhere and will have to disappear at the end of its exhibition, (unless its concerns are taken in as exhibition when presenting it again. Exhibited more the second time as an idea that has past/coming rather than the real thing. Idea – Exhibition). The idea of disappearance through destruction opens a breach in the dominant artistic ideology, which wants a work to be immortal and therefore indestructible by definition, in any case in the environment and the museum as shelter.

‘Ideas go on forever, are continually developed, the great advantage of conceptual artists’.

The implication of the place of exhibition, as an integral part of the work, fragments the aforementioned work into as many occasions as there are places used, and depends if a type of installation is easily transferable or definable. Every place radically imbues (formally, architecturally, sociologically, politically) with its meaning the object (work/creation) shown there. Art in general refuses to be implied, or reject the draconian role imposed by the museum, a role both cultural and architectural.

It is much more a matter of showing what a work will imply immediately in a given place, and perhaps, and finally to the work, what the place will imply. The crises between the function of the museum (architecture) and that of art (visual object) will appear dialectically from the tension thus created. In fact, the freedom of a work under the pretext that it can be transported from environment to environment, from one exhibition to another, regardless of the architecture of the place in which it is displayed, presupposes either that the architecture is familiar, or that it is being deliberately ignored. To know the architecture without having seen it is to accept working a priori in the context of an aseptic and (so-called) neutral place, cubic, vertical walls, horizontal, white floors and ceiling. This architecture is the well-known kind, since it is more or less what is found in all the museums and galleries of the western world. A place architecturally adapted to the needs of the market implied and allowed by such a transportable commodity. And in both cases it is obviously a question of a setting that under the pretext of illuminating the subject (the work) in order, attempts to make it as autonomous as possible.
For those who wish to ignore the architectural context in which they exhibit, they are the ones who still believe that a work is self-sufficient, no matter what surrounds it and no matter what the conditions in which it is perceived. (Everything affects everything. Nothing is made up of one element. This is the case with practically all painting, which consoles itself in a debilitated 'en-soi.' However what about those artists who go beyond the frame? Such as Jan van der Ploeg (Netherlands) or Stephen Bram (Australia), as they have developed a methodology, which deals with both wall painting and canvas painting. To imply in the work the place where it is situated (whether internal or external) is to give the limits materially and visually, without leaving an escape route. It is also to bind oneself to a certain given reality, which the work if necessary will undertake to criticise, to emphasise, to contradict, in a word dispute dialectically. The sharpness of the comment will depend on the precision of the intervention.

The architecture in which the work of art is exhibited must be taken into account. Weight and Volume, Size and Context, all these things play a role when going up against a structure. The sheer weight/size of the building easily stares down upon the work. Unless you are Carl Andre and Richard Serra, whose practice in particular has made this constant shift between testing its own limits of materiality and the link of the space/structure. It is therefore certainly not a matter of carrying out a work of architecture. Nor is it a matter of choosing, an architecture to suit the point one wants to make. All architecture must be able to be used. It is not a problem of architecture on one side and a problem of art unknown to it on the other. Neither is it a question of art submitting to architecture, nor of architecture wedding art. It is a question of a relationship, where both parties are on trial concerning a fundamental difference with art, as it attempts to establish itself. The point of intersection – or point of rupture with modern art – between a work and its place (the place where it is seen), is situated 'somewhere else', outside the work and no longer entirely in the place, becomes an important foci for practitioners.

The problems set by architecture attempt to conceal themselves, in order to support (artificially) the triumph of a bourgeois art, which thus given value can assert itself 'freely', within the soft shelter which receives it. In the case of triumphant architecture (anti-neutral), and excellent example being the Guggenheim Museum in New York, subversion would consist of accentuating what is already in place and making any other situation inside the museum untenable, except the one chosen by the subversive work in question, such as Daniel Buren's striped work and the article 'Gurgles around the Guggenheim' Studio International, June 1971, pp.246 – 50. The Guggenheim museum is a perfect example of architecture, which although enveloping and
welcoming, in fact excludes what is exhibited there (normally) for the benefit of its own exhibition. Any work, venturing unconsciously into such 'envelopment' is irrevocably absorbed, swallowed up in the spirals and curves of this architecture.

By a so-called neutral architecture, the work turns up its nose at any external influence and attempts, despite everything, to attract the eye regardless of the context. The architectural frame always wins, rounding on those who ignore it (its so powerful that it can become to much to deal with) for example U.S. architect Frank Gehry's architectural constructions. Such architecture is damaging to art as it is, and by the same token very clearly reveals the limits of the so-called art incorporated within it. In so-called neutral architectural places, the non-neutral points/axes breaking the neutrality and generally never used for this reason, such as the windows, the doors, the narrow corridors, the air vents, the heating pipes, the light sources.

'When we say architecture, we include the social, political and economic context. Architecture of any sort is in fact the inevitable background, support and frame of any work.' Daniel Buren

There no longer exists architecture peculiar to the painting or to the work of art. The impossibility of conceiving a work, outside the place where it will be exhibited, can create a problem. Perhaps not only the actual exhibition room (where the goods are shown), but also the director's office (where the goods are sold), the storeroom (where the goods are discussed). Exhibiting has become multi faceted, and it is perhaps also the external architecture of the gallery, the staircase up to it, or the lift, the street leading to it, the area where it is situated, and the town. When we say architecture, we mean an urban place (inhabited or not), a cultural place.


'Move through the space, explore it in different ways. Feel it, look at it, and speak to it. Let the space do things to you: embrace you, hold you, move you, push you, lift you up, crush you, etc.'

The idea of establishing a series of physical relationships between the space of an indoor environment and plastic-visual experiments carried out in that environment, dates back several
centuries to the moment when the artist, having been allotted a certain space within a building decided to use it not merely as a ‘bed’ for his work, but as an integral part of it. In the terms of this analysis, including space as an integral part of the plastic-visual work does not mean partially ‘decorating’ the surfaces of volumes of a given environment with fresco, mosaic, painting or sculpture. It means taking on the space in its entirety, in order to give it structure or pick out its features by means of a plastic-visual modification. The works referred to are not of the type, which concentrate on a particular detail while ignoring the whole; on the contrary, they are consistent with the shape and structure of the overall space in question.

Celant points out that ‘inside the given space, a relationship between part and whole’, occurs. This means that we can disregard all fragmentary works, which can be seen in the sculpture of Donald Judd and Carl Andre. If we take only those cases where there is a two-way link between the space and the work of art, it will suffice to list those cases where the spatial, visual and volumetric themes of a given architecture ‘extend’ into the sphere of the work of art in question. Thus to the point where the latter appropriates these themes, distorts them and transforms them.

Wall paintings make a continuous covering of the walls and ceilings of the interiors, as there is total saturation of the given architectonic space – in terms of figures, colour and light. The artist’s work replaces the masonry, obliterates planes and the intersection of walls to produce a visual ‘field.’ Although these two works are the product of artists with different outlooks, different historical and artistic backgrounds, they are both clearly examples of the artist aiming at ‘transfiguring’ an environment by taking possession of the given space in its entirety. The aim is to integrate two-dimensional visual work with the spatial structure. Plastic forces applied to the structure of the interior environment give it movement in every direction. But sometimes the work goes beyond just making plastic art (work that is placed upon the architectural support). Instead the work is more importantly focused on creating an environment in which a dialogue can be exchanged between work-architecture-viewer.

Spatial articulation becomes the object of the artist who immerses himself in the space, treating it concretely like material to be molded. He puts it together and organises it, not only on a superficial and visual level, but also, in such a way that it affects the spectator’s own senses and movement. The result is something more than a mere projection of surfaces, homologous to the actual walls: it involves a real experience of the given field, with the plastic relationships
providing the environment with an extra dimension. This environment may be ‘molded’ in either an ordered or a disordered fashion.

To obtain an idea of how work in plastic form can absorb and enfold environmental structures, think of Michelangelo’s *Laurentian Library* and of Baroque interiors, with their volumetric protrusions and cavities which can create imaginary and distorted spaces. In these examples, of Aztec, Maya, Gothic and Rococo sculpture, the relationship with the surrounding space is one, which gives greater importance to movement and touch than to the eye.

The topological relationship between architecture and art may also depend on ritual or functional factors; it may be governed by a consideration of the geometric form of the space, or by a consideration of the effects of light and sound. The artist brings about a certain rearrangement of space and this is determined not only by technique (painting or sculpture) or dimension (surface or volume), but also by other elements which may be introduced, such as the sense of luminosity and spiritual evanescence to be experienced at Galla Placidia in Ravenna, or the feeling of suppressed energy discernible inside an Aztec temple or an Egyptian pyramid.


Battcock has stated that Marcuse in ‘anti-art’ has labelled those art works that have been created within the modern culture that best conform to the requirements for total revolutionary change. They are artistic endeavours that are so opposed to the mainstream of Western artistic tradition that they cannot be accommodated within the existing institutions are probably what Marcuse has in mind. – ‘Graffiti’ written (drawn, painted?) on the walls and streets of Paris during the May Rebellion in 1969 was ‘anti-art’ because it was entirely spontaneous and though visual and pictorial, was not conceived with any deliberate artistic intent. Art would, could and should be an integral factor in shaping the quality and the ‘appearance’ of things, in shaping the reality, the way of life.

‘The order and organization of class society, which have shaped the sensibility and the reason of man, have also shaped the freedom of the imagination.’ Gregory Battcock
These artists demand a reception that cannot easily be awarded them. Ultimately they are disruptive toward contemporary standards, and unacceptable to persons of ‘scholarship’ and ‘reason’. They are representative of those notions concerning the radicality of art proposed by some avant-garde artists today. Barbara Rose explains U.S. fluxus and composer John Cage’s aesthetic as follows: ‘For Cage...the radicality of art is defined not in terms of its form, but in terms of its disruptive function within a given social, political, economic or psychological framework.’

In order for a statement to be awarded the ‘anti-art’ label such a statement must, in some way, demand (require) a change in prevailing receptive capabilities. Warhol’s films can be considered “anti-art” because they do not accommodate themselves to the commercial structure and procedures for cinema in general yet they have titles similar to the titles of commercial films and they directly parody Hollywood productions in general. What this boils down to is that the artist today should not be concerned with any type of work that can be accommodated by commercial or technological institutions. The artist should not collaborate with industry but rather provoke it. After all, collaboration does not lead to the essential condition for freedom and that is, according to Marcuse. Could Richard Serra’s work be considered anti-art? Because hasn’t he provoked an outcome for the situation, by asking questions regarding the spatial poetics of the institution it sits in.

Marcuse states ‘Capitalist progress...not only reduces the environment of freedom, the “open space” of the humane existence, but the “longing”, the need for such an environment. In doing so, quantitative progress militates against qualitative change even if the institutional barriers against radical education and action are surmounted.’

Since ‘anti-art’ neither depends upon nor cares about any such traditional artistic concerns and ‘freedoms’ the liberal, intellectual class that used to defend such concerns will find itself with nothing to do – robbed of its only function with nothing to replace it. Marcuse speaks of ‘kept intellectuals’ and it is the sort described above that he refers to. The ‘kept intellectuals’ are housed today within the various liberal institutions that further and deliberately encourage intellectual ‘elitism’.

‘Anti-art’ objects are conveniently housed within the framework of existent cultural, educational and even industrial corporations. Some examples of art trends during the past decade that only
partially succumb to “anti-art” tendencies yet remain establishment art (or at least eventually become establishment art) include Pop Art, and its apparent social implications, ‘Junk’ and ‘Assemblage Art’ that discarded the word ‘find’ and offered instead (at least materially) and Minimal Art that rejected illusion and encouraged the factual and the real as opposed to the expressionistic. All these forms remained, more or less, acceptable as objects affording opportunity for genteel aesthetic speculation and confirmed, after a fashion, to acceptable standards of taste and just as importantly, to the mechanics of traditional art merchandising. One way or another could be accommodated by the Museums.

In *The Politics of Art, Part 2*, Barbara Rose points out that current ‘serial’ type art (modules, etc.) can be viewed as a metaphor for “...relationships in an ideally levelled, non-stratified democratic society.”

“...class structure and the perfected controls required sustaining it, generating needs, satisfactions and values which reproduce the servitude of the human existence.” Barbara Rose

“... radical transvaluation of values.” Barbara Rose

Numerous artists today have already rejected the commodity status of art. The ‘earth’ artists are an example. The ‘conceptual’ artists go even further and make it clear that we can no longer define art as a commodity or even a physical fact of any commercial value. The question is ‘if an artist/practitioner begins to sell work does he come to a point, where he or she negates his vision to accommodate the financial side of his work?’ Does he or she choose to make more of a career out of their practice rather than concentrating on the practice?


In 1986, Jan Hoet organized the *Chambres d’Amis* project (see Rudi Fuchs, ‘Chambres d’Amis’ Art Monthly 99, September 1986), at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent. The project and exhibition series focused on a debate about permanent and temporary works. What it did point out was the divide between practitioners wishing to define a practical and ideological base
for making and placing art beyond the gallery and the theoretical and entrepreneurial aspirations of curators involved in making art projects beyond the gallery. Temporary and permanent works needed to address the question of who constituted the ‘public’, issues of class, gender and race on the one hand, matters of corporate prestige and notions of the ‘monument’ on the other hand. What needs to be looked at is that artists and curators had equal responsibility in the field.


People tend to par down their work without truly understanding it, calling it minimal. In short, what is at stake in this trashing is history, in which minimalism is hardly a dead issue, least of all to those who would make it so. Foster believes that it is, however, a perjured one, for today the minimalist art of the 1960s ‘is issued as a foil-reductive, rule-bond, retardatiare-for the pluralistic, painterly art of the 1980s.’ In this way the different cultural politics of the minimalist 1960s and the expressionistic 1980s are misconstrued: for all its apparent freedoms, the latter participates in the cultural regressions of the Reagan era, while the former, restrictive though it may seem, opens up a whole new field of art, one that advanced art of the present continues to explore. Foster believes that the reception of minimalism must first be set in place, then a counter memory posed via a reading of its most important texts. This counter memory will next be used to define the dialectical involvements of minimalism with both (late) modernism and the (neo) avant-garde.


‘Is it a contextual shift, when photographs become a new work within themselves?’

At the edge of a broad, flat expanse of mesa top in southern Nevada is one of the main artworks of the past several decades. Barely perceptible until one approaches the scalloped lip of the mesa, Michael Heizer’s *Double Negative* is carved into the earth of the plateau itself. Two gigantic
excavated slashes face each other across the indented scarp, roughly paralleling the gorge by the Virgin River, which flows across the valley floor hundreds of feet below. The negative volumes are indeed monumental, displacing some 240,000 tons of earth, which have been pushed into a hollow between the cuts to form on the sloping cliffs a new positive, a rubble ledge.

Conceived and completed in 1969 and 1970, following a series of much smaller cuts in the ground (such as Isolated Mass/Circumflex, Dissipate, and other works from 1968 that Heizer collectively called ‘depressions’), Double Negative remains, even in its naturally decayed state, the ultimate heroic gesture, and its ideas were an influence on a subsequent generation of artists who work on site. While Heizer has denied that the piece was meant to involve the kind of site specificity so prominent in environmental works of the past fifteen years, any on-site experience of Double Negative demands that it be read in concert with its surrounds.

The unity implied by the two massive cuts is Double Negative’s most striking characteristic, but the otherwise uninflected acreage provides a matrix of references for the piece. Approached from the side, each cut reveals in its far wall the geological forces that created the mesa, the river valley, and the neighbouring mountains, recorded in stratified cross section. In turn, the landscape’s formations bear witness to the upheavals and the sedimentary processes unearthed in the trenches of Heizer’s art: the syncline exposed in the excavation bind his man-made cuts to the ancient mountain shapes across the valley. Heizer’s excavation underlines the most dominant sense of the place; the long horizontal of the mesa top frames and is echoed in his rectilinear chasms.


‘Non-figurative art brings to an end the ancient culture of art. The culture of particular form is approaching its end. The culture of determined relations has begun.’ Piet Mondrian (1937)

A methodology of determined relations can be seen as a process of moving or connecting with ideas and concepts. What can be discussed and researched is a methodology of ‘Determined Relations’ between work that may not necessarily be considered art or architecture, but in areas, which mels the two together. However obviously the essential problem is that economics play a
role within the integration and placement for this type of work. Galleries have to have artists who produce work, which is sellable. In turn museums only exhibit those individuals they deem to be the best representative of a chosen genre.

Peter Hill raises the issue that a main problem that most artists who are concerned with interdisciplinary activity aren’t concerned with the economics of the work outside of the means to have it created and placed within its appropriate site. While video, installation and non-conceptualism are having there ‘hour in the sun’ so to speak, at daybreak it will always be painting that has the following. However, the problem is more subtle than that, as it is the sensibility and the curiosity of the painter that has informed all of those new media. The centuries’ old art of dismantling the visual world and re-building it on a flat plain has produced a way of looking at the world and ‘doing things with it’ that now permeates all visual culture from web-design and video art to deconstructive sculpture and sound art, and it is often painters who have moved the chess piece most daringly. But it has been a two-way learning process. Painters have seen installation art and in a flash have seen a wealth of new possibility. They have escaped the myth and tyranny of the frame and they have emerged wearing the gallery like a new skin. The gallery can be seen now as a three dimensional field that can be physically experienced rather than the three-dimensional illusionism of past painting practices.

Hill’s *Short Circuit Long Circuit*, raises the issue that if painting concerned with interdisciplinary activity is clear in its conception, complex in its interaction of parts, then it can become a rare example of how new knowledge can arise collaboratively from individual studio investigation. All artists, architects, designers, directors and curators involved in such activity should be encouraged to undertake more initiatives. In the initial proposal of the *Painted Spaces* exhibition (2000), the project was originally centred on ‘the creation of a dialogue between the real time experience of the space and the pictorial space of the painting’. This of course is a positive theme, however further investigation in the act of collaboration and the subsequent results of such collaboration add a further dimension of originality to ongoing discussing.

‘Who will decide that painting abuts its neighbours? Or how will the panorama differ on each outing, for this mammoth series of art works is site responsive rather than site specific?’

If the final act of a wall painting can be seen as an architectural skin, then it is one that can be stretched into different shapes, methodologies and architectural facades, allowing a continual
engagement with each new project and environment. An example is the work of U.S. conceptual artist Sol LeWitt (and his band of helpers) who cover entire spaces of gallery's, museums and architectural environments with his designs, such as the top floor of the Musée d’art Modern de la Ville de Paris with his seductively subdued geometry.


‘Painted spaces: a collaborative wall project; the title is predicated on its sub-title. Walls make spaces. They do so most intensively when there surface are activated or added to in some way; painting, ornamenting or otherwise inscribing walls is a space producing activity.’

What you are receiving is the natural order or inclination to move beyond the frame and deal with the wall. The wall acts as a framework with its dimensions. If a framed painting is placed on the wall everything is self-contained within that frame. Even though it may be referencing space e.g. Yves Klein *YK79* or Ian Burns *Blue Premise* in which the painted surface reflexes the space. However the work only incorporates itself within the space by referencing. Depending on the angle and distance in which you view the picture plain, the reflection can be different. However this is all only secondary illusionism. It makes no difference what or where they are shown because there content is never changed. However a work that depends on the surface of the gallery wall has its content deeply imbedded in the architectural space. You can’t have one without the other. They are dependant on each other’s sympathy and support to co-exist and function.
Chapter Two

Stop Me From Falling Down:

Painting from the 1960s and the Expansion from the Canvas to the Architectonic Support

Artworks cannot be mounted randomly on the wall, but instead must be individually ‘fine-tuned’ to suit their surroundings in accordance with the artist’s specifications. This adjustment ensures that each work unites with its environment in its own specific and non-interchangeable way.\(^5\)

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the shift of painting and its depiction of spatial relationships from easel painting to work being produced directly in an architectonic field. The chapter focuses on the period from the 1960s and the geometric abstract artists of Europe and especially the U.S. Certain practitioners from the early twentieth century are discussed due to their influence on the 1960s, their work demonstrating an opening up of the gallery from a place to hang paintings on a wall to a site of spatial exploration through wall paintings and works which relate to the site.

Through the elimination of gesture and through a concrete working technique, painters have been able to develop concepts without being burdened with the weight of a particular style or with traditional painting problems such as composition and technique. Rather, they have been able to create work that developed a more physical approach to painting. The reduction of painting was essential in the development of structural components and conceptual intentions. Because of the visual link of geometric abstraction and monochrome paintings to architecture, it is only normal to think that painting and the artists involved within the subject would shift their focus of operation from the frame to the frame of the architectural site. U.S. minimalist Donald Judd stated, ‘not much can be done with an upright rectangular plane and an absence of space. Painting is almost always both flat and infinitely spatial’.\(^6\) A more active involvement with the space of the gallery has developed, not in the traditional isolation of a painting hanging on a wall but in the context of a place to develop two-dimensional spatial articulation on a

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three-dimensional canvas (the architecture). This has enabled painting and painters to readdress and develop traditional modes of representation from the Renaissance period of art, such as wall paintings. In doing so the space for painting has opened out: the field of activity is not limited within the frame but is a diverse and changing built environment.

In art history new methodologies parallel new art movements. By becoming more integrated with its environment, painting now represents an ability to conceptualise broader concerns within the frame of a two-dimensional space. In many ways painting can be seen to be a blueprint for broader conceptual concerns inherent within the plane of the canvas as well within as the extended space of the gallery or room. Painting’s validity does not lie in a crisis about the dominance of abstraction or representation or ‘mere’ decoration, but rather is about the necessity of painting as an art form to be continually redeveloped through the expansion of its concerns from two dimensions to three. Different artistic approaches are emerging independently, with many practitioners using video and installation artwork methodologies to express individual concerns. However, painting has continued to be a highly developmental practice through the re-investigation of historical movements such as Abstract Expressionism and Geometric Abstraction. This has created a situation in which issues such as the origins, the artistic, social and political meaning and the role of abstract painting are becoming more and more pressing, and painting has become a vehicle by which others can see an emphases on the re-investigation of spatial manipulation. Installation art has opened out the traditional aims of painting within a set frame, with painters now expanding their work within a broader architectonic frame, such as Dutch artist Jan van der Ploeg’s Grip (1997 to current), (figs.2 & 3). Paintings have developed from being executed on canvas to now being wall works, installed in museums, private galleries and private residencies.
The real question involves a personal expression of what is painting’s function now that we enter the twenty-first century. It is specifically a game of questioning, and contained within it is the implication of the very act of art making and the question, ‘whose problem are you trying to solve?’ It is not an issue as to how logically correct any solution to a problem might be, rather it is an issue as to whether or not the problems you are working with are relevant to painting. Artists and, in particular, painters need continually to ask themselves: are we asking ourselves the right questions, and in doing so are we answering those questions posed?

The practitioners chosen within this chapter have been selected on the basis that they have continually reevaluated the developmental nature of their practice and have participated in the expansion of painting into a more immediate architectonic realm. The act of painting has unique problems within it that relate to the concrete reality of a painting as a thing, such as spatial demarcation and visual representation. The act of painting is intimately involved with the perceptual sharing of a sustained state of seeing. The painting itself is the visual place of that state of being. The perceptual identity of painting at its radical source does not stand for some other place, it is not a metaphor, a sign of, or symbolic of something else. The painting is the place, and we know we have arrived at that place when it appears that nothing is taking place but the place itself. The French theorist Yves-Alain Bois, who understood this area of painting as a ‘technical model’, expressed this idea as a model for some other structure. This gives meaning to abstract painting because it is intellectually usable as a metaphoric tool with which we can understand something else. The inception of abstraction painting into the broader concerns of an architectonic support enables that chosen support to be reinvented, and at the same enables painting to become a three-dimensional model rather than a two-dimensional illusionist practice. The centuries-old art of dismantling the visual world and rebuilding it on a flat plane has produced a way of looking at the world and ‘doing things with it’ that permeates all visual culture from Web design and video art to de-constructive sculpture and sound art. It is often painters who have shifted the context of their work most noticeably. However, it has been a learning process, as painters have seen installation art and perceived a wealth of new possibilities. They have escaped the myth and tyranny of the frame and they have emerged wearing the gallery like a new skin.

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Russian Movements and The Architectural Space

Translating the sensations of three-dimensional space into two-dimensional equivalents, painting has always been representational in content and context, which can be found from fourteenth century fresco wall paintings to the implied spatial constructs of U.S. abstract expressionist movement of the 1950s and the work of Willem De Kooning and Franz Kline. Perhaps this dependence on representation occurred because painting was considered too personal for large wall spaces and the easel-painting artist was more involved in the painting and the ends within it. However, there have been awakenings among certain painters to the demands made upon them by integrating their practice into the urban environment and the new architecture.

Fig.4

The movement beyond the frame into the architectural space can be seen initially within the work of Russian constructivist El Lissitzsky. In Proun Room (1923), (fig.4), Lissitzsky moved away from the context of staying within the confines of the painting and made the entire space of the gallery his canvas. Thus, 'proun is the station where you change from painting to architecture'. Lissitzsky's exhibition designs transformed the neutral, white-walled gallery, or 'white-cube' (so described by U.S. artist and art critic Brian O'Doherty) developed by Modernist architects in the 1920s into an interactive environment. In his Abstract Cabinet (1927–28), the walls of the exhibition space at the Landesmuseum in Hannover were lined with vertical wooden slats painted black, white and grey, and they shifted in tone as the viewer walked past. Abstract paintings were also hung on movable racks that the viewer altered in order to select what would be seen. Forty years later in the 1960s, U.S. minimalist artists would create similar dynamic and embodied viewing experiences.

The blankness, the emptiness and vacuum of content within both geometric abstraction and monochromatic paintings can be easily construed as an occasion for spiritual contemplation, as it is a nihilistic denial of the world. Yet while the confusion of such work may look alike that does not necessarily mean that the work has the same content or conceptual framework. Rather, a specific cause and effect relationship exists between influences of the past and artists from the 1960s. Reducing the painted field down to one or two simple elements allows the artist and the viewer to ‘define the distinction between subject matter or meaning on the one hand, and form on the other’.9 ‘The forms of art are always pre-formed and premeditated. The creative process is always an academic routine and sacred procedure. Everything is prescribed and proscribed’,10 and only in this way is there no grasping or clinging to anything other than the concerns of the work. Painting is thus able to deal with broader concerns rather than traditional values of creativity, technique, skill and composition.

The reduction of this field is illustrated by the work of the Russian constructivist painter, Kasimir Malevich, who developed the principle of Non-Objectivity. His painting Black Square (1915) (fig.5), was of the traditional constructivist theory, in that the intention was to create works that consisted of purely abstract shapes using only primary colours, black and white. In doing this Malevich realised that he was able to develop a greater understanding of spatial relationships to an object within a field. Reducing painting to its bare elements also allowed a greater understanding and development of those concerns which were more important, as Malevich noted, ‘the energy is all in the idea, we feel. The idea to project nothing but black squareness’.11

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In his manuscript *Die Gegenstandlose Kunst – The Objectless Art* (officially translated: The Nonobjective Art), Malevich stated, ‘When in 1913, in my desperate attempt to liberate art from the useless burden of the object, I sought refuge in the form of the square, and exhibited a picture that represented nothing but a black square on a white ground, the critics did not like it, nor did the public. The perfect square seemed to both critic and public something incomprehensible and menacing.’\(^{12}\) *Black Square (1915)*, was first exhibited in 1915, in a show called *Last Futurist Exhibition 0.10 (Zero-Ten)*, with nine other artists participating, all advocating the new principle of Non-Objectivity. Spread all over the walls in an irregular formation, three or four deep, nearly all the paintings are configurations of squares with other elementary geometric shapes – diagonal bars, circles, semicircles, triangles, all floating in a white space. For some, the new movement was a vile desecration and the *Black Square* and another monochromatic work, *White on White (1917)*, represented the destruction of everything, as it represented the ‘zero-degree’ of painting. It summed up everything and it had all meanings covered within its frame. It was the height of art as the best it could do.

This theme was summed up by another Russian constructivist Alexander Rodchenko, who wanted to rid painting of illusionism or reference of any kind, in an effort to align his art with the materialist values of the new communist culture in Russia. Rodchenko declared that ‘the three primary colours are declared. Painting is dead, as I have made the last painting’,\(^ {13}\) referring to his triptych *Pure Colours: Red, Yellow, and Blue (1921)*, (fig.6).

![Fig.6](image1)

![Fig.7](image2)

This work was shown in the exhibition 5 x 5 = 25 *1921* in Moscow, alongside works by other Russian artists Varvara Stepanova, Alexander Vesnin, Liubov Popova and Alexandra Exter. All the works were painterly constructions which were concerned with space-volume, colour-

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surface, enclosed space construction and space-force, and all ‘the given constructions were pictorial and should be considered simply as a series of preparatory experiments towards materialized constructions’\(^4\). Such work demonstrated criticism of the idealism and illusionism of easel painting and instead was more concerned in a process of art making associated with labour. Thus artists were exhorted by Rodchenko, ‘the artist must become a technician; that he must learn to use the tools and materials of modern production in order to offer his energies directly for the benefit of the Proletariat. The artist-engineer must build harmony in life itself, transforming work into art, and art into work’\(^5\). This can be seen in the U.S. minimalist sculptures and objects of the 1960s, whose adherents such as Judd, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre and Dan Flavin relied on industrial technology for the production of their works. The constructivists’ use of materials for their innate properties, rather than to refer to something else (such as the carving of marble to make it resemble drapery), its depersonalising of artistic procedure through the use of industrial production and its activation of the beholder were central concerns of minimalism as well.

The Russian constructivists explored the premises of faktura (facture), a revelation of an object’s literal materiality, and Konstrucktsia (Construction), an organisation dedicated to function and the physical nature of the chosen materials. The Russian painters’ canvases exemplified these notions, with thickly applied all-over surface highlighting the painting’s objectness, while the monochromatic colours exemplified the work’s structure, showing a transition from painting to the production of objects, and from artistic pursuits to practical applications.\(^6\) It was an art revolution, because it enabled painting to function as just painting. It enabled painting to look inward towards its content and conceptual concerns, and in doing so was able not only to question the idea of what is it to paint, but also to raise issues about the importance of representation and spatial invention.

The Russian constructivists can be seen to open up their production from painting to more site-specific spatial constructions. These focused on the shift for the viewer of having an active participation with the work within the space, rather than a passive experience of the object on the wall with the viewer occupying a certain amount of space within the gallery. Constructivist art voided the work of affect and uniqueness with its machine-made appearance. The fact that the

\(^4\) Gray, op. cit., p.251.

\(^5\) Ibid, p.246.

work required one to physically activate it in order to complete it was not aimed to inspire aesthetic admiration, but rather a more physical, interactive response. Russian artist Vladimir Tatlin sought this effect in his *Complex Corner Relief (1915)*, a metal construction suspended from wires that projected into the gallery space, creating an awareness of the actual corner of the room, the presence of the work in three dimensions and the body of the viewer standing before it. Another work of Tatlin’s was the *Monument to the Third International (1921)*, (fig.7), consisting of a tower of rotating structures. Rodchenko’s *Hanging Constructions (1920 –21)* were physically activated by the presence of the viewer. Suspended from the ceiling, where they were subject to the slightest breeze, these delicate works moved in synchrony with one’s movement.\(^\text{17}\)

**Take It on Board to be Redeveloped**

At the current time painting is redeveloping and re-contextualising its position within a world of hybrid experiences. The real question is ‘are we in a good position any more to understand exactly what the ideas of the De Stijl, Russian Constructivists or the Bauhaus were about?’ Are we too distanced from the age in which these practitioners lived, as their cultural horizons are not our horizons? The answer would be both yes and no. Obviously, by viewing past history one is able to accept things that have worked and leave behind those that have not. By producing such work we are now adding to a style or practice, as a form of mimicry. This has a 1980s association of appropriating, which can be also seen in the U.S. pop art movement of the 1960s. It represents a reflection of the position of abstraction in history, in the sense that one can no longer be the originator of a style, but can only endlessly merge with the ambit of abstraction itself, shifting between origin and influence, between silence and communication.

Historically, Non-Objective art is an optimistic, forward-looking art. The forms are geometric because they are more democratic. Simplified geometric compositions engender a positive paradigm. Even though the visual content of the picture plane was reduced to a bare minimum, the aesthetic or conceptual concerns were still inherent or more focused, because there was less to look at and what was left could be considered more deeply. The positiveness which can be seen to come out of the early twentieth century work of the Bauhaus, De Stijl and Russian

\(^{17}\) Meyer, J., op. cit., p.19.
constructivists is that their most basic premise was the structuring of cultural life through the integration of visual artists, architects, writers and poets.

One senses an opposition to the florid baroque fullness of the angst-ridden older generation of painting such as that of the U.S. abstract expressionists Jackson Pollock, De Kooning, Arshile Gorky or Philip Guston. Thus the hollow and the barrenness of the void have a certain poignant expressiveness. Within it, certain artists looked to redevelop themes and ideas which had been formed before, with recapitulations such as of Malevich's *Black Square on White* (1915) in U.S. geometric abstractionist Ellsworth Kelly’s 1952 pair of paintings of a white square on black and black square on white. Even though it is nearly impossible to pin down a specific image or sensation, except for the reaction that they are not what they seem to be, such work, in the face of so much nothing, shows the relevance of theory through differing periods of activity. Rather than guess at intentions or look for meanings, one needs to try to pinpoint the new sensibility or new work and its relevance to its environment, not to the environment of an historical work. As the U.S. art critic T. E. Hulme has pointed out, 'the problem is to keep from discussing the new art with a vocabulary derived from the old position'.

The content, then, if we are to take the work at face value, should be nothing more than the total of the series of assertions that it is this or that shape that takes up so much space and it is painted such a colour and made out of such a material.

The U.S. geometric painting abstractionists Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella seemed to reach what looked like a definitive conclusion in the minimal art of the late 1960s, with Noland’s target works *An Half* (1969), (fig.8) and Stella’s shaped canvases *Express of India* (1965), (fig.9). The careers of established minimal painters such the American Robert Ryman continued through the late 60s and into the 70s without any change of style to mark the change of a decade. Two other U.S. artists working in much the same vein, both as it happens older than Ryman, attracted attention rather later. They were Milton Resnick and David Budd. In these, as in Ryman, one finds a fanatical concentration, not on anything recognizable as design or composition, but on an evenly exquisite surface. Each work is autonomous within its own needs yet can be viewed as just one piece of an extended working proposition, and as such, 'the canvases, invite concentrated meditation'.

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18 Rose, op. cit., p.62.
Shapes and Architectural Experiments

One can see a correlation in the move away from the flat surface of the canvas to that of more extended architectural experiments. The work of U.S. geometric abstractionists such as Noland and Stella, who worked with simple shapes and large colour areas, recalls precedents for structuring a field with this kind of rudimentary geometrical division which existed in the work of U.S. modernist painter Barnett Newman, *Onement I (1948)*, (fig.10). Judd followed Stella’s paintings, moving towards the direct use of facts as abstract entities in order to liberate art from associative responses. This can be regarded as having effected a significant shift in our understanding of abstract form in relation to ‘felt consciousness’. ‘Felt consciousness’ is the way in which a work is installed in a particular space and the way it reacts to and is inherent within, that place.
The most interesting and original aspect of minimal painting during the 1970s was linked to the search for what has been labeled 'object quality' – that is, it sprang from the desire to make the work an independent entity, added to a universe of other such entities. By the middle of the 1960s, the leading post-painterly abstractionist, Stella, had already begun to put great emphasis on the edge of the canvas as opposed to its centre. He made paintings with a void in the middle, so that the whole painted area became a frame for something which wasn’t there; he also experimented in other ways with shaped canvases. Stella’s black paintings Luis Miguel Dominguin (1960), and Portrait Series (1963), (fig.11), were a suggestion of new possibilities with geometry. Thus by trying to make painting just surface, without any idea of purity of materials and colour, he was able to steadily eliminate spatial illusionism. As Stella stated, ‘both vertically and horizontally, by altering the parameters within each successive series’, the paintings were structured deductively so that all internal differentiations of their surfaces derived from the literal aspects of the canvas edge. The structure of the canvas is what controls the nature of the work. Thus the work is non-illusionist, as it is a flat object, unlike most paintings that deal with illusionism and the nature of pictorial sensibilities and invention. Serra’s paintings are left to be what they are. Reverberating inward from the shape of the support, they thereby seem even more nakedly dependent upon the literal features of that support. It seems easy enough to say this, and if you add the effect of the surface that is flashed continuously with the sign of its edge, the painting will purge itself of illusionist space and achieve flatness. That flatness is the flatness of an object – of a non-linguistic thing.

The logic of the deductive structure is therefore shown to be inseparable from the logic of the sign. Both seem to sponsor one another and in doing so, ask the viewer to grasp the natural history of pictorial language. The real achievement of these paintings is not only that they are fully immersed in meaning, but that they have made meaning itself a function of the surface – of the external, the public, or a space that is in no way a signifier of the priority or of the privacy of intention. The meaning of Stella’s expurgation of illusionism is unintelligible apart from a will to lodge all meanings within the (semiologic) conventions of a public space that artists use (such as museum, and private gallery spaces). To expose illusionist space as a model of privacy – of the self-conceived as constituted prior to its contact with the space of the world.21

Kelly’s Hard Edge

The implications of a hard edge style are seen in the work of Kelly, whose first single-panel, single-colour paintings date from 1952-53. Kelly’s paintings of the 1960s are made of one of two bright colours applied to the canvas as uninflected fields. The flatness of these works is so extreme that the surrounding wall reads as a ground. More important, the colour extends to the edge of the plane, defining that plane. If two colours cover the surface of the painting, a division in the panel marks a butting along the seam. Colour is declared to be coextensive with its support. Similarly, because plane and colour are fused, the function of line in delimiting shape is subsumed within the larger enterprise of pictorial construction.

Fig. 12

Fig. 13

The reductions of Kelly’s paintings, then, created complex relations. In regard to those paintings and to the extension of painting beyond the frame, it is important that the paintings have been re-contextualised into sculptures and site-specific pieces, such as Blue Red Rocker (1963), (fig.12), Curve 1 (1973), Four panels (1989) and White Curve Vevey (1990), (fig.13). Kelly noted that feature in his site-specific wall piece Sculpture For a Large Wall (1957), which consisted of multi-panelled lines of coloured aluminium that completed an immense mural of juxtaposed panels showing arbitrary combinations and interchangeable units. By extending his practice outside the frame of the canvas, Kelly was able through his site-specific use of steel and steel reinforced concrete structures to create a new form and a new space to work upon. Our new environments need new resolved work to be integrated with them, as Kelly noted, ‘the monochrome buildings demand an image on a large scale – powerful statements that are very much alive’.22

Is There No Room for Personal Traces Here?

This displacement of personal aspirations in 1960s art was developed in two ways: by eliminating the physical 'traces' of the artist, and by serial repetition and systems. This elaboration of extended series provides a dominant 1960s thematic in painting. The best example can be seen to be the group B.M.P.T, consisting of French artists Daniel Buren (vertical stripes), Niele Torini (rectangular brushstrokes repeated the same distance apart), Michel Parmentier (horizontal stripes) and Swiss-French painter Olivier Mosset (single centralised black circle on white foreground), who have consistently shown the same type of work for most of their careers, moving in and outside of the frame to work directly with the space or public environment. The only change within the group has been by Mosset, who can be considered a geometric abstractionist, as his practice has moved between monochromatic and geometric abstract painting. The remaining members of the group have all continued to develop the same working methodology which they first displayed together as a group, in Manifestation No.1 (1967), Salon de la Jeune Peinture, Paris.

English artist and writer Mathew Collins, in his book This is Modern art (1998), believes that 'one artist in the history of art making a white square is not so annoying for many people. They draw the line, though, at more than one doing it. They think repetition in art is bad enough, because artists should be original and always think up new things'. Yet repeating nothingness or a set methodology through an extensive period of investigation and production allows originality to be created. The reason is that the process of repeating or doing something over a long period of time allows an extensive understanding of the issues inherent within the work to be developed and thus new foci that may never have been considered can be now examined and developed. This can be seen in the work of both Buren and Torini.

Fig.14

Fig.15

23 Collins, op. cit., p.143.
Through an ongoing dialogue with a set format of working, both Buren and Torini have been able to develop their practice within many different environments and spaces while still maintaining a set methodology. This is evident in works such as Buren’s *Photo-Souvenirs: Points De Vue Ou Le Corridorscope* (1983), (fig.14), *Photo-Souvenirs: Les Deux Plateaux* (1985-86), and Torini’s *Le Coin du Miroir, Dijon* (1983), (fig.15), *Bundesplatz 4 (en collaboration avec les architectes de l’Atelier 5) Berne* (1981) and *Reperes Martigny* (1986). Such serialization can also be seen in the work of U.S. conceptual artist On Kawara, with his date paintings, which are painted dates of the days the paintings are executed. Serialization can be seen to have a certain historical logic. One important source is the late work of French Impressionist painter Claude Monet who, with his paintings of haystacks and cathedrals, first began to explore the idea of variation on a given pictorial theme. Monet can be seen as a forerunner of serialization, leading into modern serialization by Swiss concrete artist Josef Albers and his square paintings *Homage to The Square: Light Tenor II* (1961).

Minimal painting, though usually called avant-garde, is, in terms of the historical context, deeply conservative. Not only does some of it cater to the nostalgia felt by many urban intellectuals for what is simple and ‘natural’ (in this respect it can even be traced back to the tradition founded by Monet and his repetition of haystack paintings of the late nineteenth century), but also it seems to establish intellectual superiority, while at the same time not disturbing existing institutional structures – the way in which artworks are classified, looked after and presented to the public. Even the controversies aroused by minimal art-works are controversies about the nature of art. They do not spill over into the political and social arena, and seldom threaten either museum funds or museum careers.  

‘To seize, in passing, the variations in aspect, which the same scene assumes at different moments, and to fix them on the canvas with precision, is an extremely delicate operation’, and to point out one particular aspect is to award it an inherent value. In doing so one must make sure that this value is not viewed as a site of decoration, because such work is not about that, but a rather a reworking of conceptual investigations. Painting of this kind necessitates the pursuit of a total whole, and one of the most difficult tasks in criticism is to descriptively consider the components of a work of art without usurping its unity. ‘The masterpiece concept is abandoned. Consequently each work within the series is of equal value; it is part of a whole; its qualities are

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24 Lucie-Smith, op. cit., p.20.
significantly more emphatic when seen in the context than when seen in isolation." Serial imagery is treated as a continuum, having neither a first nor a last element. This implies a macrostructure with variables such as rhythmic variations of shapes and intervals, combinations of verticals with horizontal and diagonal directions. Such working methodology could be seen in the *Serial Painting* exhibition at Pasadena Art Museum, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, in 1969, comprising U.S. painters Ad Reinhardt, Morris Louis, Noland, Kelly, Stella and Larry Bell.\(^\text{27}\)

A mistake made once is a mistake. A mistake made over and over again will ultimately comprise a body of work. If something is made as a one-off then it is embedded within its own autonomous reasons. An artist is always looking for the slightest reason to make another work, and an artist with something to say is always saying the same thing, from one work to another. Each new work, even as it changes in size or shape, even when the colors or materials change, is the same work, as if it had been developed from each work that came before. Each act in its turn is accounted for insofar as it deepens the logic of a particular formal convention, or as it supplants one convention with another, or it attempts to transgress the notion of convention.

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**From Ceiling to Floor: The Expansion of Painting into Environments**

In 1949-50 numbers of painters, from U.S. Abstract Expressionists Jackson Pollock to Newman and Italian Lucio Fontana to French conceptual artist Yves Klein, expanded their practice and painting by reaching from ceiling to floor to create an ‘environmental painting’. In doing so they can be seen as developing painting beyond the boundaries of its frame into the built environment through extended spatial demarcations. The work was influenced by constructivist theories, as each shape, object and colour was adapted to the whole, allowing the painting to take a more physical role in its environment.

If one considers that Pollock’s work remained at the level of intention, with Fontana’s work we arrive at the real construction of ‘spatial environments.’ In 1949, inside a room with the walls, ceiling and floor painted completely black, he traced in fluorescent paint a series of points similar to the holes in his canvas. While Fontana and Pollock were aiming at the construction of

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\(^{27}\) Ibid.
their own space and action-time, this line of experimentation was rejected by Klein, when, in 1958, he presented his Void at the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris, declaring, ‘I burst into monochrome space, into the all, into the incommensurable pictorial sensibility’. Obviously, between Fontana’s spatial environments and Klein’s void, there is an oscillation between a totality that is lived and a totality that is thought or immaterial. The former accepts the concrete quality of its gesture, and makes it into an ‘object’ and luminous ‘trace,’ while the latter, aspiring to ‘transcend itself,’ tries to reach ‘cosmic regression.’ The examples of object-space that have been mentioned do not seem to distinguish between the outside world and the inner world. The artist’s subjective experience of the world is at the same time shared and private, and therefore the object-environments are developed as both collective and personal fantasies.

The act of describing a geometric field has enabled painters to develop methodologies outside of the frame and to deal directly with an expanded field of research because, as noted by Judd, there is ‘no way to further the unity between the shape of the canvas and its internal element(s)’. Therefore the logical choice is to end one’s association with the canvas and to move beyond the frame and deal directly with architecture.

Wall painting often makes a continuous covering of the walls and ceilings. This is total saturation of the architectonic space, in terms of figures, colour and light. The artist’s work replaces the masonry, obliterating planes and the intersection of walls to produce a visual field. Although works are the product of artists with different outlooks and different historical and artistic backgrounds, wall works can be seen as examples of the artist aiming to transfigure an environment by taking possession of the space provided in its entirety. The aim is to integrate two-dimensional visual work with the spatial structure. ‘Plastic forces applied to the structure of the interior environment give it movement in every direction’, but the work goes beyond just making plastic art (work that is placed upon the architectural support).

Walls make spaces, and they do so most intensively when their surface is activated or added to in some way through painting, ornamenting or otherwise inscribing. Walls in this sense are space-producing entities. The natural order or inclination is to move beyond the frame and deal with the wall. The wall acts as a framework with its dimensions. If a painting is placed on the wall,

there is a demarcation of a set amount of space, as everything is self-contained within the frame. Even though the painting may be referencing space, for example Klein's *IKB 79* (1959), or Australian conceptual artist Ian Burn's *Blue Premise* (1967), in which the painted surface reflexes the space, the work incorporates itself within the space only by referencing. Depending on the angle and distance from which one views the picture plane, the reflection can be different. However, that is only secondary illusionism. It makes no difference what paintings they are, or where they are shown because the content is never changed within the painting. In contrast, a work that depends on the surface of the gallery wall has its content deeply imbedded in the architectural space, because one cannot have one without the other. They are dependent on each other's sympathy and support to co-exist and function.

The space which walls create may be religious. For example, consider the patina of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, affected by breath, touch and tears, and the innumerable prayers written on folded paper wedged in its gaps. Or the iconostases screens, illustrating painted ranks of saints and angels in a Russian Orthodox Church. They may be political, as with Italian artist Ambrogio Lorenzatti’s good and bad Government frescoes in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, or anti-republican graffiti on an end wall in Belfast. Mexican artist Joseph Maria Jujol's neo-baroque gilded wall decoration in the Casa Negre and German Modernist architect from the Bauhaus Mies van der Rohe's richly veined marble walls in his *Barcelona Pavilion* (1929) create luxurious and sensuous aesthetic space. Painted Kowhaiwhai rafters and Tukutuku woven panels in Maori meetinghouses in New Zealand construct complex mythic spaces through their narration of ancestral lineage and cosmological integration, where formal thought and cultural modalities vary. Thus in one sense these different spaces are all social spaces. As a cultural form, walls are always more inherently social in their implications than easel paintings and more unavoidably communal in their functions and effects.31

Painting on walls is a foundational cultural activity, is primal in a physical sense. To map something of this significance of the painted wall one must look beyond its revival in contemporary art practice. Gottfried Semper, the nineteenth century German architect and theorist, through his consideration of the role of wall painting regarded the skin or covering layer of architecture as its essential attribute. It is not its material framework, its trabeated structure, its density, nor its resistance to gravity that Semper saw as the foundation of architecture, but rather

31 Schneede, op. cit., p.15.
its ornament, as adorned and embellished surface. Even architecture's role in providing protection from the elements is not primary, as 'real interior space is not created by enclosing walls but through the language of decoration that plays across these walls and turns them into signifying surface'.

It is clear that wall works, and the practitioners who undertake them, are in their conception, complex interaction of their parts. The invitation of the artist to work directly on a wall allows an opening up of the architectural support through the work's inversion of the wall as not just object but value-added construct.

Originally, wall works centre on 'the creation of a dialogue between the real time experience of the space and the pictorial space of the painting'. This of course is true. However, through ongoing development, the act of collaboration between artist and artist and between artist and architect results in the addition of a further dimension to originality. Thus the work is site-responsive rather than site-specific. This is evident in the project by LeWitt, who covered the entire circular gallery on the top floor of the *Musee d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris* with his seductively subdued geometric wall works. The exhibition *Painted Spaces*, which consisted of a collaboration between artists and architects on wall related works, appeared to be a stepping stone forward for the advancement of painting to be fully integrated within its site. The enormous difference that each of the artists layered into the overall project of painted spaces was highlighted in a quote by English art critic Bryan Robertson, writing in 1971 on the opposing binary spatial relationships evidenced in the works of Swiss geometric abstractionist Victor Vasarely and English op painter, Bridgett Riley.

Vasarely confines his use of space to the picture plane: whatever obtrudes from that plane or recedes into it is implied by perspective within that picture plane. Riley's true space is not confined to the picture plain: it is the distance between the spectator and the canvas.

Yet the exhibition represented a traditional role of art as a decorative function for architecture, and implied that painting, or art for that matter, must be sympathetic towards the project's needs and not try to challenge the architect's vision.

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34 Ibid.
The Synthesis of Painting and Architecture

A project which can be viewed as the most successful motion towards a complete synthesis of painting and architecture, is Austrian artist Heinrich Dunst’s proposal for an installation at the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna in 1997. Dunst’s project investigated the notion of painting to ‘rid itself of its delimiting and protective frame and enter into relations, to the walls, and to relate to the room or to its constituent elements’. The proposal consisted of dissecting a painting into parameters of colour, frame, support, body, appearance and boundary. By using the space of the gallery and walls there was no longer a unity of a single painting but rather a total environment. These considerations were based on the experience that ‘the open painting forms in their reciprocal dynamics and in their delimiting nature reveal a complex relationship of representation and readability’, and integrate the viewer present within the room in this process. Within this work the idea of the form is replaced by a system of relationships that are developed by the culmination of the different components. Not only is the relationship of wall to painting inverted, but also the relationship of configuration to configuration.

The influential U.S. formalist Clement Greenberg stated in 1947 that ‘American painters should remain detached from current political and social issues. They should remain autonomous. They should become separated from the work’. In such work outside influence did not penetrate its meanings. Such work was separate from its site. One way of transforming meaning from the frame to the architectural site was through the investigation of space. For someone like German artist Oskar Schlemmer, working as a painter and theatre director at the State Bauhaus, Wiemar, Germany during the 1920s, theory and practice reflected a complete synthesis of both concerns. The essential investigation of his paintings, as in his theatrical experiments, was that of space, his paintings delineating the visual and two-dimensional elements of space. In his writings he clearly described paintings as theoretical research. Schlemmer’s ideas were similar in each subsequent work. The difference is the field in which the work takes place. The field is opened up. A room, a building, a canvas or a street were all possible avenues for advancement and mediation, where investigation could take place. This is also evident in the site-specific pieces by Buren, who produced striped canvases that imply rhetoric on the idea of the public and private

36 Ibid.
spaces. By opposing the two, inside and outside, the gallery with its specialized audience becomes a symbol of private, exclusive territory.

Buren’s work neutralizes any additional reading for the work, allowing it to refer back to its architectural positioning and to help render the architecture’s/art’s assumptions and functions more apparent. This can be seen in the piece *Within and Beyond the Frame (1973)*, (figs.16 and 17), where the work consisted of 18 striped canvases hung in one straight line, nine inside the gallery and nine outside the gallery over the street. The work took up the properties of the relationship between the building’s façade, the street, and the gallery space as well as the canvas’s space within each picture, facilitating integration of all four elements. The work also raised the question of the host spaces, those of the gallery and the street. The work was no longer art or non-art; it was integrated within its intrinsic environment and was thus able to shift context from art piece inside the gallery to de facto flags on the outside.

*Within and Beyond the Frame*

In connection with the place where the work is installed, we can speak of the internal architecture of a painting, or of any other work of art. This architecture of the work is the way in which it is constructed from its frame, the canvas and what is expressed on it (or beneath it). It continually addresses and distances itself further from the architecture/place in which the work
becomes known. Modern art (in particular) is the history, recounted and repeated, of the internal architecture of the work, seen simultaneously as content and container. However, 'the work of art only exists, can only be seen, in the context of the museum/gallery surrounding it, the museum/gallery for which it was destined and to which however no special attention is paid'.

There are those who wish to ignore the architectural context in which they exhibit, who still believe that a work is self-sufficient, no matter what surrounds it and no matter in what conditions it is perceived. However, everything affects everything and as a result nothing is made up of just one element, but many which come together to form a whole. Wall works allow the work to make very specific, exactly defined, but extremely differing demands on its qualities. When the relations of a painting are extended to the room and thus into the third dimension in an experimental process, isolated elements of the painting are shifted into the room, and therefore, explicitly make it a constituent part of the work. The painting's function no longer remains within the painting, but rather the dimensional form structures the relationship of one to the other. Shifting painting into the architecture or the space facilitates, through intuitive or lyrical settings, the development of a new reading of spaces, which are in many ways set in concrete in terms of their construction and meaning. Through the intervention and investigation of a marked-off space a breakthrough occurs in the understanding of that particular site.

The 'white-cube' of the gallery space is the origin for many paintings and subsequent wall works, but also the target of their critique. Although traditionally designed galleries are created around the function of showing work on walls, the most effective method could be through the invention of temporary walls or even the construction of temporary spaces. This would enable artists to branch out and investigate more actively the spaces that are built and inhabited. The advantage of wall works or wall paintings is that they can be fully integrated with their setting.

When the surface of a painting is looked at, it is just that: a surface. It is not a metaphor for a body or a space within the picture, but an object within a world of other objects. Stella stated that within his black and white shaped canvases from the 1960s, 'what you see is what you see'.

The reinvention of abstract painting into an architectonic field facilitates a sense of building or construction, in that re-addressing the historical interpretation and representation of geometric

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painting has provided painting with a foundation to build on. Considering painting in spatial concepts related to architectural concerns and terms enables painting to be opened up, allowing a greater opportunity of development, because when painting is thought about in strictly design terms, it becomes flat once more, dealing only with two-dimensional spatial organisation. This can be seen in the shift in context from the painting being dependent on the wall, as in German artist Gunther Forg’s wall work *Wall Partition (1986-93)*, (fig.18), to the painting dictating the delegation of space within a particular room or environment, as in Kelly’s *Yellow Curve (1990)*, (fig.19), or *Project for Westfalisches Landesmuseum (1992).*

Creating an environment through painting enables the painting to surround the spectator in the same way that architecture binds. This encourages an increased physical participation or immediate sensory reaction to the work of art or environment, in that the work ‘demands that the observer get physically involved’;40 allowing a greater understanding of the work but also of the architectural support upon which the work is dependent. This dichotomy between itself and the architectural environment allows painting to be continually re-evaluated and readjusted, depending on its environment. Every place impinges formally, architecturally, sociologically and politically upon the art object and the individual entering that space. So to reveal its limits and its role within such environments, painting has been able through wall works to emphasise what the work implies immediately in a given place, and what that place implies in the work. This creates a positive paradigm between the function of the architecture (space) and that of art (wall painting). In both cases it is a question of a setting in which, under the pretext of illuminating the subject (work) in order to make it as autonomous as possible, the work and the architecture become intriguingly linked.

The theoretical discourse on abstract painting and its expansion from the frame and support of the canvas to the frame of the architectural support is an attempt to link painting to a positive developmental practice. The fact that artists work directly with wall works does not imply a radical break with the representational use of painting. It is simply a different strategy along the same conceptual shore or intention of their practice. The art makers represented, although working within an architectural environment, still have their practices imbedded within their initial intentions and concerns as painters. Shifting their concerns or, more importantly, undertaking a positive engagement with their environment facilitates a more developed understanding of the meaning of the work in relation to its own concerns and also to the social, cultural and environmental space with which it collaborates in regard to its inception. This enables our built environments to become more highly evolved, through a constant reworking of spaces, places and theoretical undertakings.
Chapter Three

Objects, Subjects and Contexts:
Towards a Specific Object for a Specific Place, Space and Time.

Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colours.\footnote{Brehm, Margrit, *Minimal, Maximum: Minimal Art and its influence on International Art of the 1990s*, Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen, 1990, p.290.}

The aim of this chapter is to explore how sculpture evolved from the support of the pedestal or plinth to deal directly with space, and the representation and presentation of such work. The artists and artworks explored have developed a critical shift in the arrangement of sculpture since the 1960s. Within this shift, certain practitioners have continually redeveloped and negotiated a particular space, and through the co-existence of works of art and site-specificity, new experiences of sensory perception have taken place. The shifting of art from an autonomous object hanging on the wall or placed onto a plinth to something located directly on the floor has allowed the establishment of a permanent work in space and time. In this chapter the minimalist movement of the 1960s is the predominant focus, as it provides the best examples of works which were able to develop the organisation of space in and around the art object.

Since the 1960s the adjective ‘minimalist’ has been pulled and stretched to cover such a wide range of sculpture and painting (and other art forms) that it has lost whatever limits it may have once had. Almost any geometric, austere, monochromatic looking work can be viewed as being concerned with and linked to minimalism. Conversely, anything labelled minimal will automatically be thought of as being austere, geometric and monochromatic, and such work is regularly viewed as negative because of its uncompromising appearance. The grouping of individuals under a common name, such as minimalism, homogenises bodies of work that might be only superficially alike, but simultaneously detaches that work from other material that may only be superficially different. In this chapter the shift of certain artists and their willingness to
explore and develop work beyond the production of an object as sculpture, towards a more architectonic space, is explored. These artists have been able to re-contextualise their approach towards object making and the internal relationships of the work through the production of space and environments.

Within the development that occurred in the 1960s of artists formulating and creating specific objects for specific spaces, this chapter explores the proposition that three-dimensionality is not simply about being a container for painting and sculpture, but it concerns an object that integrates itself within the building that contains it and ultimately becomes a part of that particular site. 'A shape, a volume, a colour, a surface is something itself. It should not be concealed as a part of a fairly different world';\(^{42}\) rather it is a participant in the organisation and re-evaluation of our space. In this chapter the aim is to show that through the production of spatial and site-specific objects, invention and investigations can be made towards our built environment. This allows visual arts the opportunity to be integrated within a broader environment such as architecture and design, rather than being confined to the traditional role of display within a museum or private gallery context.

The works of certain practitioners from the 1960s, in particular U.S. minimalist artists Robert Morris and Donald Judd, feature strongly in this chapter because they are the best examples of work which is received in terms of their affiliation with the structure in which they were exhibited. Their work utilised 'the space of the room by forcing the spectator to take it into consideration'.\(^{43}\) Apart from these two artists, there is exploration of the way that other art makers redeveloped the production of sculptural objects to an extent where their common aims and objectives were to accept and use the walls and floor of a given room, architectural facility or space. It is demonstrated that sculptural forms and exhibition space, instead of being introverted and isolated from each other, were linked in the production of the object and the space it inhabited. Such artists, their work and subsequent exhibitions and instalments defined a particular space, making spectators acutely aware of their space and of the relationship between the space of the sculptural object, the viewer and the building. Even though many of the intentions if the artists discussed may not have been to create architectural sculpture, the effectiveness of this sculpture in transforming the space around it seems to be a major


achievement in moving sculpture away from the burdening factor of the plinth. This has allowed a direct relationship to occur between the artwork and the architectural space. In turn this has allowed certain practitioners to contextualise their work in the outside environment or in permanent installation.

It is not necessary for a work to have many elements to look at, to compare, to analyse one by one, and to contemplate. The work as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting, as ‘the shape, image, colour and surface are single, not partial and scattered’. These ‘specific objects’ are hence highly concrete in regards to their inception, function, production and experimental nature. As three-dimensional objects frequently owning their own space, they penetrate real space. That is the space of either the gallery, the museum, or the plaza which they share with the viewer, presenting a challenge by the simple fact of being there and being as they are. The minimalist sculpture implies that through the physical movement that is needed to take in all its different sides, the space around it is activated due to its relativity. The work exists and is experienced as a form, and the space can be experienced as a whole. The work as an object-like body with different sides that realise each other as they are perceived, containing an eloquence all of its own, as ‘the thing as a whole, its quality as a whole, is what is interesting’. Walls and floors become part of the viewer’s experience of externally oriented work.

Minimal artists made minimal art with non-minimal means, using pliable instead of rigid materials, their oeuvres conveying expressionism of sorts. One should beware of discrediting the awesome machine-made perfection of structural art as cold and inhuman. It is precisely that flawless perfection which allows omission of all unnecessary particulars to reduce the object to its essence. Minimalist sculpture seeks a complex lack of complexity, a monumentality without parts as a ‘natural’ selection of forms. From the didactic side of minimalism we can learn a great deal about the problems of shape, colour and scale. From its unconscious or conscious affinity with architecture and the environment, we learn of an exceptional desire for a consanguinity of art and architecture, of architecture and nature, a desire that is not only social, but also ultimately moral. The point of minimalism was not to copy the past but rather to develop critical ideas of representation and spatial construction. The studies were based on the idea that a simple order,

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44 Brehm, op. cit., p.290.
applied to a complex situation, would make the complexity more easily understandable. As Max Bill, the Swiss artist/architect stated in his 1968 declaration, ‘less is more’. 46

Like International Style functionalist architecture, minimal and conceptual art of the 1960s seemed to claim autonomy from the surrounding social environment. It represented only itself, as a factual, structurally self-referring language. It deliberately sought to suppress both interior (illusionistic) and exterior (representational) relationships to achieve a zero degree of signification. When big business, the government, or the cultural establishment uses this type of art, either domestically or as a cultural export, it functions perhaps contrarily to the artist’s intentions. For ‘to replace a form of art which denies political or social content in fact provides a cultural rationalization for just such a denial’. 47 Perhaps the contradiction between the idealist and materialist impulses exists not only in modernist sculpture but also in modern society as a whole. Certainly it exists between sculpture and society – between the artist and an individualistic basis of traditional work on the one hand (plaster, marble, bronze, or wood, modeled, carved cast or cut) and the technological, collective basis of industrial production on the other. In industrial society, U.S. art critic and theorist Benjamin Buchloh has argued, these old paradigms of sculpture that sought to be eternal could only become archaic, even atavistic, and they were ‘definitely abolished (as valid models) by 1913’, 48 with the advent of the first ready-made art of French Dadaist Marcel Duchamp and the first construction of Russian constructivist Vladimir Tatlin. These new materialist paradigms repositioned sculpture subversively in terms of epistemological inquiry (the ready-made) and architectural intervention (the construction), with the effect of ‘the eventual dissolution of its own discourse as sculpture’. 49 For this reason Western art institutions, predicated on the old idealist models, mostly repressed these new materialist paradigms. Nonetheless, the contradiction between traditional arsien sculpture and industrial society did not disappear; on the contrary, it persisted in the very practices that sought to resolve this contradiction mythically – to mediate between individual craft and collective industry through various versions of welded sculpture, found objects and assemblage. U.S. artists such as Julio Gonzalez, David Smith, John Chamberlain, Judd, Carl Andre, and Dan Flavin favored this type of production in particular.

47 Graham, Dan, Art in Relation to Architecture/Architecture in Relation to Art, Artforum, Vol. XVII, No.6, February, 1979, p.25.
49 Ibid.
The ascendancy of sculpture in the 1960s was accompanied by a polarising declaration that painting was obsolete or ‘dead’. However, rather than being dead, painting was just not a viable vehicle for undertaking more personalised examinations. Although artists were still making works along similar conceptual frameworks, what was being undertaken by painting no longer was a viable option. Minimalist sculpture was primarily the work of former painters. Because of the history of art education, painting was always the vehicle within which to discuss issues of pictorial representation. But certain practitioners wanted to step outside the frame and work within a more open system. They rejected almost all the tenets of both painterly and ‘post-painterly’ abstraction. Most minimalist painters came from painting, so they were in essence trying to develop a mode of practice that dealt with the real space of the structure, not as a means of escape but as a way of enlarging the field of inquiry. The majority of artists were vehemently against interpretive readings of their work (and such readings would seem virtually impossible anyway), as most of the U.S. artists were highly articulate figures such as ex-critic Judd, occasional writers Morris, Flavin, Robert Smithson, Andre and Will Insley.

Minimalism sought to demystify art, to reveal its most fundamental character, its reality within a given environment. By exposing its materials and processes, it attempted to engage the viewer in an immediate, direct and unmediated experience. The work was uncompromisingly radical and challenging. It proposed a new way of looking at the world. Many of the artists were exceptionally articulate and were able to contextualise their ideas about their own discourse and that of other artists, as for example in Judd’s years of art criticism, and in Morris’s regular articles in Artforum. Minimalism is often misunderstood as negative, nihilist and empty. In fact, the apparent simplicity of minimalist works focuses attention without distraction on the straightforward reality of the object, the relation of the object to the space in which it is seen, and the relation of the viewer to this experience. This is neither simple nor an art of exclusion. Minimalist sculpture was an art based on ordinary experience, using ordinary materials and objects, and making explicit the role of the viewer. One of the main directions in modern sculpture, as U.S. formalist critic Clement Greenberg pointed out, was reduction. ‘The new sculpture, like the new painting, seems involved with finding out how little one can do and still make art’.50 This is not the same as Duchamp’s making the bottle rack art by calling it art, but it does have similar considerations with U.S. painter Ad Reinhardt’s search for irreducibility within his black paintings. But in Reinhardt’s case, the attempt to find a colour (black) and an

order (trisected square) that can be reduced no further seems a noble quest for some personal absolute.\textsuperscript{51}

Minimalists attempted to reduce art to an absolute \textit{sine quo non}; they wished to rid it of residual illusionism and to make words as close to objects as possible. Static and geometric, their sculptures, which at first seemed so very object-like, tended after careful study to deny their very materiality, as they became subjects for phenomenological investigations. Judd maintained in the 1960s that the great tradition of European painting and sculpture had run its course and it was time for something new; something that was neither painting nor sculpture but still art, indeed, great art on the same plane as art by Durer, or Impressionism, or the pyramids. Judd was looking for an art that had total integration with itself and also with the space which it occupied. Judd's coordinated practice came out of his judgment of art history and the autonomous nature of art works being static. Judd was making decisions on what had come before, but at the same time rejecting traditional sculptural concepts.

The power and physical presence of material as container and catalyst for content may be considered by surveying the broad current of contemporary sculpture. Employing materials both for their inherent force and character and for their metaphorical capacity, sculpture has a physical object that evokes a multitude of associations, often referring to the body and its movements, to nature and to architecture, and taking on isomorphic, ritualistic or totemic form. Also consider the idea of the self-contained object, its content held within the object itself: in its size, scale and particular materiality as well as in its relationship to the space in which it is placed. This attitude has a long history and a close relationship to abstract painting.

The words ‘reductive’ or ‘minimal’, rather insulting in their implication of a final result that is less in quality than some earlier original, are still current, yet as Morris points out: 'Simplicity of shape does not necessarily equate with simplicity of experience'.\textsuperscript{52} However, the word 'rejective', which implies a process of elimination but not attrition or economy, can be seen as being negative because it suggests that the artists or art works have settled for less because it is cheaper aesthetically or practically.

Minimalists were distinguished by a philosophical breadth and depth, a certain largeness of interest and ambition that was salutary for those who were seeking to escape the categories and traps of traditional and studio-based object-making. Surprisingly, public response was a hostility, more active than mere indifference to painting. This could be seen when major galleries purchased minimal sculpture for large sums of money. More often than not, such work was ridiculed by a society that did not understand the work. An example was the purchase by the Tate Gallery in London of Andre's *Equivalent VIII*, 1966, in 1972, (fig.20).

Sculptors have vitality and ideas, and they are evolving a coherent sculptural style that has much in common with the new post-painterly abstraction – a move from realistic painting to a pure geometric abstract style. Group shows at the Finch College Museum, Park Place, and A.M.Sachs, (1966), (Judd, Sol LeWitt, Smithson, and Hutchinson), and one-man shows by U.S. artists LeWitt, Andre, John McCracken and Insley, shed further light on the subject. The Finch exhibition was particularly salient, as its theme was *Art in Process* and its participants were largely structural in inclination: U.S. artists Richard Artschwager, Dan Flavin, Paul Frazier, Insley, Judd, LeWitt, Morris and Smithson. Sensibly and modestly installed, its theme gave it coherence and kept it from being just another group show. In many cases the process (sketches, models, notebooks, sources and other ephemera) can be considered more interesting than the results.
Spatial Inventions Through Material Methodology

Sculpture that offers only one satisfying view is really not much more than a relief pulled away from the wall. This means it makes fewer demands on space than those so amply capable of making. 53

The work of the minimalists revealed how spatial concerns were realised in the way traditional casting, carving and modelling had been supplanted by various methods of assembling and how the new materials - steel, aluminium, plexiglass, not to mention scraps and junk - had superseded bronze, wax and plaster. In painting the liberation was from the image. In sculpture what was needed to move ahead was freedom from the laborious processes and techniques that had to be learnt through long years of apprenticeship. This work could be conceived and produced quickly with a high level of professionalism.

The basic preoccupations of sculptors seem less changed, of necessity more tradition-bound than those of painters. For one thing, innovations are harder to make in sculpture, the work being so expansive and time-consuming to make, but more importantly, painters have a kind of total control no sculptor can hope for: they can determine both space and light. Thus, though it can make different demands, it must exist in an unchanging void, which is identical to the space in which the viewer stands. 54

Minimalist art, particularly sculpture, is dependent on setting. Whether of the technological, hard-edged variety, or the geological and much softer kind, minimalist art is a form of man-made nature or nature made over by man. Michael Fried, U.S. art critic of the 1960s, described minimalist or, as he called it, ‘literalist’ sculpture, pejoratively as ‘theatrical’. ‘For in the theatrical work the observer is no longer outside the work of art but is instead a part of its setting’. 55 Essentially the criterion for such work was the notion that the work applies to nothing other than being an object. However, this was a problem for minimalism, as people thought that it was so easy to do and also so obvious in terms of visual recognition that many practitioners

54 Ibid.
fundamentally adopted the style of reductive practice because it seemed to be 'cool' at the time. Artists in the 1960s in the first generation of minimalists, such as Judd, Andre, Flavin, LeWitt, and Morris, had to deal with this problem because any individual who appeared to create a minimal type of work was bundled in with them, regardless of that artist’s concepts or intentions. Being categorised under a name, a title, a heading can create apparent groupings of artists who may not have anything in common, but who within history are considered to have similar concerns. This can be seen within the work of Andre, Morris and Judd. All three may have made similar work but it was developed for different reasons. What was the point? Was it just to cater to expectations? Just to place objects within visual obviousness enables magazines, critics, galleries and dealers to trade and exchange commodities. Minimalist artists recognized that this myth obscured the social division of labour. The coherence of minimalists, like that of any art movement for that matter, can be best described as the coherence of particular concepts that are identifiable with a group of people. Thus, concepts, individual practitioners and their varying artistic approaches create a situation where a synthesis of ideas came together to form a body of work or investigation.

**Fabricated Simplicity and Geometric Design**

Sculpture’s specialised craft and highly fetishised materials such as marble were countered by minimalism with the introduction of objects industrially fabricated from ordinary materials, using ‘pre-planned geometric designs, which, so often, are simple and straightforward in all aspects’.\(^{56}\) Although Flavin’s fluorescent lights, Judd’s aluminium boxes, and Andre’s metal plates were in no way products of the artist’s hand, they were constructed to produce ‘whole absolute objects specifically geometrically manufactured in varied materials in stable respect of their intrinsic relative gravity’.\(^{57}\)

In many ways sculpture was forced into modern technologies of industrial fabrication, but the technology is used merely to suit the practitioner’s purpose. Like manufacturing masquerading as art today, large-scale object sculpture has abdicated the objective of art, which is the ambition

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for new structure in the most extended sense. As Judd noted, 'the minimalist object is a right and true art object, really well made; like a Brancusi sculpture might be thought to be well made. Or even one by Michelangelo or Bernini or an African tribesman'. Even though Judd's sculpture was made by a factory and not by the artist, it is secondary to the real aims of such work, which were its inception and its reception within a space. However, Judd's boxes from 1968 and 1969 were completely different to the pop work by U.S. artist Andy Warhol, *Brillo Boxes (Soap Pads)* (1964) (fig.21), because Warhol's boxes were imbedded in popular culture and direct images, whereas minimalism, particularly Judd's, was imbedded in architectonic space, *DDS 46 (1964)* (fig.22). Their only subject was the object itself. Judd wished to eliminate all evidence of the artist's hand, forcing the viewer into an intense acknowledgment of the relationships between onlooker, object and space.

![Fig.21](image1.jpg)  ![Fig.22](image2.jpg)

There was no sense with Judd of the magic notion of the object which could be seen in the 1970s art movement Conceptualism, or a Duchampian poetic gesture, making an ordinary object of the everyday world turn suddenly into something unique or extraordinary, or into art. Instead Judd's boxes were never anything but art. With him there was still a mysterious interaction between the objects and the empty nothingness around. Within Flavin's light pieces there was the extra mystery of what happened when the lights were turned on and the fluorescence spread throughout the space it inhabited. Judd's mystery was just the mystery of any sculpture, that is, the negative and positive space of the sculptural experience. All sculptures by Italian Renaissance artist Buonarroti Michelangelo and Italian Baroque sculptor Gianlorenzo Bernini articulate the space around them, because that is the nature of any three-dimensional object. But with minimalist boxes negative space was unavoidable, and as a result it was maximised to great effect. This is seen in the recent work of English artist Rachel Whiteread and her three-

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58 Collins, Mathew, op. cit., p.149.
dimensional impressions of the negative spaces around household objects, for example Table and Chair (Clear) (1994) (fig.23), and Closet (1988).

Flavin’s light installations, such as untitled (to Jan and Ron Greenberg) (1972-73) (fig.24), or the nominal three (to William of Ockham) (1963), were tubes which stood somewhere between Judd’s boxes and Duchamp’s Fountain (1917) (fig.25), because they had the extra mystery of industrial, mass-produced objects having been made into art merely by an act of placement. Flavin’s untitled (to Jan and Ron Greenberg) (1972-73) was more sculptural art than poetic gestural art. It stood on the wall, shining its neon light and perceptually changing the space around it and charging it with meaning. However, U.S. art critic Barbara Rose believed that such work, as ‘environmental sculpture, an attempt to change space by putting the viewer “inside” the work has, as far as I’m concerned, not been a success, possibly because we can only take in one view at a time anyhow’.

Perhaps because sculpture is, by definition, three-dimensional, there is no such thing as anti-illusionistic sculpture. Whereas pictorial space is an artificial construct to begin with, sculpture exists in our own space, and this is, perhaps, at least part of the reason why good sculpture seems more tied to organic forms and relationships than does painting. But maybe it is too difficult to compare the two. Perhaps what should be discussed is the different levels of spatial articulation between the two methods of working. It is obvious that painting deals with illusionistic space, and equally obviously sculpture deals with literal space. However, when painting goes beyond the frame what does it become? Is it still painting? Does it still only relate to itself? The dimensions play a role in the site understanding of the work. This is what saves the work, which is made up of standard construction units. Nevertheless, wall painting is

\[59\] Rose, op. cit., p.32.
still only flat and two-dimensional, whereas sculpture continues to be active within its environment. The site is essential to the work.

The First Strike

Morris held the first exhibition of what was to be called minimalist sculpture in an old warehouse on the Upper West Side in Manhattan used by art gallerist Leo Castelli for storage, in December 1968. Therein, strewn upon the cement floor or affixed to or leaning against the brick walls, were objects that defied every expectation regarding the form of a work of art and the manner of its exhibition. Such work was received with initial shock registered by the public and museums and private galleries. However, minimalism has since been absorbed, brought within the purview of normalised aesthetics, and finally consigned to a history of avant-garde that was understood to have been concluded. For many practitioners who had began to think seriously about art precisely because of such assaults on their expectations, the return to convention in the art of the 1980s can only seem false, a betrayal of the processes of thought that the confrontations with art had set in motion. Consequently, practitioners try again and again to recover that experience, to make it available to a new viewing public. How is this done? The only viable option is to show that such methods of working have been developed over a long period of time, and that such work deals more readily with everyday space and the articulation of it, rather than merely being an autonomous sculpture cast in bronze and placed on a pedestal. Minimalist sculpture, with its overt application of the principles of architectural construction, put the pieces in a category almost outside sculpture. The Russians, the first to arrive at a non-objective style in both painting and sculpture, were of course the first also to apply the principles of engineering to sculpture. In many ways it seems that only now are the implications of the astonishing body of Suprematist sculpture understood, as some artists within Russian constructivism such as Naum Gabo and Anton Pevsner are now more generally recognised for their contribution. Also a museum show of lesser-known artists, as well as the more provocative figures like Tatlin, Mikhail Larionov, and Rodchenko, would display a broad range of ideals and concepts that have either been influential or have continued to be developed by artists today.

One similarity that can be drawn between the work of Judd, Morris, Andre and Flavin is that all four produce a thoroughly conceptual art, only in the sense that the work is in fact not executed
by the artists but by others according to their instructions. All the work is preconceived and thoroughly planned. Like the architect, these artists make a plan, which is executed by someone else. All evidence of personal touch is carefully eliminated, as is any reference to psychological states or forms in nature. Colour is important (everything except Andre’s Rodchenko-like raw beams are painted) and geometry provides a point of departure for all concerned. Painting heightens the degree of abstraction and immediately of impact, because "by painting the work, one takes the first step in giving a different identity to the individual parts". Meanwhile the emotional content of the organic, gestural relationships keeps the sculpture, which is, after all, made up of so many pieces of architectural references, from becoming some kind of functionless architecture.

Morris’s work, with its standard units, shifted away from simple minimal objects, which were autonomous within the space. Functioning within themselves, Morris’s ideas became more involved with the body and the shift of the space that is occupied by the object and the space that houses the work. Through his work, Morris brought the body of the viewer into play. Thus the bodies of the artist and the viewer were now under investigation and interpretation by Morris’s constructions and environments. This facilitated a diverse and consistent line of development from painting to sculpture to environments.

![Fig.26](image)

The minimalists were influenced in part by painting and the expansion of non-illusionist space within the production of minimal object. An artist working in an absolutely structural idiom was

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60 Agee, William C., *Donald Judd Colorist*, Hadje Cantz, Bonn, 2000, p.34.
U.S. artist and architect Tony Smith, whose work Die (1962) (fig.26), was virtually unknown except by those who saw the Black, White and Gray (1966) exhibition in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1966. It is also difficult to tell how important Reinhardt’s extremely relevant attitude was to the artists at the beginning of the structural trend. U.S. geometric abstractionist painter Frank Stella’s paintings and ideas are another major ingredient. His paintings offered a reference point from which painting could be constructive and flat (non-illusionist). This enabled artists such as Smith and Judd to depart from painting and look at investigating a new method of production. Writers such as McLuhan, Robbe Grillet, Wittgenstein, Beckett, Fuller, Borges and others provided fine points of departure for philosophising about the subject. The distance of all these figures from the field of art criticism was important and necessary, because it enabled minimalist sculpture to be taken literally as intended.  

Simplicity Through Repetition

The apparent simplicity of the minimalist artists’ work was achieved through a series of complicated, highly informed decisions, each involving the elimination of whatever was felt to be nonessential. To find variety in repetition, where only the nuance alters, seems more and more to interest artists, perhaps in reaction to the increasing uniformity of the environment and repetitiveness of a circumscribed experience. Warhol’s ordinary objects presented as sculptures, Brillo Boxes (1964), silk-screen paintings of the same image repeated countless times Campbell’s Soup Cans (1961–62), and films in which people or things hardly move, such as Sleep (1963), are illustrations of the kind of life situations many ordinary people will face or face already. In the The politics of Art, Part 2, Rose points out that current ‘serial’ type art (modules) can be viewed as a metaphor for ‘relationships in an ideally levelled, non-stratified democratic society’.

Both Judd and Morris use elementary, geometrical forms that depend for their art quality on their presence and simplistic construction, which in turn often seems no more than a literal and emphatic assertion of their existence. The thing, thus, is presumably not supposed to ‘mean’ other than what it is. That is, it is not supposed to be suggestive of anything other than itself. As

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61 Lippard, op. cit., p.33.
the box is a constant in their work and that of other minimalists, it acts like an armature, analogous to a canvas support, within which the interior planes are like lines. The interrelation of external and internal design, debated by Frank Stella and others in painting ten years ago, seem operative here. Either way, one does read content, distinct from the box form. A Judd box has roughly the same dimensions as a television set, and that too is an object effaced, in part, by an inner space that is read simultaneously before and beyond the wall.

U.S art theorist and critic Michael Fried believes that the minimalist object is theatrical insofar as it imposes as a presence, a presence that provokes a situation between viewer and itself. This he rejected as not self-critical. Judd’s plywood boxes are indeed related to theatre, that is to conventional theatre, the place of drama, not Fried’s theatricality hypothesis. Open at front, they relocate experience within the object. Each box is thus a kind of empty theatre. Inasmuch as a box or a theatre displaces space, it is an object and yet it also contains space. No single reading is secure when looked at longer; the boxes map out other spaces. Open, with inner planes that angle outward, each box looks like a perspective device whose point of intersection is where we stand. In a sense the viewer may seem to be an extension of its space, as mere coordinates in an abstract system of axes, with real space elsewhere around the box.

As drawings, plans or etchings, the boxes do not project as forms. There is a ‘positive-negative’ instability to that medium (an optical effect also of graphic cubes) that negates perspective. The etched boxes are flat, abstract lines, much like French conceptual artist Daniel Buren’s reconstruction and his various placements and locations of his striped works Photo-Souvenirs: Punctuations, Statue/Sculpture (1980) (fig.27), as well as Frank Stella’s black and white striped shaped canvases De La Nada Vida a La Nada Muerte (1965) (fig.28). To expose interior volumes and to sharpen the distinction between edge and shape, Judd adopted industrial fabrication – as a pragmatic means to an end, not through any idealism but as technology per se. In his fluorescent-yellow Plexiglas box untitled (1968) (fig.29), the edges literally glow. This identification of light with substance or surface appears again and again throughout the work. It is an element that relates Judd’s work more closely to that of Flavin and U.S. minimalist Larry Bell than to other structuralists such as Andre or LeWitt.

The repetition of standard units may derive partly from practical considerations, but in the case of Judd, Morris, Andre and Flavin's pieces it seems to have more to do with setting up a measured rhythmic beat in the work. A repeated motif may take on the character of a personal insignia. 'The masterpiece concept is abandoned. Consequently each work within the series is of equal value; it is part of a whole; its qualities are significantly more emphatic when seen in the context than when seen in isolation.'  

Within the minimalist sculpture there was 'particular emphasis on evolution within a style which at first looks deceptively unchanging'. André, Morris and Flavin have all used standard units interchangeably. Again, the reference is to the history of Russian constructivism, particularly the work of Rodchenko.

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64 Calas, Nicolas, op. cit., p.36.
65 Agee, William C., op. cit., p.43.
The objects of Carl Andre are just wooden blocks, bricks or metal plates laid or arranged on the floor. The basic idea about space in Andre’s case is that it must not be complicated, but his sculptures are primarily concerned with physical matter and the properties of matter, not so much the mystery of the negative space being electrified. In fact, he is one of the few minimalists who do not object to the label of minimalism because he likes its association of a radical purge. ‘Art is a very high form of pleasure’, he says.\textsuperscript{66} And he believes that for an audience to have to make an effort to understand it is only right, as it is not entertainment. Such a statement could be read as an old notion of the artist as a great creator or inventor. However, the quality comes from the inherent craftsmanship of the worker and the fact that the work made has an inherent quality. Just like a carpenter and the woodwork table he produces, these works have the same quality. Andre occupies a peculiar position in the ranks of the minimalists, partly because he is among the most radically inventive and partly because his attitudes show a metaphysical tendency, a refusal to reject imagination and a concern with directing it into new channels.

Andre advised, ‘Settle for nothing less than concrete analysis of concrete situations leading to concrete actions’.\textsuperscript{67} In his exhibition at the Dwain Gallery, Los Angeles, in 1967, Andre’s sculpture consisted of a long thin line of bricks laid flat out from the wall, which had 151 modules. Off the floor and when seen positively, instead of negatively as intended, the work presents an aerial pattern, a floor plan: 8 cuts (1967) (fig.30). Space is now left unencumbered except for a series of accents, clues to the way it is to be experienced. The work demands imagination and participation from the spectator in a way that is alien to most of Andre’s structuralist colleagues, except maybe Morris. No matter how logical such a confrontation may be with regard to the principles on which it is constructed, it withholds rationalism (or perhaps confers a singular rationale upon) from the experience of the viewer. The idea of a changeable object is not new and is part of the game aesthetic that has come to be common ground. Yet, like all structuralists, Andre has a precise sense of purpose. Why? Because even though the parts can be changed and are interchangeable, it does not necessarily mean that the conception of the work is not a thought out process. Not all mathematical concepts have interesting visual analogies; this happens to be one that does, thanks, of course, to the intervention of an artist.

\textsuperscript{66} Collins, op. cit., p.154.
The minimalist object concerned an interaction between the object and the space around it. There were variations on this idea amongst practitioners. The work was related to the production of space through its highly simplified/concrete geometric systems. Other than the inherent relationship of the physical work within itself, it was also the distance between the walls, floors, tops and bottom which functioned in its meaning. Minimalist sculpture not only has a physical presence but also, through the demarcation of space, forms and ideas, represents a developmental practice of conceptual intentions within visual art and architecture.

**Donald Judd**

The minimalists shied away from sculpture that is relational in character, described by Judd as ‘made part by part, by addition, composed’. The strategy here was to negate anthropocentricity, both in image and in process. That aim was achieved, superficially. These sculptures were about strategy. They were about a system or model of production that was determined before construction. In this it was unlike expressionist sculpture, where the way a structure looked at a particular moment influenced the next particular moment, which then influenced the next, and so on. That type of work embodied the idea of the artist being influenced by a higher order. Instead, Judd’s structures were concerned with craftsmanship. They focused on the production of work and the intentions that were undertaken. This in turn was related to the notion of a concept taking a physical presence as well.

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68 Bishop, op. cit., p.58.
By using new industrial materials, most notably Plexiglas, Judd was able to advance his methods of spatial analysis, exposing the interior of the work, so that the volume was opened out. According to Judd, this process allowed the pieces to fit into the space, enabling it to be fully integrated within its chosen environment:

It's fairly logical to open it up so the interior can be viewed. It makes it less mysterious, less ambiguous. I don't like any dramatic quality or incident or anything archaic. The boxes just hang on the wall in a practical manner.⁶⁹

Judd's ambition by 1960, particularly in his paintings of 1959-60, was to consistently eliminate pictorial incident, adopting an increasingly flat, non-spatial ground. It was not the geometry of Dutch painter Piet Mondrian or of Reinhardt, which Judd viewed as too 'ideal and clean', but a matter-of-fact, simple, unitary geometry. He had become tired of reliefs and their dependence on the wall, reminiscent, after all, of painting, and thus of the very problems he was trying to escape. As Morris noted, 'An object hung on a wall does not confront gravity; it timidly resists it'.⁷⁰ By moving from the wall to a more direct relationship with the space around, the work began, 'to have an enormous number of possibilities, and it looked at that point and from then on that I could do anything'.⁷¹ The boxes of 1963-64 have remained at the core of his work. Wooden boxes were low and relatively inert as forms – height was the smallest of their dimensions. The incremental expansion of these intervals was a prototype. Judd first combined a distinct containing shape with a revelation of interior space. Adjustment between these elements is one of the major themes of his work to the present day.

Judd was not alone in his aims during the early 1960s. A number of artists developed related but different solutions to similar problems, such as U.S. pop artist Claus Oldenburg's soft sculptures, in which Judd believed that the 'usual subordinate shapes became the whole form'.⁷² Judd's concerns were also close to some central aspects of pop art (Judd's plywood boxes and Warhol's Brillo boxes (Soap Pads) (1964), and also to U.S. pop artist Roy Lichtenstein's single-object paintings of about the same time. Seemingly alien, mysterious configurations of a three-

⁶⁹ Coplans, John, op. cit., p.45.
⁷⁰ Lippard, op. cit., p.34.
⁷¹ Agee, op. cit., p.41.
⁷² Osaki, Sachiko, op. cit., p.119.
dimensional work can also be seen to be 'co-extensive with its total shape'. Central to Judd's aims was elimination of the pedestal, which was an object symbolic of an ideal, remote order, antithetical to his concern for a self-defined, non-allusive work. Within Chamberlain's crushed car sculptures there was a realisation of the close correlation of the 'skin' (thin metal) to the volume it defined. This was a theme paramount in importance to Judd's sculptural development and his plywood boxes of 1968-69.

The term 'minimal' engulfed Judd (and other first generation minimalists) when he first gained recognition in the mid-1960s, yet at the same time forced the work of minimalists to be seen as a generalisation. To the extent that 'minimalism' designates a mid-1960s concentration of energies which briefly created a movement, and to the extent that it denotes a principle still alive, though covertly, in much of the art of today, it is a useful term and has a limited relevance to Judd's work. Such implications are belied, however, by some of the most salient features of Judd's art: large scale, brilliant colour, rich materials, and an absolutely personal approach to sculptural forms.74

Fig.31

Judd's first show in 1964 was primarily a brilliant, matte, cadmium red light, and he has consistently used strong hues as well as the natural colours of his materials. The colour is full strength, full density, decidedly hedonist and luxuriously sensuous despite its industrial connotations, as in DSS 41 (1963) (fig.31). Their unitary form (wholeness), their point blank use of materials, their indefinite (object) scale, their negation of illusion, all seem to deny any possibility of a felt response. In objects stripped of meaning Judd has indicated, "the whole is

73 Osaki, op. cit., p.121.
74 Agee, op. cit., p.43.
made according to complex purposes and these are not scattered, but asserted by one form. It should follow then that, taken within an art context, these objects are made exceptional by the manner in which these facts can be apprehended. But the formal nature of this context of art is now considered through what has been made explicit by the analysis of Judd’s art. An object of art, instead of being thought of as a physical means for ordering our felt responses to objects, is thought of as an intended framework through which the facts of experience have been represented. Or more abstractly, if it is thought of as an object that is in itself a projection of felt-consciousness, then to begin with it will be seen that the nature of the formal concerns of these movements are entirely different from those asserted by ‘modernist’ criticism.

The galvanized-iron works of 1964-1966 are among Judd’s finest works. However, fewer versions were done and they have been seen less frequently than the stacks. It is axiomatic to Judd’s work that the order of his mid-1960s multi-part pieces is immediately and entirely apparent, while each internal element retains its independence of shape, colour and surface. But even when the parts comprising a given work are identical, because of the difference of angles of viewing they are all perceived slightly differently. In 1965 the viewer is given two separate and dissimilar spaces, a narrow one between two walls and a full inside volume. A related piece, and a particularly successful one, is a large 1969 box that derives from the same vocabulary but, instead of defining two spaces, joins two distinctly different surfaces.

The constantly restated anti-illusionist intentions of Judd throughout his work have become unavoidable, as the illusionism is real – a physical consequence of the structure of the work, not depicted or suggested as in painting. These pieces further demonstrate the continuing dialogue between the properties of literal structures and of painting, a dialogue that has engaged Judd since the early 1960s. Here, a bothersome ‘problem’ of painting was turned to specific and powerful three-dimensional ends.

From 1965 Judd’s stance was firmly established, as he sought to reject conventional methods of balancing and relating major and minor parts in hierarchic arrangements. By 1965, parts were equal and uninflected, structure, colour, surface and material were equated with total shape; wholeness of shape was immediately graspable; thin, tough industrial materials defined surfaces.

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75 Louw, Roelof, op. cit., p.172.
76 Ibid.
77 Agee, op. cit., p.45.
and edges; colour was intrinsic or thinly applied, appearing fused with surface, as in *Untitled (1966)* (fig.32). Within these principles, Judd produced enormous variations. This fact is often overlooked, because his invention of new forms is not always obvious and thus does not always appear to have a high priority. But as Judd remarked, ‘there is more variety in my work than is casually apparent.’

![Fig.32](image)

In addition, Judd often shifted back and forth or, perhaps more accurately, developed new versions of an idea in extending a series over several years. Judd quoted Ingres: ‘Expression cannot be good if it has not been formulated with absolute exactitude’.78 The development of his art was not totally unswerving or untouched by changing attitudes toward the art-making process, but displayed an uncommon consistency of purpose. Judd stated, ‘I don’t have too great a sense or progress of change, I like to work back and forth’.79 By reinvestigating, he continually redeveloped existing work. Why? Because new technologies, materials, new periods of construction all played a pivotal role in Judd’s understanding of past work and new work.

It should be emphasized that a distinct underlying stylistic evolution occurred in Judd’s work, despite the fact that only in 1971 and 1973 did immediately apparent stylistic changes occur in the manner associated with the year-by-year or period-by-period development of most artists. Judd’s overall evolution moved from single pieces to separate units connected by transverse bars; to identical, repeated, unconnected elements (later modified according to available space); and finally to pieces designed for specific interior and exterior sites.

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78 Agee, op. cit., p.40.
79 Ibid.
The horizontal progressions represent an opening up of Judd's work. His work can be considered as a constant working model or a system of production that was relational, as seen also in the architecture of Marfa, Texas and the Chianti Foundation, *artillery shed (with 100 works in mill aluminium) (1980)*, (figs.33 & 34). These works show an affirmation of a type of ongoing dialogue, or series of productions, which Judd continually developed for over 20 years. It could be argued that if Judd had not died, a straight line could have been drawn from his earlier box constructions to his furniture, then to his architectural designs and building renovations, showing that he was moving away from the production of objects confined within a space to the realisation of constructing that space.

Much of Judd's work from 1971 on involved itself with the dictates of a unique site or space. Previous series within Judd's work had been related and adjusted to architecture. It is true that to some extent the stacks, for instance, could be modified according to the height of the room - but clearly a new flexibility of attitude was emerging. At the 1971 Guggenheim International, Judd's piece challenged (and paid homage to) the museum's architecture, always notoriously difficult for the installation of sculpture, because the architecture always has its own concerns due to the distinct nature of its construction. Thus, when something which is completely opposite is added to the framework, or something which has no relationship to the interior of the space, the work and the architecture can appear to be completely at odds with one another. Additionally, regardless of how big the sculpture is and how much space it takes up or requires, the building that houses it will obviously always be larger. This produced an ambiguous equilibrium that takes the measure of the site no matter how one views the piece. This adaptation to a site may owe something to the example of U.S. minimalist Richard Serra's site-specific sculptures that
impose their own gravity and weight upon the museum or gallery space, for example *Corner Prop* (1969), or *Kitty Hawk* (1983) (fig.35).

In 1967, Judd had noted that ‘the main virtue of geometric shapes is that they aren’t organic, as all art otherwise is. A form that is neither geometric nor organic would be a great discovery’. It may well be that in these pieces, particularly the outdoor concrete ones, Judd came close to discovering just such a form, and his work was continually geared towards particular sites. For example in 1971, at the Sonsbeek Art Festival, in Arnhem, Holland, Judd created spiralling cement structures that were against their environment yet at the same time took into consideration the space around them.

Many of Judd’s works have been sealed to specific architectural spaces. In 1974, at the Lisson Gallery, London, several works in plywood were designed not just to fit a certain length of wall, but for specific, idiosyncratic architectural spaces. One such piece, also using the materiality of plywood’s complex surface patterns, was in keeping with Judd’s longstanding involvement with surfaces characteristic to particular substances, such as the unadorned, blunt presentation of material. The piece filled the room and yet was obviously separate, not ‘environmental’ in the usual sense of the term, and thus was in keeping with Judd’s insistence on independent shape and form. Describing the work Judd stated, ‘I still intend to do discrete pieces, but I get a little tired of them. My work goes back and forth. I got a little tired of big pieces that just sit there in an indefinite space, so I wanted to do something that dealt more with the space of the room’. In each of these boxes, Judd presented a distinct new experience. In the perception of space, area, surface, volume, and scale, that the work represented another step in his still continuing stylistic

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80 Agee, op. cit., p.47.  
81 Coplans, op. cit., p.50.
evolution. 'Some of them go to the side/walls, and the interval between the walls and the boxes is identical. So they are related to the architecture, they have to look static, without movement. I am interested in static visual art and hate imitation of movement.'

Judd’s plywood boxes are a good indication of the versatility of minimalist working, in particular of artists who are interested in developing conceptual frameworks outside the gallery or museum and placing them within a broader working context. They shift the working environments back and forth, or work within a set system that allows work to be shifted within content and context, such as the varying sizes of gallery or museum space, or the outside exterior space of a building. Within minimalist sculpture, and particularly in Judd’s work, the works have a physical reality. It could be argued that the only illusion within the work could be that it is a model for a bigger space. However, there are two answers to this argument. On the one hand, all Judd’s works in particular are autonomous. They are objects made to be objects. Yet on the other, Judd’s buildings in Marfa, Texas, have shown that he developed his work from conventional ‘specific object’ to a direct ratio of one-to-one physicality within the gallery space.

Robert Morris

The interaction between object and space seen in Judd’s work was not as mysterious as the interaction that was supposed to be going on in a different type of minimal box art, plywood painted grey. The minimalism of Robert Morris, another of the main first-wave New York minimalist, had more to do with the presence of the object in the space but also with the viewer and his or her relationship to the space and to the work within the space. As Judd noted,

82 Coplans, op. cit., p.49.
...art in any media boiled down to what it does in the experiencing of it, creates itself through relations, proportions. The quality of art depends on inspired felt relations or proportions as on nothing else. A simple unadorned box can succeed as art by virtue of these things, and when it fails as art it is not because it is a plain box, but because its proportions or even its size are uninspired, unfelt.  

For minimalists the main shared ground is their agreement that the reason to have boxes or tubes at all is that these are very specific forms with all the matter-of-fact object-ness of non-art things. In New York in 1965, when the first minimalists were searching for new methods of production, simple forms were felt to have more potential for radical artistic complexity than complex ones. Why? Through the elimination of excess form and content, and by reducing the object to its bare essence, an interaction is created between the box, the space and the mind of the viewer. Obviously, the mind of the viewer is engaged in any art experience. It was through this felt experience that Morris’s work developed to the point where his work transgresses from minimal structure to body-related activity. Morris’s work was about the personal self and was less concerned with the idiom of non-referential space. Although it may have a certain look, it is not necessarily concerned with the same issues.

In Morris’s ‘object’ sculpture, three-dimensional forms seem to be such simple uninflected volumes or structures that they appear to be functionless objects rather than sculpture as we know it. But if they are objects they may still have no function. Even if they are sculpture they may have no function other than focusing the attention on fundamental principles. Morris poses such questions as: What is the function of the artist? What is the basis of sculpture? What is structure, what is construction and what is their relationship? This involvement with process and with the very act of creating or making is part of Morris’s total statement, as evidenced in his smaller, more complex but finally less subtle lead pieces. Ultimately, of course, he questions the limits of art and the very activity of the artist.

Morris’s purpose is to teach or to question certain basic ideas about art, its meaning and function. The most overtly didactic of the artists that have been discussed, his formulation of issues is in many ways the sharpest. This is particularly noticeable in the way in which he subverts the

83 Louw, op. cit., p.172.
84 Rose, op. cit., p.36.
'purist' reading one would normally give to such geometric arrangements by interpolating a content that jars and does not mesh with any geometric interpretation. He does this first of all by changing normal scale and by not relating one part to another, as well as by relating the pieces to the wall and floors of the room they are in, as in *Floor Piece (1968)* (fig.36). By putting distance between the object and the viewer, Morris asks everyone to play their part.\footnote{Burnham, Jack, *A Robert Morris Retrospective in Detroit*, Artforum, Vol.VIII, No.7, March. 1970, p.68.}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{fig36}
\caption{Fig.36}
\end{figure}

It has been suggested by U.S art critic and theorist Gregory Battcock that Judd's and Morris's structures were 'not monolithic because they are shells, thus dealing with interior and self-contained space rather than solid volumes.'\footnote{Battcock, Gregory, *Minimal Art: A critical Anthology*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, p.222.} Battcock also believes that the works make 'no attempt to change or activate the space they fill nor do they refer to anything outside of themselves'.\footnote{Ibid, p.225.} This could have been true when both artists were first producing minimalist sculpture from 1962; however, their work developed and as a result changed slightly, in that Morris's work became more self- and bodily aware, while Judd's shifted towards the architecture of space, and more importantly literal space, in which we as individuals have an invested interest. Yet within the work there is no way of telling which structures are hollow and which are just made out of light materials. While the bulk of some indicates the first by practical necessity, it is hardly a factor in their significance.
The artwork of LeWitt, whose show at the Dwain Gallery, New York in 1966 consisted of five large white structures conceived in a cubic frame module of about 1m, entitled Modular Piece (1966) (fig.37), dealt with the production and design of interior space. This idea was taken to its logical conclusion: a cube based on three modules entitled A5 (1966), in the Primary Structures show at the Jewish Museum, New York. Because their entire structures, internal and external, were laid open to view, these were among the most cohesive works made in the minimalist genre. Nothing about them is secret. No angle is any better than any other angle. There is no core, no relationships within or without the pieces other than the perfectly regular base for construction.

![Fig.37](image)

The ironic thing about LeWitt’s structures is that despite their rigorous rejection of all chance and inflection, their apparently ultimate order, through an ‘embrace of unity and simplicity’, are subject to the most drastic change and modulation because of the shadows cast by the bars, with or without dramatic lighting. The shadows transform the structures, and the perceptual distortions involved in looking at his work bring to it an element of disorder that neutralizes the fundamental order apparently governing its conception. This disorder occurs when the object is not just conceived and diagrammed but made, seen, and experienced in reality. It is an idea that was often remarked upon by Judd, originally in his review of Morris. These two fundamentally different artists share an acknowledgment and controlled cultivation of the irrational, though their disorder is very much built-in and contended with, not accidental.

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88 Jenkins, Kyle, Interview conducted with Sol LeWitt on 01/01/03, 2002.
LeWitt believed that the multipartite structure becomes ‘too architectural. A single structure seems better, probably more inert, less inviting, somewhat ugly and impenetrable’. LeWitt avoids the architectural implications of the cage or framework basis, refusing to make secondary walls even when he uses the specific gallery space, as in his Modulation Pieces (1973). These works are closer to painting, as they consist of three square frames, one on each wall of a corner (near the corner but not in it), and one lying on the floor with a corner pointing directly into the corner line of the wall. This makes a kind of dismembered perspective drawing and diverts attention from the floor-wall relationship to a more specifically concrete space.

Morris has consistently written about the conceptual context of his own work and that of fellow-artists. In one of the earliest of these essays, Notes on Sculpture, Morris speaks of his preoccupation with strong three-dimensional gestalts. ‘Characteristic of a gestalt’, he wrote, ‘is, that once it is established, all the information about it, qua gestalt, is exhausted’. The body of criticism that has grown up around minimal art over the past five or six years has, strangely enough, understood the meaning of that statement, and indeed the meaning of the gestalt itself, to be about a latent kind of Cartesian theory. The gestalt seems to be interpreted as an immutable, ideal unit that persists beyond the particularities of experience, coming from its very persistence as the ground for all experience. Yet this is to ignore the most rudimentary notions of gestalt theory, in which the properties of the ‘good gestalt’ are demonstrated to be entirely context-dependent. The meaning of a trapezoid, for example, and therefore its gestalt formation, changes depending upon whether it must be seen as a two-dimensional figure or as a square oriented in depth. With different forms and varying strategies, Judd’s, Andre’s and Flavin’s work are similarly involved in discrediting the persistence of Cartesian theory and in positing meaning itself as a function of external space.

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89 Lippard, op. cit., p.34.
90 Ibid.
91 Krauss, Rosalind, op. cit., p.50.
Richard Serra

That sense of coalescing in experience and of a realisation of the self as it achieves eternality is evident in the Prop Pieces that Serra began to make in 1969. By means of a metaphor of striking abstractness, these works suggested a continual coming into coherence of the body, in the guise of a form that was constantly seen to be in the act of cohering. The special precariousness of their parts did not suggest imminent collapse or dissolution. Rather it was directed at evoking the tension between a conceptual unity of certain simple shapes and the actual conditions of their physical union. The One Ton Prop (House of Cards) (1969) (fig.38), for example, is a cube (therefore, an ‘ideal’ shape) perceived as perpetually dependent upon these conditions. House of Cards (1969) deals with internal space as something constantly available to external vision, and as something entirely defined by the perpetual act of balance by which its exterior is constituted.  

Fig.38

Serra’s work is grounded within a need to achieve verticality without permanently adhering separate parts of the sculpture. In the past several years his works have tended to adopt a special form of drawing to define the modality of one’s experience with them. By basing the foundation for work in line, linear vectors, and types of boundaries, Serra shares with other artists the importance of drawing as an essential element in the planning of the work. The same can be seen in the wall drawings of LeWitt. This is also true of the art of U.S. earth artists Robert Smithson and Michael Heizer, which related to the landscape as a linear unfolding. This type of linear unfolding can be seen in Serra’s piece Splashing (1969) (fig.39), executed for an exhibition at the Castelli warehouse, New York.

\[92\] Krauss, op. cit., p.50.
Of all the things in that warehouse, certainly none was more defiant of the sense of the aesthetic object than Serra’s *Splash (1969)*. Along the juncture where wall met floor, Serra had tossed molten lead, allowing it to harden in place. The result was not really an object at all. It had no definable shape or mass; it created no legible image. It achieved the negation of categories that Judd had, some years earlier, described as ‘the best new work, neither painting nor sculpture’. By effacing the line where the wall rose up perpendicular to the floor, Serra obscured a marker for the viewer’s orientation in interior space, claiming that space as the ground of a different kind of perceptual experience. The dimensions within the work can be seen to be completely dependent on the size of the architectural surface and also on the inception of the work. This work used relations between the gallery as a space of viewing and as a space of commerce. In installing a work that could not partake of the commercial possibilities of commodity circulation, Serra was nevertheless able to make that condition of the gallery a part of the work’s experience, if only in abstract, sensory terms. If you reduce sculpture to the flat plane of the photograph, you are passing on only a residue of your concerns. You are denying the temporal experience of the work. You are not only reducing the sculpture to a different scale for the purposes of consumption, but you are denying the real content of the work. At least with most sculpture, the experience of the work is inseparable from the place in which the work resides. Apart from that condition, any experience of the work is a deception,’ whether the work is Serra’s *Splash (1969)*, installation or torqued eclipse, *Clara-Clara (1983)*.

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Just as no one perspective can comprehend a given sculpture by Serra, no one argument can account for his art in general. As befits a practice driven by research, its methods are consistent but its discoveries diverse. U.S. art critic Lisa Bear asked Serra in 1976, ‘What does making sculpture mean to you right now?’ After a long pause, in which he looked back over ten years of mature work, Serra replied: ‘It means a lifetime involvement that’s what it means. It means to follow the direction of the work, I opened up early on for myself and try to make the most abstract moves within that. To work out of my own work, and to build whatever’s necessary so that the work remains open and vital’. The concept of Serra working out of his work suggests that its own language drives the work, once opened up. This begins to inform and make decisions within it. It starts to constitute its own means, to determine where it can go and what it can do. This is the real difference characterising artists who tend to have longevity. The work is more informed and as a result it proceeds in a succession of highly contextual works.

The first principle of sculpture for Serra can be called constructivist, for it focuses, as did Russian constructivism, on the expressive development of structures out of the effective treatment of materials (which the constructivists called construction and faktura respectively). The second important principle that influenced Serra could be described as phenomenological. Thus, sculpture exists in primary relation to the body, not as its representation but as its activation, in all its senses, all its perceptions of weight and measure, size and scale. The third principle, which might be called situational, is that sculpture engages the particularity of place, not the abstraction of space, which it redefines immanently rather than re-presents transcendentally. Together, then, these principles define sculpture as a structuring of materials in order to motivate a body and to demarcate a place. It is not a fixed category of autonomous objects but a specific relay between subject and site that frames the one in terms of the other, and transforms both at once. This can be seen in Russian constructivism of the 1920s, which dealt with the total integration of art and life. Also the State Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, in 1930 termed the total integration of art and life as ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’; its participants, like those of the Russian constructivism, were focused on the integration of art, architecture and design into one complete body of production.

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94 Foster, Hal, op. cit., p.177.
95 Ibid, p.179.
Whatever its restrictions, sculpture can intervene critically in architecture because its language is not as compromised by capitalist rationalization and bureaucratic regulation. However, Serra suggests that sculpture can recover a neglected principle in architecture, recover it as a ‘lost origin’ for sculpture. Often his sculpture works in contradiction to the architecture of its sites, as can be seen in his site-specific sculpture *Tilted Arc (1981)* (fig.40), which was subsequently destroyed in 1989 because it was deemed inappropriate for the architecture of the Federal Plaza in New York. But it can also be subtle, complementary, and even reciprocal, when sculpture and architecture frame one another. There are pieces (often arcs) that primarily frame, such as *Trunk (1987)*, first installed in a baroque courtyard in Munster. There are pieces (often blocks) that are primarily framed, such as *Weight and Measure (1992)*, first installed in the neoclassical hall of the Tate Gallery in London. There are also pieces that do both, such as *Octagon for Saint Eloi (1991)*, which stands in a complex relation to the Burgundian church behind it. Serra’s outdoor projects seem to be related to Judd’s architecture, to earthwork artists such as Heizer and Smithson, and to the Japanese public artist Tadashi Kawamata and his *Roosevelt Project (1993)* (fig.41) in New York, as well.
After the Race Was Won and Lost

The terms ‘post-minimalism’ and ‘dematerialisation’ have become entrenched within the lexicon of contemporary criticism. These terms are constructions that trap meaning within an infinite regress of negation. Neither label really conceives in positive terms the content of the works they characterize. One begins to see the absolute continuities of meaning that connect ‘post-minimalism’ to minimal art. Given this sameness of tone in the mode of construction, it may seem from the outside something of a fine point to say that Stella’s stripes are on a canvas support while U.S. artists Mel Bochner or Dorothea Rockburne mark directly on the wall. It may seem an over-subtle distinction that Judd’s, Morris’s and Andre’s constructions involve rational geometric forms, while Serra’s are generated through the process of making. Yet all these practitioners have a shared notion about the prerequisites for a model or meaning.

Operationally, post-minimalism acts to drive an historical wedge between the minimalist art of Judd, Morris, Flavin, Stella and Andre and the work of a younger generation which began to achieve prominence by the end of the 1960s, such as Serra and U.S. artists James Turrell and Eva Hesse. Post-minimalism, by insisting upon the temporal divide between these two generations of artists, signals that it is acting as a conceptual marker as well, as asserting a separation of meaning between the two groups, a separation where the notion of sensibility meshes with the supposed shift in historical time. ‘Dematerialisation’ functions similarly as a chronological counter, by scripting as a new act in the historical drama the flight of certain work from the material concrete arena of the object. The assumption behind the use of both these terms seems to be that the demarcations of historical time carry within themselves the profile of meaning. Thus they themselves are adequate to characterize or define the deep import of works of art. The same assumption occurs when, in answer to a question like, ‘What does this painting by Stella mean?’ the reply comes, ‘It’s about his relationship to U.S. painters Jasper Johns and Barnett Newman.’ The question asked was about meaning, yet the answer that was inevitably given was about historical context. The assumption was that meaning and historical context are synonymous. However they are not, because even though they may seem to be chronologically in line with each other (e.g. one being influenced by the next) the works may be about completely opposing issues and aims.96

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96 Krauss, op. cit., p.43.
The real problem with reductive, geometric or minimalist practice is the question, who is in charge of meaning? Is it a consensus because artist, writers and audience all play a part? In the 1960s there was a consensus that minimalist art had certain meanings; therefore it really did have those meanings? To think about the art in a different way would be to get it wrong. Obviously to fit in with what was happening, people wanted to stay within the guidelines of the time. Maybe this was really the problem. Perhaps many ‘pin-up boys’ of minimalism threw away a literal notion of minimalism because they were all working on varying coordinates of work. In short, they had begun at similar points but had developed their personal methodologies. Moreover, they dealt with and developed issues that were essential to their individual practices.

One problem with minimalism was the fact that it predominately involved white males. This became a problem in the 1970s, in light of the social and politic changes that were occurring in the public space, exterior to the museum or gallery. Women demanding more rights, Afro-Americans demanding to be treated equally, and the Vietnam war were essential ingredients in the social and political fabric of the 1970s. People came to believe that in essence minimalism was exclusive. From this came post-minimalism, consisting of floppy forms, or forms that were on film rather than on the floor or the wall, or performed forms, or forms that were not forms at all but only ideas, or written down words, or just gases or condensation or steam. These new forms were possible only because of the reductionism that minimalism ushered in. However, they were forms that were against reductionism. They were connected to a new consciousness of the possibility of art after modernism, an art that was inclusive rather than exclusive, an art that could be an expression of everybody, not just white males. However, like everything that occurs in history, people take an idea, a method of production and develop it. So from minimalism derived second and third generation production.\footnote{Collins, op. cit., p.156.}

Practitioners or sculptures were now pursuing formal integration, which was in essence incomplete. In Serra’s work the lead is like an unmoving, dense residue in the unconscious, that undermines the naïve integration afforded by the unstable cube form, which is always about to disintegrate by falling over. The lead is the vehicle because it gives the work its weight, its power. The same thing can be said of U.S. artist Keith Sonnier’s neon sculptures, where the neon tubing at once transcends its formal arrangement and becomes an historical and libidinal signifier. Material heterogeneity is not made formally homogeneous by the erratic serial
alignment of the flamethrowers, nor by the alignment of Serra’s belts (1966-67), where it becomes clear that serial form does not really integrate material, but rather ‘re-marks’ it. Form such as it is, marks the already marked material as heterogeneous and irreconcilable. Form heightens the historicity of the material and marks the work as unconsciously meaningful.98

The big names of the late 1960s, Morris and Judd, continued to produce art that was closely related to what they had been doing from their initial sculptures in 1965. The idea of development in unitary sculpture seems a contradiction in terms, since it proposes an ultimate that is quickly reached. Judd stated, ‘The first fight almost every artist has is to get clear of old European art.’99 That is because of the historical baggage. However, looking back it could be said that similar baggage remains prevalent. Today it may appear minimal or reductive in nature, being now burdened with a general consensus that the artists must have an invested interest in minimalism. But by getting past it, it can be argued that an actual redirecting was taking place of concerns that had been undertaken in Europe in the 1920s. The difference between the U.S. artists of the 1960s and Europeans was that the Bauhaus in Germany was more interested in a total integration of everything from design, sculpture and painting. The U.S. artists were reducing what were essentially art objects, although they were still autonomous within their own concerns. One can, however, point to two contrasting sculptors whose work seems characteristic of such development. One is U.S. sculptor Larry Bell, who at the beginning of the 1970s developed the simple glass boxes he had previously been producing into large, coated-glass screens set at right angles to one another, in Untitled (1971). The coating allowed effects of reflection and transparency to be combined in a magical way, so that a gallery full of visitors became a place where figures disappeared and then mysteriously reappeared. The other was an artist who has perhaps received less recognition, and who put her finger on a central problem for sculptors and object-makers during the 1970s. U.S. sculptor Wendy Taylor is a specialist in visual impossibilities. She takes what appears to be a massive column of brickwork and ties it into a knot. She cockles a brick pavement by looping a chain around one corner. According to Taylor, ‘chains are the most generally accepted form for tension, while bricks the most accepted for compression. Each is a perfect way to suggest that the impossible is always possible.’100 The fascinating thing is that the basic shapes she uses undoubtedly belong to the old classic abstract tradition. The knotted column, but for the illusionist brickwork, would resemble a sculpture by

99 Agee, op. cit., p.44.
100 Lucie-Smith, Edward, op. cit., p.67.
Swiss concrete artist and architect Max Bill. The pieces Taylor herself made in the 1960s and the early part of the 1970s were still in the model of minimal constructivist idioms. However, Taylor’s sculpture is gestural in character and as a result departs from any minimalist ideal.

In the 1980s, minimalism seemed to be influencing ordinary life. Minimalism became a lifestyle choice instead of an obscure art movement because everyone wanted a minimal apartment with no furniture, or they wanted to look at minimal apartments in magazines. It was not exactly minimalism, but a kind of sampling of an earlier notion of modern, pared-down living, which came to be known in the 1980s as minimalism. This can be seen in the interior design work of U.S. artist Jorge Pardo, in his light fittings or his house that was built in Los Angeles. It was modern art finding its way back into the wider culture. This type of design was more geared towards a new consciousness of the possibility of art after modernism. It was an art that was inclusive rather than exclusive, and however reduced or abstract this art was, it had a social aspect and a social meaning, not just an art meaning. With this new idea or attitude, minimalist art has become more art expression of the swirling mass of different identities making up the world. Thus it does not make sense to hold onto those reductive labels indicating social groups or types. Obviously it comes down to the individual’s choices, and intentions and the inherent qualities that are involved.

The popularity of minimalism in the 1980s was as much to do with minimalist principles as with the general minimalist look. The popularity of minimalist art today is largely a product of that 1980s type of popularity. It is not because the education departments of the big museums all heroically relayed the difficult meanings of 1960s minimalism to a wider public and made them understandable. Minimalism’s difficulties have just suddenly been ignored by this public, and instead a new stylishness that minimalism is thought to possess has been enjoyed. And minimalism is now about an essential pared-down simplicity. Turrell, a minor U.S. minimalist from the 1960s, has become the undisputed leader of radical minimalism in the 1990s. His art is simply planes of coloured light. Every installation is a different experience of light. If it is in a gallery it might be a wall of red light, with the light shone by projectors, or a blue light, as in Hover (1983) (fig.42) or Orca (1984).
Each art act in its turn either deepens the logic of a particular formal convention, or supplants one convention with another, or attempts to transgress the notion of convention altogether. No matter what the stance of a given art toward the acts that preceded it, the description of its meaning is generally entrenched within the hermetic logic of paternity – of the sets of aesthetic that make up the history of modern art. Meaning in the present becomes a coefficient of the past; explanation is circumscribed by the profile of a historicist model. The special irony of that ingrained use of history as meaning is that it is applied to a tradition that prides itself on an original act of historical demolition.

**What Space Do We Occupy?**

Minimalism conceived the body of the viewer in roughly phenomenological terms as an abstract form not disturbed by an unconscious. Feminist art in turn elaborated this body critically. It agreed that no viewer exists without a body, but added that no body exists without an unconscious. More recently, artists influenced by feminism (such as Mona Hatoum) have looked to a minimalist idiom to draw out its psychological implications, which suggests they were there all along. From the beginning Serra and his peers, such as Smithson, Nauman, and Hesse, were ambivalent about the rationalism of minimalism. On the one hand their projects were also rational. They placed their projects within a minimalist process in order to demystify the viewer about the making of sculpture. On the other hand this process suggested ‘an erotics that implicated the anxious and the perverse as well’. ¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Foster, op. cit., p.193.
In works by Serra such as the Torqued Eclipses, these two effects are folded into one another, yet they appear rational and perverse at once. What is their perversity? Is it the actual construction of the work with its undulating sides as it convexes in and out? Is it the fact that the size of the works which Serra produces, such as Torqued Eclipse (1983) (fig.43), imposes a certain level of physicality on the architecture, forcing the building where it is located to respond? Thus the work turns the traditional recessive gesture of the art object placed in a space to the object being the dominant figure while the gallery space is constricted. The gallery viewer or audience is treated in a similar manner with Serra’s Torqued Eclipses. An object is always going to be recessive in relation to the audience. Regardless of what it aims to pursue, it will always be open to failure by those who judge it. However, when viewing any of Serra’s Torqued Eclipses one is forced to interact. Moving forward, moving back or sideways, one cannot remove oneself from the sheer spatial presence of the sculpture or construction. Both in his outdoor public works projects in Germany, such as Fulcrum (1986-87) (fig.44), or his indoor works such as Mailliart (1988), Serra continues to maintain a shift between the subtle and the complex.
Both in wall paintings and in works shown in a traditional context, the architectural space always shapes the way the work is received. The work is the dominant paradigm within the space. It controls how a viewer walks within the space and within the work. It controls the flow of space and the sheer volume of the gallery.

Is it problematic to have such objects, or is it enough to have them just in an idea or conceptual form? This issue should be examined, because spatially you do not get an exact idea of how a building or a sculpture reacts or responds to its environment. Size and dimensions are standard formats, which conceptually we can estimate. However, stepping inside a volume or having a relationship with the solidity (of an architectural space or artwork) is a personal experience. One must be physically within the parameters, and this really is the crux of a wide variety of works. From Serra’s sculptures/constructions to work of the U.S. earthwork artists such as de Maria, Smithson, and Heizer, one is offered an understanding of the work in photographic documentation. In many ways, the problem with dealing with the work is the fact that we need to understand its site-specificity, and thus its physicality literally does not travel.

Serra’s eclipses, even though visually they appear the same, are different in their placement. It is the gallery space, the architectural framework that creates the differences between the works. The spatial differences make these works function regardless of whether the room opens to the outside or how the viewer is able to move within the frame of the space. These works seem to have similarities to Baroque classical architecture; The Torqued Eclipses put the viewer in play within the space in a way that seems to change its rational structure. The viewer seems overwhelmed by the space even as he or she seems to overwhelm in it, as if the space was a projection of the body.

Simple Work for Simple People

The variations between series and minimalist artworks must be viewed in terms of calculated moves. Certain practitioners already mentioned, such as Judd, Morris, Andre and LeWitt, have continued a long history of production which conceptualises spatial arrangement. Obviously, certain materials act a certain way, but it is investigation that the minimalists were doing. They were investigating new materials and new ways of representation. At first they experimented
within a production and exhibiting system, with regard to the conceptual frameworks and possibilities of such work being used in other disciplines. Obviously at the start these concerns may not have been so prevalent, but as time passed they began to look at different avenues, shifting towards a total architecture, the amalgamation of site, volume and environment. This can be seen in the work of Judd, Smithson and Turrell. These artists were concerned with the object, autonomous of its site while at the same time aware of its placement and the space it inhabited.

The benefit of the minimalist paradigm is that the artwork can develop a unique aura and create a particular atmosphere through its relationship to the place where it is presented, heightening the viewer’s sense of presence and awareness of the place. This character is evident in Judd’s Marfa project and in the site-specific minimalist work installed by Flavin, Chamberlain and Judd himself. Such working methodologies can be viewed as the continuing redevelopment of minimalist theoretical concepts, and as such have greatly influenced the way in which we experience our built environments and the way in which we experience objects within their chosen spaces such as galleries, museums and public spaces.

The climate of the 1960s and 1970s was a time of cultural and social change which led to the opening out of the gallery system. The background of women demanding and gaining equal rights, of social and racial politics, and the shift of opinion in the U.S. because of the Vietnam War, became supplementary material for an active engagement with the external environment. Minimalist sculpture and its adherents began to develop their practices, and new avenues and movements of artistic endeavour followed, such as conceptualism, performance art and earthworks. These movements and the practitioners engaged within them drew upon their immediate environments, and in doing so developed more immediate spatial concerns, either political or personal.

Today the artwork can identify less than ever before with the secure role that the classical categories of media used to provide. Artistic practice now seems historically convincing only when it raises doubts, not only about itself as art but also about its allocation of specialized roles, methods of production, and conventional materials. Without exception, real progress has occurred only when a fundamental transformation has been made in the procedures rather than merely the forms of a particular tradition in art. If a work ceases to be painting or sculpture, one must focus on what it is beginning to be. The important role of minimalism was the opening up of the gallery space into a site of exploration and also a space of invention, within itself as an
object. This occurred not only within the gallery and museum space but also within the wider community. Minimalism represents a convergence of strategies which, when applied to our built environment, can bring a synthesis between our various spaces: those that are constructed and the spaces left between the constructions.

The architectural analogy of sculptural work by Judd, LeWitt and Serra has introduced new concerns for the development of permanent sites of installation of work, and it has also enabled a new approach to be undertaken in built environments. Even though the work discussed in this chapter predominantly deals with the floor and walls of a particular space, objects installed within it or added onto the existing structure, in a sense becoming ‘decoration’ for interior architecture, are not subservient to it. The work and the practitioners look for new or redeveloping relationships within the architecture and visual art object. The minimalist art movement can be seen as having a direct link to the coexistence of spatial development within sculpture and architectonic construction.

The most important features of minimalism are its philosophical underpinnings and developmental nature. Its non-figurative, non-referential and non-narrative geometric construction enables practitioners to develop concepts and work through different fields such as architecture, visual art and design, because even though the context of a project may change the working methodology does not, as it is situated in the ‘simplicity of means’. Critique of practitioners and of work that uses a minimalist idiom allows more positive approaches to be adopted towards our built environment, also through the development of relationships between practitioners. Such methodologies express beliefs in the constant renewal of our immediate environments and our perception of the world.
Chapter Four

A Place Apart: The Creation of Environments Through Installation Art, Performance Art, Happenings and Earthworks.

The major issue in art is what are the boundaries. For too long artists have taken the canvas and stretchers as, given the limits.102

The aim of this chapter is to show how artists, painters, and sculptors in particular have moved beyond the confinement of the autonomous object within space and developed a new criticality towards the expanded field of the site. Site-specificity within such work has allowed the work to be continually re-evaluated through active role of the viewer-participant in the work’s inherent processes. The intention is to chart, discuss and debate certain installation and site-specific practices and to provide a framework that encourages a rethinking of our varying urban and natural spaces. The research examines specific contexts of production in relation to a framework that could facilitate collaboration of artists and architects. This is done through theoretical and conceptual examples of institutional, historical and practical discourses. This chapter focuses on particular practices, from the 1960s to the present, which have articulated exchanges between the work of art and the place in which its meanings are defined. The site of installation becomes a primary part of the content of the work itself, but it also posits a critique of the practice of art making within the museum by examining the ideological and institutional frameworks that support and exhibit the work of art.

While it is possible to discuss the issue of space on the basis of the opposition between full and empty, it would be restrictive to approach the work of art as an object closed in on itself and being referential only to its inner idiosyncrasies. This chapter deals firstly with the shift from the private gallery or museum space as isolated entity to a place of active participation and experimentation, leading to artists moving from the museum space to deal directly with the outside environment. It is shown that the discourse of the work of art could expand beyond its physical presence, and has done so. At this point architecture, the site and viewer participation all became determining elements for defining the work of art and inscribing it into a specific space,

and terms such as ‘context’, ‘place’ and ‘in situ’ acquired crucial importance in the aesthetic vocabulary.

From the moment space assumed a new leading role in the conception of the work of art, architecture, considered as environment, also took on a new dimension in the field of visual arts. The relationships established between art, architecture and environment have enabled painting and sculpture to reveal their final essence through the dimensions of architectural space, environmental space and through the dialogue between creator (artist) and receiver (viewer). It can be shown that shifting the level of experimentation beyond the space of the object and then the space of the gallery, moving finally into a public space, has created a succession of experiences and work. In turn this has created a dialogue with the surroundings on the basis of minimal gestures in the environment. This is expressed in the evolution of U.S. artists such as Robert Smithson and Walter De Maria, who after initial minimalist periods progressed towards earthworks.

Collectively the work of installation and the creation of environments and site-specificity engage the aural, spatial, visual and environmental planes of perception and interpretation. This work grows out of the collapse of medium-specificity and of the boundaries that had defined disciplines within the visual arts since the 1960s, and it facilitated the introduction of new working methods and means of expression. Through research into certain individuals and disciplines, various aspects of installation and site-specificity appear within divergent and varied spheres of meaning. These include community space, corporate space, architectural space, multimedia, cyberspace, environmental action, public and private ritual, political activism, government and private patronage systems, and the compelling and problematical intersections created by all of these sites. Even though all these areas play into the total synthesis of installation, this chapter deals with only a few of the above aspects, such as environmental action, architectural space, and private and public space. In subsequent chapters, community space and private and public space are discussed in relation to museum practice, collaboration, public art and architectural discourse. The reason for limiting the focus of activity is to show certain work that has developed from painting and sculpture, which deals with the construction and development of real space, or the space that we inhabit rather than a synthetic environment such as cyberspace. This focus is consistent with the aim of this research which is to present in each chapter particular areas of activity that can be viewed as a link between visual art and
architecture. This presents a positive argument for an increased dialogue and working methodology between the two disciplines.

The articulation of place and space can be understood to be the connecting fibre between visual art and architecture, as it is "...the place or position occupied by some specified thing. Frequently implying original or fixed position". By considering various approaches to spaces and sites through materials and frames, as well as documentation as an instrument of recording site-specific work, the distinct methodologies of minimalism, land art, happenings and performance show formal invasive interventions into urban spaces, gallery sites and published material. In this chapter the aim is to show, through the presentation of work, how elements of site-specificity are not only a set of critical terms and a mode of work but also a way of characterising the places and spaces they reflect upon. Thus formally diverse areas of work, just as they make radically different responses to the presentation of site-specific investigation, are also used to define site-specificity. They are not only a set of critical terms and a mode of work, but also a way of characterizing the place and space of the various site-specific practices they reflect.

Reclaiming and Reactivating Natural and Urban Spaces

![Image](image-url)

**Fig.45**

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The environment or installation established itself as a relatively commonplace art form during the 1960s, as artists looked to create total environments or site-specific works which best exemplified their aims and conceptual intentions. This continued during the 1970s, but with a number of interesting variations on the basic theme of the all-surrounding work, or of the work that filled more or less the entire space available to it. The environment or installation piece in its simplest form is represented by work such as French Conceptual artist Daniel Buren’s *Photo/souvenir: Travail in situ (interior) (1969)* (fig.45), presented at the Wide White Space Gallery in Antwerp. Here a given space was manipulated by the most elementary means, by putting a striped border along the bottom of the walls where one might normally expect to find a skirting board. More typical of the 70s, however, was a development towards narrative. Sometimes this narrative was extremely hermetic – a matter of suggested conjunctions only, as in a number of mixed media pieces by the English sculptor Carl Plackman. Typical of his work was an installation entitled *Relationships and the Way in Which the World Defeats Us (1975).* Here the mixture of abstract forms and recognizable objects – a broom, a basin, pillows, light bulbs, drinking glasses – are designed to trigger off a chain of associations in the viewer’s mind which would, like clues in a guessing game, eventually lead him or her to the point from which the artist had begun. Italian artist Giulio Paolini’s installations also have a metaphysical content. His installations make use of classical heads and classical columns, as well as easels and other references to the tradition of academic art. Paolini uses these props where another artist might be content with merely abstract forms, as a means of stressing that the relationships that interest him had also been the concern of artists such as Leonardo da Vinci.

Most notable about installation art is the way it uses and addresses space, context and site. Space in installation art is not simply the gallery with its solidity and straightforward rectangularity, or the empty house, or the unploughed field which the art occupies. In installation art the work has
been transferred from inside the painting to the gallery space and beyond. Space is one of the essential elements in installation work and can be seen in the near tangible, almost liquid air of U.S. minimalist James Turrell’s mass-less light rooms, such as *Wedgework IV* (1974) (fig.46). Like sculpture, which can slice or suck up space into invisible volumes, installation makes space participate in creating a work’s meaning, not by assembling objects but by referring to and playing off their environmental space. Italian Claudio Silvestrin’s architecture, *Flat, Riverside One* (1993), London, is concerned with similar ideas of environment and theatricality of space. If the objects and the space they create or occupy are not integral to one another, or if the experience of moving through the work does not engender or alter meaning, then it is not an installation, it is a collection of things. Installation may be a firm, physical reality completely bound to the viewer’s body, as in English sculptor Rachel Whiteread’s *House* (1993) (fig.47), or an illusionary suggestion of depth such as English installation artist Richard Wilson’s *20/50* (1987) (fig.48). Installations that show a representational context loaded with ideological theories include such works as Belgium conceptual artist Marcel Broodthaer’s critiques of the cultural power of museums, *L Angelus de Daumier* (1975).

![Fig.47](image1)

![Fig.48](image2)

Space used as a cultural material is not a new concept. It can be traced back to the Constructivists and Futurists who illusionistically incorporated it into their works to reflect the dynamism of the increasingly mobile and chaotically fragmented modern world. Later, however, Modernism’s narrow concentration on form and the art object drove avant-garde artists like French painter Yves Klien to rebel and take on space itself as meaningful. In 1958 Klien painted the outside of the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris a spiritually significant blue, and painted the inside white, removing everything except one empty showcase. Entitled *The Isolation of*

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Senxibilith in a State of Primary Mattes Stabilised by Pictorial Sensibility (1958), the exhibition offered the site as subject for consideration. In the words of the U.S. artist and novelist Patrick Ireland (who writes art criticism under the pen name Brian O’Doherty), it was a ‘new space, the gallery infiltrated with consciousness’.

In the 1960s and 1970s the artist-run-space, rather than the things within it, increasingly became the focus for many artists, through artists’ initiatives (artist-run galleries) such as Food in New York and W139 in Amsterdam. The initiatives were spaces that enabled contemporary artists to show their work, which might not have been shown at the more prestigious museums and galleries. The artists’ work also focused more on specific sites such as fields, deserts and seashores, as well as on the gallery. The work of U.S. artists Smithson and Gordon Matta-Clark was concerned with specific sites. Whether it was the physical manipulation of a house in Matta-Clark’s Splitting (1974) (fig.49), or Smithson’s Spiral Jetty (1970) (fig.50), these artists were concerned whether to regard the empty building that housed the work, or the museum, as a cultural institution. In this their work reveals the ability of all interventions to provide the setting with a new identity.

While installation art or site-specificity was recognised as shaping space and the varying environments that are inhabited and visited, it was also loaded with political and cultural implications. U.S. installation artist Maria Nordman repeatedly recast public sites and buildings as spaces where observation and human occupation were the art under consideration. She used existing architecture and urban territories of meeting to show how a place can interact with the social groups in which it is located. Many also felt that space could be genderised. In 1972

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Womanhouse was founded as a collaborative art environment by feminists of the California Institute of the Arts under the direction of feminist artists Judy Chicago and Mariam Schapiro. It was a temporary space where the domestic rituals of woman’s lives could be explored in the politically explicit context of an abandoned and condemned house.

Space can be seen as material, completely bound up with people’s experience of it. Its relationship is vital to contemporary art, just as the art object now interacts with its context, and the viewer’s role of assigning or creating the meaning has become central to the art process. Installation art is inexorably linked to experience, depending on its audience and their bodily movement to unfold or recreate the work’s meaning. Sensations, sounds and smells can also be an integral part of the installation, but most essentially time passes, and it is the living time of the viewer that is unique to installation art. The audience feels the importance of time experience, where they observe and participate in something that often has only a limited life span, or that can be altered by their presence. The piece may not appear the same twice. Thus many viewers feel differently each time they view the work. While often subtle, this shifting of time by the art and the audience highlights the importance of the viewer to the work and its meaning. Clearly an installation is a construction that has the function of needing to be experienced now. It exists for that purpose and then usually ceases to exist.\(^{108}\)

![Fig.51](image_url)

A work that takes into consideration the place in which it is shown/exhibited cannot be moved elsewhere. If installed it will inevitably have to disappear at the end of its exhibition, unless its concerns are in relation to a continuing re-installation. Presenting it again and again allows the

work to have several different visual responses while at the same time maintaining its initial concepts, as occurred with Wilson's *20:50 (1987)*. The idea of disappearance through destruction opens a breach in the dominant artistic ideology, which wants a work to be immortal and therefore indestructible by definition, in the surroundings/shelter of the museum. Ideas go on forever and are continually developed, and the major advantage of conceptual art is the ability to have the ideas being continually re-contextualised as time passes. This is seen in the comparison of work by De Maria *The New York Earthroom (1977)* (fig.51), and Wilson's *20:50 (1987)*. They have similarities in that both deal with raw materials, De Maria with dirt and Wilson with sump oil, and both also consume the spaces in which they are exhibited. The space is the determining factor in the work, because it decides how much volume the work will consist of and the way in which the work will be viewed. Also both works have had many incarnations, and as a result they can be adapted to the environment in which they are to be installed. One of the problems encountered by any work of art is its ability to relate to the space within which it is exhibited yet at the same time to take on its unique form of existence from its individual and continual destruction. Moreover, the implication of the place of exhibition, as an integral part of the work, fragments the afore-mentioned work into as many occasions as there are places used. As a result, a work that is easily transferable or definable can be shown repeatedly because it continues to have an ongoing relationship to the spaces in which it is shown.

**Historical Evaluations**

To imply in the work the place where it is situated (whether internal or external) is to set limits materially and visually, without leaving an escape route. It is also to bind oneself to a certain given reality that the work will undertake to criticise, to emphasise, to contradict, to investigate and to dispute dialectically the spaces which it will inhabit. The sharpness of the comment will depend on the precision of the intervention. An historical evaluation of installation art can begin with various works of ‘environmental’ art by Russian constructivists Vladimir Tatlin, Georgy Yakulov and Alexander Rodchenko, and Dutch De Stijl artist/architect TheoVan Doesburg, appearing between 1917 and 1926. In 1917, Tatlin, Rodchenko and Yakulov were commissioned by the Russian industrialist Filippov to execute the interior of the Café Pittoresque, Moscow. The interior consisted of ‘dynamic constructions in wood, metal and cardboard which clung to the walls, squatted in the corners, hung from the ceiling of this tiny interior, destroying the idea of a
room as an enclosed space with solid walls.\textsuperscript{109} The integration of matter and space formed a kind of shell which was self-sufficient. It provided scenery composed of voids and volumes to go with sound or visual effects.\textsuperscript{110}

We are here at the stage of a ‘superficial’ operation, in that the architectural field already has a structure, and the artist transforms it by means of colour, optical and perceptual use of space. In other words, the structural properties of the field remain the same, and the chromatic transformation serves as a visual lightening or intensification of the field. Van Doesburg’s aim was to ‘break-up all symmetry, and not allow the eye to rest on any point, to obliterate all the contours of the walls, to establish a systematic, incessant pattern of referring and cross-referring between the various elements’.\textsuperscript{111} Each part of the building, the entrance, the foyer, the staircase, was defined by colour. Every surface was painted so as to create continuity between ceiling and walls, walls and floor. One must be careful when working through a set of ideas not to become entrapped within the work. This means that a method of working can after years of activity become an identification or mark of style – a personal blueprint which in turn can be seen as expression.

Like architecture (each building has its own style), artwork should be treated as devoid of its creator: it should be evaluated on face value, not by the reputation of the artist and his or her past events but on its meaning, its methods of production and its materials. By treating each project with a level of originality, projects can be fully integrated with its environment. Consider a particular spatial design, in a private environment such as a house or studio where the artist is free to alter the shape and the layout of the rooms. If the artist is working on his or her own premises, then the changes can be more extensive and more personal.

\textsuperscript{109} Celant, op. cit., p.117.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
In 1924 German Dada artist Kurt Schwitters began to construct *Kathedrale des Erotischen Elends* (Cathedral of Erotic Misery), or *Merzbau* (fig.52), which was finished in 1933. It was an immense collage, ever-expanding and swallowing up space after space. Schwitters used his freedom to produce what was really an incommensurable work in time and in space. By excluding the possibility of a public-social function, of a permanent site and of an enclosed plastic-visual definition, the *Merzbau* departs from the methods followed in static environmental art. The field has become mobile and can be adapted to other spaces, where it undergoes continual transformation and continual transplanting. It allows for a freer, more cerebral environmental activity, where there is not only the given space but also the possible space.

Similarities can be drawn between Schwitters’ construction and the work of Matta-Clark and the influence they have had on the Australian painter Stephen Bram. Bram, like both Matta-Clark and Schwitters, deals with the deconstruction and reconstruction of built spaces. Bram’s constructions have similarities to that of Schwitters, in that Bram constructs two- and three-point architectural perspectives within the building, cutting up the space into varying degrees of spatial planes, as in *Apartment, Prahran, (1997)* (fig.53). This work transforms the room’s use from functional to conceptual, a vessel for an idea. Matta-Clark, on the other hand, uses abandoned buildings to make his cuts, as in *Office Baroque (1977)* (fig.54). By essentially deconstructing the building (cutting it up), Matta-Clark transforms the building into a useful object once again. Yet in both these creations, the work does not last long and thus is continually manifested within the act of the idea or within the concept.
For installation artists, the space to be used may be found on any occasion. It does not necessarily have to be arranged in advance and it may be of an accidental, ephemeral nature, or an art gallery that becomes a possible field, such as the Berlin Exhibition in 1923 by Russian constructivist El Lissitzky who designed the Proun Room (1932). The environment was 'shaped with elementary forms and materials of line, surface and segment, cube, sphere and black, grey and wood. Some surfaces were painted flat on the wall (colour), and some surfaces were placed vertically against the wall'. The basic idea was the search for continuity between space and pictures. The surface of the pictures merged into the support/surface. The entire room thus became a constructivist work. Proun Room, in avoiding any kind of symbolizing tendency or individual characterization, belongs to a functional category of works in which the nature and position of each element is precisely thought out. Two examples are the environmental adaptation of Casa Zampini at Esanatoglia (1925-26) by Ivo Pannaggi, and Piet Mondrian’s Salon de Mme...a Dresden (1926) (fig.55). Both these works were influenced by constructivist theory, and in both cases space was given chromatic and structural treatment. In both these works the space and the objects were able to achieve a transformation of the environment to a point where it was rendered devoid of all historical-concrete references, without individual connotations but rather through an autonomous series of ideas and concepts. Each shape, object and colour was adapted to the whole environment.

112 Celant, op. cit., p.118.
Within environmental experiments or installation art, we can see that there is a certain fluctuation between the social need to create a physical space with a utilitarian function and the individual need to construct a symbolic environment of a monumental nature. Both attitudes are valid but obviously the former places greater restrictions on the artist. From the historical movements of Futurism to De Stijl, from Constructivism to Dada, these movements and their participants believed they were creating an expression, albeit an indirect one, of society. Within all installation art there is a continual shift from object to place, ironically finding its final form as a photograph in a gallery. The photograph reduces the emphatic experiential quality of the work to a mere record of the experience. Documentation becomes the obverse of conceptual art. The initial anti-object motives and direct experience criteria of such pieces are absorbed and muted by the medium of documentation. The documented projects transmit an idea of space by suggestion, projection or model only, while the information on space is acquired passively. The passive role of the viewer could be changed to an active one only if the experience of the constructed space was the experience of the piece.

The Difference Between Spaces, People and Places

Subsequent works which present different senses of space are constructed space by U.S conceptual artists Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconcì, natural space by Dennis Oppenheim, body space by Simone Forti, Trisha Brown and Yvonne Reiner, spectator space by Dan Graham, or
even work which was presented as a critique of the uses of public and private space by Buren and Zagreb artist Braco Dimitrijevic.

For Graham, the particular interaction between individuals, their action in public and private space, and the constructed spaces, made the pieces more ‘architectural’, in the sense that architecture implies such relationships. Architecture constricts and confines; it mediates movement within its interior and around its exterior, as it is essentially a constructed volume, constructed space, much like the productions of radical reductive painting practices, which are essentially works of constructed colour. The aspect of two equivalent, total/complete readings allows a work to question its own position within a given space and its relationship to the spectator. Spectators are able to question the installation of the work and the way in which their own movement is categorised within the space. It is important to explain what the terms represent, because they are an indication of the different levels of activity which are taking place within what could be considered a single movement: performance, installation, conceptual art and earthwork.

Oppenheim uses ‘natural space’ (beach, mountainside, ploughed field) to make direct correlations between the body and the space surrounding the body, such as Reading Position for a Second-Degree Burn (1970), rather than constructions or directly interpersonal performance as Acconci did in Tonight We Escape from New York (1977). Acconci’s work deals with the interplay between himself, the work and the audience. In the 1970s Acconci was looking for a way of having the work become more directly associated with and to the viewer. He abandoned the notion of creating specific stand-alone objects; instead, through the initiation of performances, the concepts can be presented from the artist (initiator) to the spectator (receiver). Thus instead of the artist presenting an idea in the form of an object and then the audience having to respond to that object, Acconci became the object. Acconci became the artwork and as a result the conceptual undertaking of the work was directed straight from the artist to the audience. This permitted a more direct level of response and interaction between the concept of the work and the viewer, essentially making the viewer a part of the work. Oppenheim’s 1969 earth works extended U.S. minimalist Carl Andre’s conception of ‘sculpture as place’ to the point where, as Andre stated, ‘a work is not put in a place, it is that place’. To experience the place or space is

to experience essentially the artwork. This creates a dichotomy between what the site was and what context that space now provides as an artwork or project.

Many of Nauman’s pieces relied on a more formal definition of space. Specifically constructed environments were built so that a particular feeling of space was designed into each. Nauman insisted that many of the pieces were to do with creating a strict environment so that ‘even if the performer didn’t know anything about me or the work that went into the piece, he would still be able to do something similar to what I would have done’.

Nauman manipulated space in order to provide a means for us to recognize how we perceive space, as in Going Around The Corner Piece (1970).

The object-fields and installations made by U.S. artists Arman, Jim Dine, Claus Oldenburg and Allan Kaprow in the 1970s encompass, in disorderly fashion, the greatest possible quantity of items. The lustful desire to possess the world drives the artist to inflate the environment with ‘sensual’ fragments brought in from the street, creating a shifting or transference of the commodity of the artwork to a sensory experience. The products of installation artists do not distinguish between the outside world and the inner world. The artist’s subjective experience of the world is at the same time shared and private, and therefore the object-environments are developed as both collective and personal fantasies, as in Dine’s constructed The House (1970). Other artists who produced environments were the Italians Castellani, Scheggi and Bonalumi, whose works enclosed the viewer upon entering the space, and were made of craftsman’s materials such as wood and canvas. These artists gave concrete and material expression to their environmental situation. Within these works the artists, instead of defining and displaying optical or ‘objectual’ details, gave the entire space (figural space) concerned an iconic totality.

By defining and detailing, in a rational manner, all concrete entities within the spatial placing of a work of art (e.g. volume, colour, light, surface/support, material and operative procedure), the artists who work within this field have an active and inherent understanding of the place in which the work will be produced. This study of environmental structures takes place simultaneously with the basic arrangement of artistic elements, and understanding the concrete entities leads the work to an awareness of the ‘environments’ within which they are constructed. The spatial characteristics of an environment are in fact concerned with problems of content,

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114 Goldberg, op. cit., p.132.
composition and the individual historical nature of the space. Every space has to be looked at in the light of its behaviour, which can be understood through the standard units (ceiling, floor, walls and dimensions) of which it is formed. Since the environment consists of a group of two- and three-dimensional relationships, it is possible to identify it by using either fixed or mobile points. This means that certain artists dissect the space, using it as a map for constructing new spaces. Essentially a ‘mapping of the terrain’ is occurring. The structure of the work is formed out of taking into account the various concerns inherent in each space-environment. The space is thus divided and subdivided according to its two- and three-dimensional characteristics. The division or deconstruction of the environment essentially governs the aesthetic arrangement of the work. This method of working can be seen in the work of Daniel Buren and U.S. conceptual artist Sol LeWitt from 1968 onwards. Within a particular situation or environment, Buren’s installations attempt to define one aspect of the space. This aspect might be, within the given field, the regular pattern made by certain elements (windows, doors), or the way in which surfaces are divided up (in squares, rectangles or circles), or else the volumetric compactness and the internal/external dialectic. His paintings are governed by set points of a given structure or environment. LeWitt, on the other hand, seems to focus his attention on the geometric diversity of the surfaces or of the lines related to the surfaces.

U.S. artists such as Richard Irwin, Turrell, Anthony Wheeler, Nordman, Michael Asher and Nauman, as well as the European artist Moraud have, since 1968, built a series of spaces based around discovering one’s own experience. The purpose of building these spaces is to ‘test’ one’s own dimension and energy on a human scale. Each space is generally constructed independently of the existing architecture, although sometimes a ‘memory’ of the architecture may be used, for example in Asher’s installation/constructions. A person’s attention turns towards himself, as in Nauman’s corridors and tactile walls, in Moraud’s meditative spaces. Everything is reduced to the perception of a phenomenon that fluctuates between interior and exterior, as in the light rooms of Irwin, Wheeler and Turrell (images created by polarizing the senses in simple happenings) where one feels the need to be alone with oneself. Maybe what is being introduced is a system of set-ups, where the work’s integral feature is to turn itself upon the person. Thus his or her own personal experience becomes the work and the viewer now has the control. The viewer becomes the creator, the receptor, and the carrier of the work.115

115 Goldberg, op. cit., p.123.
An example of such an environment can be seen in the work by U.S. Jeff Raskin (an artist-scientist holding degrees in philosophy and computer science) entitled Mazes (1969), which was installed and opened for exhibition at the University of California at San Diego on January 3rd, 1969. The work took up over 30,000 of the approximately 50,000 cubic feet of the University Art Gallery. By January 31st the work had not only vanished from the Art Gallery but had ceased to exist altogether. Mazes (1969) was a continuously alterable, walk-through environment eight feet high, constructed entirely out of 2,800 60cm x 46cm x 46cm cardboard boxes of the type commonly used in the moving industry. As its name implies it was a series of walls perforated by passageways, and was originally designed to be permeated by a series of gradual and unique changes through three basic structures. However, the work was somewhat more idiosyncratic as it was internal architecture, that is, architecture inside architecture. By constructing a building inside a building a subversion occurred of the space the viewer inhabited: while inside the gallery they were still outside the work, but being inside the work, they were in essence outside the space of the gallery, because they inhabited an autonomous environment. Thus the audience had continually to readdress their own position within the gallery and within the work.\footnote{Antin, David, Mazes, Artsmagazine, Vol.43, No.7, May, 1969, p.19.}

**Performance and Happenings**

Happenings and performances exist only in the present; they are temporal and ephemeral. They attempt to negate the object, and in doing so to have the concepts of the artist received directly by the audience. This enables the artist to negate any abstract reading of the work. Performance and happening artists were trying to achieve a direct dialogue of ideas from artist to viewer/participant. An object only gets in the way if the end result of the information is not that which was initially the intention of the artist. Perhaps the most drastic of all body artists was the U.S. performance artist Chris Burden. In 1974 his roster of actions included spectators being invited to push pins into his body, having himself crucified to the roof of a Volkswagen, kicked down two flights of concrete stairs, all done in the name of art. Burden has also had himself shot, and has had his body splashed with burning alcohol. The piece entitled Velvet Water (1974), which was performed at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago on 7 May 1974, consisted of Burden repeatedly submerging his face in a sink full of water and attempting to breathe until he...
collapsed, choking. He was separated from the audience by a wall of lockers, and they watched what he was doing on video monitors.

The notion of a fixed, internal armature that could mirror the viewer's own self, fully formed prior to experience, founders on the capacity of those separable parts to shift or to have shifted, to formulate a notion of the self, which exists only at that moment, of externality within that experience.117

The insistence on the body as a means of experiencing space leads to spatial notions very different from those we have come to know through painting and sculpture. Where do we categorise performance? Do we place it under sculpture or installation? Sculpture has an intimacy within itself. Installation is primarily concerned with its site. Site is the major component which influences the shape of the work, as the viewer becomes aware of the space between himself or herself, the performance or happening taking place, and the physical dimensions of the architecture. The concept or performance is information that is sent straight to the audience. Instead of being subservient, the audience is made or forced to become active participants. If they do not take an active involvement what are they left with? The role of this type of work in the 1970s was a positive engagement through the shifting of the context of the artwork from a passive role (sitting in a gallery space) to emphasis being placed on 'active concepts' through performance pieces. This implies a need to have artwork traverse a secondary state and shift into the audience, which controls the level of engagement. It is in space that we experience the effects of these art propositions. For example, the artists who introduced the premise of the 'artist-as-art' (Italian Arte-Povera artist Pier Manzoni and English collaborators Gilbert and George) focused on their own persons, perhaps so that the viewer could respond with a like body-awareness.

The outcome of these performances was also a means of rejecting the stylised conventions of formalist art, in this case of minimalism. The ascendency of sculpture in the 1960s was accompanied, we should recall, by polarizing declarations that the painting was obsolete or dead. Rather than being dead it just was not a viable vehicle for undertaking more personalised examinations. In 1964 U.S. minimalist artist Donald Judd, writing that conventional media and the canvas rectangle were no longer adequate for a contemporary expression, called for an art

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117 Krauss, Rosalind, op. cit., p.50.
with 'the specificity and power of actual materials, actual colour, actual space'. This took the form of work which dealt with the architectural space of the gallery or stepped outside the gallery space and dealt with the public and environment. Encouraged by the interaction in New York between dancers and artists throughout the 1960s, many of the discussions that revolved around minimal sculpture were applied to the various works presented by the dancers. While minimal sculpture introduced a 'new kind of physicality that came from the material, and not from internal psychological mechanisms,' in dance the 'objecthood' of minimalism was paralleled by a notion of the body as neutral object, outlining only positions in space.

The description of these works makes it clear that performance art and happenings directly reflected spatial preoccupations in the art world. As U.S. art critic Barbara Rose stated in her article *ABC Art*,

I remember thinking that dance was at a disadvantage in relation to sculpture in that the spectator could spend as much time as he required to examine a sculpture, walk around it, and so forth – but a dance movement – because it happened in time – vanished as soon as it was executed. It was not exact repetition, as the sequence of the movements kept changing. They also underwent changes through being repeated in different parts of the space and faced in different directions – in a sense allowing the spectator to 'walk around it'.

English collaborative artists Gilbert and George took the logical step at the very outset of their careers when they declared themselves to be living sculptures. Put simply then, theory – whether concepts, drawing or documentation – remains essentially two-dimensional, while 'practice/performance' implies a physical context. In this way, this type of art is to be looked at not only as the 'dematerialization of the art object' as described by Lucy Lippard, but also inversely as the materialization of the art concept.

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119 Goldberg, op. cit., p.133.
120 Rose, Barbara, op. cit., p.65.
121 Goldberg, op. cit., p.130.
This move in the early 60s from objective consideration of objects to the mingling of experience, precepts and concepts generally provided by the ‘conceptual movement’ became a wave engulfing all kinds of creativity, and it was not only in the aspects of ‘fine arts’ that the anti-objectivity could be most specifically seen. In music, too, space was the medium for less structured sound. U.S. fluxus artist and composer John Cage referred to a ‘diffuse acoustical space’. In recent years musical ideas have continued to move away from object (a composition having a well-defined relationship of parts) to process (non-structured activities, indeterminate in character). U.S. fluxus artists and composers such as La Monte Young or Cage attempted to experience sound, space and movement simultaneously, with no distinctions between the work (music) and the people who filled the space.

Land Fill: To Take Away or Add on?

Fig.56

At the end of the 60s, large-scale environmental art had combined with the then prevalent minimalism to become what was known as earth art. Some of the most spectacular examples were created by Smithson, whose Spiral Jetty (1970) at the Great Salt Lake in Utah established itself as an image of the period, and by U.S. earth artist Michael Heizer, whose immense Double

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122 Ibid, p.131.
Negative (1969-1970) (fig.56), which involved the displacement of no less than 24,000 tons of rhyolite and sandstone, was sited in Nevada. Earth art was a paradoxical phenomenon. It required patrons rather than purchasers – patrons prepared to finance art which could never be possessed. It was public, in the sense that it occupied space that was accessible to the public. But the sites were for the most part so remote that people knew them only through photographs. The economic recession of the 1970s made extravagant gestures of this type less and less possible, and by the end of the decade, earth art in its ‘classical’ form had become a thing of the past, and only the minimal alterations to landscapes made by English earth work artist Richard Long, such as A Line in Scotland, Cul Mor (1981) (fig.57) and Circle in Africa, Mulanje (1978), remained. Earth art did, however, leave an important legacy. It suggested ideas and metaphors that went beyond the minimal and conceptual framework in which the movement began. These metaphors could be ecological or archaeological, and were sometimes both at once. Earth art enabled artists to open the field of research. Essentially the frame of working was dependent only upon how much space was needed to undertake the project. As Pascal noted, ‘Nature is an infinite sphere, whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere’.

Thus earthwork artists essentially had a level of freedom within the work. The only restriction was the monetary costs of undertaking such projects.

![Fig.57](image)

The earthworks were works made either with actual soil or by marking the lines, digging holes and cutting rings on and into selected portions of the earth’s surface (illustrated in the exhibition by photographs of the various sites). Earthworks represent a special and conceptual involvement with literal nature, and it is not an accident that almost every artist who has moved to constructing earthworks has exhibited minimal sculpture or painting. Either passages of

landscape are turned into art or object-art is turned into a kind of landscape, which is combined in a way that is both aesthetic and active. Works such as U.S. artists Nancy Holt’s *Sun Tunnels* (1973-1976) (fig.58), Turrell’s *Roden Crater* (1997-current), De Maria’s *Lightning Field* (1977) (fig.59), Smithson’s *Amarillo Ramp* (1973), as well as Oppenheim, Andre, Heizer, Oldenburg and Vincent Scully’s book, *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods* (1962), all are remarkable site-specific/contextual studies in which meaning is a coefficient of place, and the undertaking a direct engagement with an environment exterior to that which had been traditionally employed by installation artists.

Like installation art which deals directly with the gallery or museum and the subsequent politics which are inherent, earthwork artists had to deal with the politics of the public domain, where much of the politics was subverted as most projects were undertaken on private land which was purchased on behalf of the artist or by private collectors funding the inception of the project. In 1979 De Maria, under the auspices of the Lone Star Foundation Inc., filled a large West Broadway Gallery with 500 solid brass rods, each of the same length. The rods totalled a complete kilometer in length, and the work was therefore entitled *The Broken Kilometer* (1979). Organisations such as the Seattle Land Reclamation Project were set up to support the ongoing projects of the earth artists. As an art form, land reclamation owes its first cogent assessment to Smithson, who attempted to create large earthworks for such U.S. corporations as Kennecott Copper, Hanna Coal, and Minerals Engineering from 1971 until his death in 1973. The idea of art as a recuperative, interactive process and not just as mere gloss on the landscape was certainly a result of his work. In 1978 the King County Arts Commission, Seattle, Washington, commissioned U.S. artists Herbert Bayer, Iain Baxter, Richard Fleischner, Lawrence Hanson,
Mary Miss, Robert Morris, Oppenheim and Beverly Pepper to reclaim significant areas by making sculpture a park and not just an object in a park.

The values of judging and choosing 'sites' or 'non-sites' (as Smithson calls his gallery objects) or the style in which a landscape is made over derive entirely from art. A thorough knowledge of modernist art and art history is therefore a prerequisite for the refinement actually involved in the literalist picturesque. For instance, qualities of shape and composition or non-composition derive from specifically abstract precedents. Earthworks were limited to works involving the earth, but the media aesthetic is not limited to a geological palette; other artists are working in other mediums that entail a corresponding landscape of tactility, where much of it combines both soft and hard components to recapitulate the basic formal dichotomy at the root of all art.

First Things First: The Invention of Earth Work by Claes Oldenburg and Robert Smithson

On Sunday, October 1, 1967, Oldenburg, who at that time was known as a pop sculptor of large-scale yet flaccid household goods in plaster or vinyl, produced his first outdoor sculpture. It was a 2m long, 1m wide, 1m deep trench dug in New York's Central Park by professional gravediggers. The work was temporary, was not of monumental size or idealizing demeanour, and consisted almost entirely of negative space. The work was for Sculpture in Environment, the widely publicized New York exhibition in which Oldenburg's Placid Civic Monument (1967) figured. Smithson did not participate in the show (which ran October 1-31, 1967). By October 1967, Smithson had not yet produced any sculpture or proposals appropriate for an outdoor urban exhibition like Sculpture in Environment. As an essayist, however, Smithson had already addressed what he termed 'a new kind of monumentality', in Entropy and the New Monuments (1966), his first written piece for Artforum (June, 1966). The Placid Civic Monument (1967) was also referred to in Oldenburg's journal as Hole and Grave (1967). Yet, for a publicity-minded provocateur such as Oldenburg, repudiation of the institutional art world was perhaps less the point than engaging with the body politic of Vietnam-era America. Smithson, then 29 and less known than Oldenburg, engaged in his own inversion of conventional ideas of sculptural monumentality.
On Saturday, 30th September 1967, Smithson took a bus across the Hudson River to Passaic, N.J., where he strolled among such sights as an aging bridge, a pumping derrick, gushing pipes and a playground sandbox. Smithson recounted his excursion in a *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey* (1967), published in *Artforum* at the end of the year. There he turned his appreciation for common earth as a sculptural material toward a consideration of the monumental properties of everyday industrial structures. The most immediate artistic precedent of the Central Park dig was a project Smithson described in the *Artforum* article in June 1967. In a paragraph discussing the preparation of a construction site by taking geological borings, he suggested using earth on-site as a sculptural material. ‘Earth work, is becoming more and more important to artists. Pavements, holes, trenches, mounds, heaps, paths, ditches, roads, terraces, etc. all have an aesthetic potential’. A year later, that potential would be explored in the Dawn Gallery’s exhibition *Earth Works* (Oct. 5-31, 1968).

Smithson constructed an elaborate new form of dialectic sculpture termed *Sites/Nonsites*. Smithson turned three-dimensional renditions of two-dimensional perspective into displaced boundary markers that refer to actual sites located outside museums and art galleries. The art object ceases to be autonomous in Smithson’s art, and becomes a point of reference. The relationship between seeing and thinking is underscored in these works, which cause observers to reflect on a distant site. A few years later, reflecting on his creative process, Smithson said, ‘It seems that no matter how far out you go, you are always thrown back on your point of origin’. It should be considered that it is not until you look back that you see what was going on, and you are able to evaluate what has happened, and how it has developed to the present. However, Smithson’s quote may have allusion to lines from the English poet, T. S. Eliot, in the conclusion to *Four Quartets*, where he wrote: ‘We shall not cease from exploration/ And the end of all our exploring/ Will be to arriving where we started/ And know the place for the first time’. Thus Smithson’s Passaic expedition can be considered his bid to insert himself into the dialogue about monumental sculpture via his ‘point of origin.’ There is nothing remarkable about the blunt metal constructions at Passaic, New Jersey, except that they bear a slight resemblance to some severely pared-down industrially fabricated minimalist sculpture. Smithson took ‘snapshot after snapshot’ with his Instamatic 400, photographs which became his essay’s illustrations. Like Oldenburg, Smithson had an ability to connect visual details he noticed to wider, existential

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observations. Thus he was able to illustrate that anything is made up not of one thing but of many things that piece together to form a concept, object, space or environment.

From the Mid-West and Beyond: The Creation of a Desert Museum

De Maria created a dramatic transgression of interior space in Munich, Germany. His 50 M (1,600 Cubic feet) Level Dirt/The Land Show: Pure Dirt/Pure Earth/Pure Land (1968) filled the emptied Galerie Heiner Friedrich with potting soil almost 1m deep for two weeks beginning 28th September, 1968. The same work has been produced for a permanent display at the Dia Art Foundation. Turrell, a minor U.S. minimalist from the 1960s, has become a central figure in the production and development of environments and installations of planes of coloured light to create spaces. Every installation is a different experience of light. If it is in a gallery it might be a wall of red light, with the light shone by projectors, or a blue light, or it might even be a tiny spot of light in a black space where you have to wait for a long time to see anything happen. If it is not in a gallery with its natural light, then it might be in the vast natural light of the night sky in the open desert in Arizona, as seen in his installation in Roden Crater (1997 – current), which can be experienced only by making a pilgrimage to the location. An example of Turrell’s work is Air Mass (1993) (fig.60), which was constructed for a public art space in New York. It is a square minimal section of bright white space. The viewer enters a room and the atmospheric minimalist square of natural light from the sky is above. The sky gets darker and the white becomes blue and then bluer and the ceiling around the square gets correspondingly yellowish. The room becomes a viewing platform for the work. Even though the work has been installed, its transitory nature enables it to evolve continually. It is the environment in which it is situated that controls the changing conditions of light.
At the edge of a broad, flat expanse of mesa-top in southern Nevada is one of the signal artworks of the past several decades. Barely perceptible until one approaches the scalloped lip of the mesa, Heizer’s *Double Negative (1969-70)* is carved into the sere earth of the plateau itself. Two gigantic excavated slashes face each other across the indented scarp, roughly paralleling the gorge made by the Virgin River, which flows across the valley floor hundreds of feet below. The negative volumes are indeed monumental, displacing some 240,000 tons of earth, which have been pushed into a hollow between the cuts to form on the sloping cliffs a new positive, a rubble ledge. Conceived and completed in 1969 and 1970, following a series of much smaller cuts in the ground, such as *Isolated Mass/Circumflex (1968)* (fig.61), *Rift 1 (1968)* and other works from 1968 that Heizer collectively called *Nine Nevada Depressions, Double Negative (1969-70)*, it remains, even in its naturally decayed state, the ultimate heroic gesture, and the harbinger of the ideas of a subsequent generation of artists who work on site.

![Fig.61](image-url)

While Heizer has denied that the piece was meant to involve the kind of site specificity so prominent in environmental works of the past fifteen years, any on-site experience of *Double Negative (1969-70)* demands that it be read in concert with its surrounds. The unity implied by the two massive cuts is *Double Negative’s* most striking characteristic, but the otherwise uninflected acreage provides a matrix of references for the piece. Approached from the side, each cut reveals in its far wall the geological forces that created the mesa, the river valley, and the neighboring mountains, recorded in stratified cross section. In turn, the landscape’s formations bear witness to the upheavals and the sedimentary processes unearthed in the trenches of Heizer’s art. The syncline exposed in the excavation binds his man-made cuts to the ancient
mountain shapes across the valley. Heizer’s excavation underlines the most dominant sense of the place – the long horizontal of the mesa-top frames and is echoed in his rectilinear chasms.¹²⁷

As previously stated before because the main problem with earthworks is the viewing of the actual work (most of the work is somewhat geographically inaccessible), the only way it can be viewed is by photo documentation. As a result it must be asked whether the photo becomes more important than the work. When the photo is sold, what is its worth? This type of production became closely allied to conceptual art. During the 1970s there was a huge upsurge of interest in both the past and the present of the medium. One side effect was a seldom acknowledged conflict between the desire to explore photography on its own terms and the wish to exploit its facility – its power to generate and preserve images – in the service of a kind of avant-garde art, which was basically not at all concerned with the aesthetics of the camera. It is within a similar frame that most site-specific earthworks are viewed. An example is work by Long, who uses photography as a means of making a record of his work, not as an end in itself; his work is time based. With him, as with German fluxus artist Joseph Beuys, it is sometimes very difficult to differentiate between the artist and his art. One of Long’s chief means of expression is simply to walk – usually according to a predetermined pattern. This pattern is for exhibition purposes recorded on a map with an accompanying statement. On occasion the statement may stand completely alone, but often, in addition to or even instead of the map there is a photograph. At times Long makes small displacements in the terrain he traverses – he arranges sticks in a pattern, or builds a line of stones. At other times he brings back materials to a gallery where they are arranged to make a design, reminiscent both of the way stones are arranged in Japanese gardens and of the ritual actions of primitive peoples. Within Long’s and Smithson’s work the photography is an essential element. However, earthwork artists such as De Maria and Heizer view photography as just a means of documentation, a means of recording the work or activity that has taken place. To view the work and to understand the full extent of the projects, the audience must be integrated with the environment or space in which the work is placed. Without an active engagement with the space, the photograph is just a secondary viewing aid.

Site-Specificity and the Loss of Place

'To remove the work is to destroy the work.'\textsuperscript{128} It is with this assertion that U.S. minimalist artist Richard Serra sought to shift the terms of debate in a public hearing convened to determine the fate of \textit{Tilted Arc (1981)}. Serra's sculpture had been commissioned by the U.S. General Services Administration Art-in-Architecture Program and permanently installed in the Jacob K. Javits plaza. As Serra has suggested, this notion of artwork having a permanent site of activity or home is at the core of the issue. Much work is exhibited for a short period of time and then moved on. The problem with ephemeral work is that it is not given the luxury or necessity to have a relationship with the space it inhabits. Over time, regardless of whether it is an installation (which obviously has a very personal connection to its space) or paintings on a wall, a works is able to have an ongoing dialogue with the space it inhabits. Examples are the U.S. painter Mark Rothko, whose paintings are permanently displayed in the Rothko Chapel, Houston, or U.S. pop artist Andy Warhol, also permanently displayed at the Andy Warhol Foundation in Pittsburgh. These gallery and museum spaces were designed as permanent structures for the housing of the work, and in Rothko's case the space has met his wish that his paintings should be shown together always. Now there is a relationship between the building and the work. They are indivisible. The viewer does not see the work without thinking about the place in which it is housed.

The same permanence can be seen in the Chinati Foundation (with its permanent installations of U.S. artists Judd, John Chamberlain and Dan Flavin) and also in the earthworks of the 1970s, whose location is an essential ingredient in the work. Obviously if the environmental placement of the work is removed from the work, you are left with nothing. The work's environment is its frame, just as a painting is framed by its dimensions. U.S. artists Asher, Smithson, Serra and Lawrence Weiner have continually addressed concerns relating to spaces and the various politics each environment entails. Their contributions are a materialist critique of art, a resistance to the 'disintegration of culture into commodities'.\textsuperscript{129} In the act of installing a work that could not partake of the commercial possibilities of commodity circulation, installation artists are able to make the gallery a condition and part of the work's experience, if only in abstract, sensory terms. Yet more often than not, installations, happenings, performances and earthworks all exist in precisely the form in which most people view them – as documents, photographs. They are


\textsuperscript{129} Crimp, op. cit., p.152.
transferred back into the institutional discourses of art through reproduction, one of the most powerful means through which art has been abstracted from its contexts throughout the modern era. For Richard Serra, the whole point of sculpture is to defeat this surrogate consumption of art, indeed to defeat consumption altogether and to replace it with the experience of art in its material reality.

If you reduce sculpture to the flat plane of the photograph, you're passing on only a residue of your concerns. You're denying the temporal experience of the work. You're not only reducing the sculpture to a different scale for the purposes of consumption, but you're denying the real content of the work. At least with most sculpture, the experience of the work is inseparable from the place in which the work resides. Apart from that condition, any experience of the work is a deception.130

A Constant Shifting of Borders

Installation’s transitory nature and experiential basis is significant at the present time. First, it suggests that art is a living thing; second, installation ideally represents a radicalisation of space, a taking back of art’s ability to think and operate independently within a world of product, marketing and sales. The importance of such artwork is its dependence on the site, rather than its existence as an object for marketability. It has been argued that within a global culture of capitalism, where ideas are commodities, installations have become as much a product as anything else. Museums and galleries have come to accommodate installations, and this acceptance could seem to undermine installation’s original function. However, it is at this point that a new site of discovery can open up. Spaces of different character, from the formal and spare (such as museums and private galleries), to the raw and open (environments and public spaces) point out the importance of installation and presentation in the experience of art. The acceptance of installations can challenge the architects, builders and planners who construct our spaces and

130Crimp, op. cit., p.159.
urban environment, and in this way installations can engage in broader social, cultural and political concerns.

The specificity of site-oriented works means that they are conceived for, dependent upon, and inseparable from their location. The space of art is no longer perceived as a blank slate to present works in but rather a real place. The art object or event in this context is to be experienced in the here-and-now through the bodily presence of each viewer, in a sensory immediacy of spatial extension and temporal or permanent duration. Site-specific art can lead to the unearthing of repressed histories, provide support for greater visibility of marginalised groups and issues, and initiate the discovery or rediscovery of places ignored by culture. The siting of art in 'real' places can also be a means to extract the social and historical dimensions from those places, to variously serve the intentions of an artist, satisfy institutional demographics or fulfil the needs of an ever-changing and expanding urban environment, as 'the elaboration of place-bound identities has become more rather than less important in a world of diminishing spatial barriers to exchange, movement and communication'.

Today's site-oriented practices inherit the task of demarcating the relationships between our varying spaces across frontiers and borders. This means addressing the differences between one thing, one person, one place, one thought, one fragment, and bringing them together to create more sophisticated and detailed environments, as well as fostering various degrees of activity amongst a wide range of disciplines, in particular that between artist and architects. Only those cultures that address and practise this relation sensibly can turn local encounters and projects into long-term commitments and transform passing intimacies into indelible social marks.

The installation form implies an engagement with the question of space. An installation both defines and contains space, situating if not controlling the viewer within it. Thus the space of installations is inhabited not by the artist but by the viewers. The meaning of an installation is created in the moment when a viewer interacts with it, by walking into and through it, standing within it, watching or even touching it. Thus the work belongs to the site it occupies. If the site was to change so would the interrelationship of object, context and viewer. In our ever-changing environments, such practices prevent the installed work from becoming generalised into an

131 Kwon, Miwon, One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity. SPACE, SITE, INTERVENTION: situating installation art, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2000, p.56.
undifferentiated serialisation or meaningless object; rather it creates an ongoing and permanent dialogue with a particular site, environment, cultural, social and political space.

The advantages of such working methodologies enable artists to construct environments that are not necessarily dependent upon a private gallery or museum exhibition system. The visual art and art maker’s intentions can move beyond the confines and aims of a museum and work directly with a society, culture or environment. Such work presents and represents a wide-ranging discourse of practices, discoveries, interventions and inventions within the constant shifting of borders in our urban and natural spaces. Installations and land projects enable the public to assess what we have done in our urban and natural environments. In turn, such working methods and projects create a widespread effort to re-establish our relationship to our varied spaces and cultures, through integration, collaboration and permanence.
Chapter Five

One Place After Another:
The Museum as a Palace in the Sky.

All means should be explored in the interest of a more open-minded and democratic museum.\(^{132}\)

This chapter explores the space of the museum from the 1960s to the present as a space in which artists and architects have collaborated. The aim is, through practitioners, to analyse processes of production involving meaning and value, mechanisms of exclusion and the clash of interests. At the same time attention needs to be paid to the structural and functional changes of the increasingly dynamic museum institution. Through their function, museums point out interdependence of sponsors and art producers, and in doing so demonstrate that the transition from the once conservative educational institutions into company-like suppliers of culture has by no means created ideologically vacant spaces and zones. The question is raised whether museums have any relevance at all to contemporary art. Through examples of practitioners within both visual art and architectural discourse, it can be shown that museums have, since the 1960s, been viable spaces for activity. Yet conjoining must be achieved of the needs of the artists and their intentions with those of the architects and of governing political, cultural and social agencies. The possibilities of artists being able to produce museums and museums being built for the permanent display of artworks will also be discussed.

Private galleries are considered as well as museums, because socially and economically private galleries and museums tend to be linked when it comes to exhibiting artwork. Artists who are represented by private galleries tend to show more often than not in museums. Another aspect which will be discussed is the education system, and the way the introduction of artist talks has aided the opening up of the museum space for more site-specific artists to explain their practice.

to a wider public who may not have had opportunities to view the works before, due to the nature of the practice.

Two positions are discussed that must be clearly differentiated. The first concerns the demands of visual arts and what is expected from a museum in relation to the installation of work. The second is the architecture of the museum and the role of the architect when designing a museum: the construction of such spaces mediates the ways in which art will be viewed within their interior. Certain artists and their practices have been chosen because of the role they have played in reconfiguring the role of the museum space the installation and reception of artwork. Such work takes into consideration the place (the architecture) in which the work comes to rest (develops) as an integral part of the work in question, and all the consequences such a link implies. It is not the aim to present negative values of ornamenting (disfiguring or embellishing) the museum (architecture) in which the work is installed, but to indicate as precisely as possible the way the work belongs in the place and vice versa.

A work that takes into consideration the place in which it is shown or exhibited cannot be moved elsewhere, and must disappear at the end of its exhibition. The idea of disappearance through destruction opens a breach in the dominant artistic ideology, an ideology which wants a work to be immortal and therefore by definition indestructible, at least in the surrounding shelter of the museum. It is within this idiom that certain art makers and their work have been chosen, as their work can be continually adapted and relevant to any space, environment or culture. Through this process it takes its unique form of existence from its individual and continual destruction.

To know architecture without having seen it is to accept working in the context of an aseptic and (so-called) neutral space, cubic, vertical walls, horizontal, white interiors with perfect lighting. This architecture is the well-known kind, since it is found in most private galleries and museums of the Western world. Such a place is 'architecturally adapted to the needs of the market implied and allowed by such a transportable commodity'. Certain artists, consistent in their work, know that their work can only be interpreted in a place such as that described above. The art makers and work in this chapter have been selected due to the developmental nature of their practice. The methodologies which have been undertaken by these individuals in the presentation

and invention of work challenge not only its own reception to a viewing public but also challenge and collaborate with the existing architectural model.

Fig.62

One problem that is presented and discussed at length concerns the role of the architect and architecture in presenting the artwork. In this research the aim is to present possible avenues of investigation that could be undertaken through the collaboration of artists and architects in relation to the production of museums and exhibition spaces. A problem raised through the research is: if an architect is given a museum to build, is the museum to take a back seat to the art and present itself in as neutral way as possible, or should the museum’s architecture itself be of greater interest? Two answers represent additional research which is presented in this chapter in depth. The first is U.S. modernist architect Frank Lloyd Wright’s *Guggenheim Museum (1943-59)* (fig.62) in New York, which through its architectural construction imposes its limitations on the artwork displayed to such a extent that the art can be seen only as simple decoration for the architecture. However, certain artists such as French conceptual artist Daniel Buren and U.S. minimalist artist Dan Flavin, as in his *untitled (to Tracy, to celebrate the love of a lifetime) (1992)* (fig.63), have used the limitations of the Guggenheim’s architectural spaces and have transformed its spatial articulations into entirely different sensory perceptions of the existing space. The second is U.S. architect Frank Gehry and his ongoing collaborations with artists such as U.S minimalist artist Richard Serra, and the production of permanent artworks for a museum such as the *Guggenheim Museum (1997)*, in Bilbao.
A further aim of this chapter is to explore how the museum as site has shifted from a space where artists showed work that became in many instances autonomous amongst all the other objects on display, to a place which since the 1960s has become a site of exploration occupied by various visual, theoretical and intellectual activities. These activities have in turn yielded a far richer understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional significance of the works presented and the ways in which they are conceived, presented and discussed. Museums represent an organisational principle for the content of cultural identity and scientific knowledge. It is within this idiom of museums collecting, ordering, representing and preserving information that two types of artists and artwork have occurred, which are discussed in this chapter in relation to the production of permanent work for permanent spaces. The artists presented either accept the boundaries and limitations of museums, exhibiting tactile work, or they choose to embrace those limitations and produce work which collaborates with them. It is important to note here that there are many different forms of museum, such as natural museums, history museums, sporting museums, car museums. Although the museum under focus is that which displays artworks, such a museum still functions in the same manner as any other museum in that it too collects and files objects and information. However, the concerns presented within this research concern artists and architects and the working methodologies of both disciplines.
Museums convey specific information about knowledge or traditions, portraying a disciplinary aspect while emphasising 'the signifying processes through which museums endow objects with meaning'.\textsuperscript{134} Within these limitations the aim is to present artists and their work, which through their development and conception of both permanent exhibitions (as well as being incorporated within or as sole designer of a museum), are able to expand, differentiate, and produce spaces for the permanent display of artwork, which coexists with the architecture. This would create architectural and artistic practices to embrace and develop stable, fixed and unified identities that would enable museums and their internal spaces to become incorporated with the artwork exhibited within them. Thus a system would be created where one could not exist without the other, or the architecture without the art.

**Limitations and Positive Movements**

Since the beginning of the twentieth century the museum has been both a theme of artists’ reflections and a target of their criticism, as it represents a central locus of power in the cultural economy of modernism. Art movements such as Futurism, Dada and Russian Constructivism and their participating artists have been influenced by and have critiqued the idea of the 'museum as institution', as a space 'representing an old world, the epitome of conservative values, a bastion against the progressive and new and thus an institution which needs to be utterly destroyed (symbolically at least)'.\textsuperscript{135}

The demand for an opening up of museums to society in general and to reflect cultural or societal interests began in the late 1960s. Art movements such as installation, performance, happenings and other forms of artistic practice became a viable medium for artists to represent their concerns and the broader concerns of the society from which they come. These new forms of practice sought to question 'the museum is less as an object an more as a muse',\textsuperscript{136} which could be


questioned through site-specific activity. From being just a piece of architecture the museum became perceived as an instrument for communication and an object for discussion.

In the cultural economy of Modernism in visual art, the museum has become the artist’s subject of reflection and a target of criticism. In response to the phrase used by U.S. 1970s conceptual artist Allan Kaprow, *Death to the Museum*, the museum space in the 1970s became a lively environment for site-specific and conceptually based activity. Now more than ever museums are adapting to contemporary ideas, which involve broader marketing and competition, inter-city competition and the desires of corporate sponsorship. Most museums and cultural institutions have long since been renewed to such an extent that they no longer pose a fundamental opposition to the ‘avant-gardes’ of economics, the entertainment industry and even artistic production. However, this shows us that although fundamentally a museum is much more than a building, it is a part and expression of a conservative aspect of society. The museum’s function in a sense is to conserve, to preserve, to keep, and in doing so the fundamental aspect of preservation becomes to a certain degree a static value of the artwork. The term ‘static value’ implies that the work usually does nothing more than take-up a portion of space within the building. It does not challenge the architectural, political or cultural nature of the building; it is merely subsumed by it.

The museum and its organisations, which remain primarily the housing of a collection, are based on the premise that the qualities of art are limited to its boundaries and surfaces. As such the collection can be divided and grouped thematically or mixed randomly, and so ‘art is inherently collectable with all that implies’.

The old argument or notion that the art should stand for itself, regardless of its installation, presupposes that art’s qualities are confinable, possessing only internal relationships like a prepared specimen in a natural history museum. Irrespective of the work’s placement within the space its qualities will remain constant and true, as if sealed. English artist Peter Wigglesworth, in his notes for a project involving the construction of a new museum, *Model Bregenz I and II* (1998), stated, ‘the museum’s effect upon looking at art is like that of our society’s mobility upon distinguishing and even destroying the sense of place.’ A work of art that fills a

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particular space is referred to by U.S. earth artist Walter De Maria’s *New York Earth Room* (1977) as defining a particular space with its qualities, while Flavin in his *Untitled Marfa* (2000) (fig.64) believes it to be both the space and the place, and U.S. installation artist Mary Miss’s *Field Rotation* (1980-81) (fig.65) occupies the senses and imagination far beyond anything that may be defined in a moment or a glance or in a reading of its description. The concept that such art can be moved and viewed in any other place and space is certainly not inherent in the nature of such site-specific work. To remove such work from its place to be assembled into a new and false whole within the mechanisms of a museum, where each work’s space is negated by juxtapositions provoking a domino effect of irrelevant comparisons and endless distractions, would be to destroy it.

![Fig.64](image1)

![Fig.65](image2)

New museums of modern art are opening all the time. Scenes of heroic construction workers operating cranes and swinging horizontal girder shapes across complicated, interesting angular abstract structures are a familiar sight throughout the art capitals of the world, as the new museums spring up. Once finished, everything that is glossy and current will shine inside them and vast crowds will stream through them. Museums are important because they go beyond society’s preoccupation with material things. The art of Europe, collected from the last several centuries and placed in the old museums, offers transcendent meanings and a chronicle of our history. New modern art museums are places of higher values, dedicated not only to collecting and preserving but also, like the old museums, to searching – searching for meaning. They stand for civilization’s highest achievements. At the same time modern museums are considered works of architectural genius, where expression and higher artistic excellence are rewarded with increased public awareness and attendance, such as Gehry’s *Guggenheim Museum, Bilboa*

![Fig.66](image)

However, U.S. minimalist artist Donald Judd noted that ‘museums are so rarely built on functional lines these days, the trend being towards the creation of a showpiece for the architect. Why are painters and sculptors not asked for their input?’ Artists have used such museums and their implied grandness to garner questions and values regarding the architecture, the exhibition space and the artwork with the space. An example is U.S. conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner’s *REDUCED* (1998), created and installed for the opening exhibition of the Guggenheim, Bilboa. The work is a traditional text piece of Weiner’s, with its dimensions being the height of the wall and stretched on the wall, the same length as a permanently installed sculpture by Serra *Torqued Eclipse* (1998). Weiner’s work questioned the idea of the work of art reduced in such a space which is overloaded with architectural gesture, as well as being inferior in weight to that of Serra’s rolled steel sculpture. It raised the question, ‘Does the artwork become secondary to that of the museum and its architecture, if the architecture is so burdened with gesture?’ In many ways an artist is trying to fit one artwork inside another, the artwork becoming subsumed by the space because of its sheer size and overburdening concepts.

If there is no meaning at all going on in the new museums, then it is up to the art to produce the meaning. However, if a space or place is not inviting, people will generally not be drawn to it.

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The U.S. architect Peter Eisenman, in his design for the *Wexner Center for the Visual Arts, Columbus, Ohio (1982-89)*, believed that ‘the architecture should provoke art. We must dispel this definition of architecture as a service-orientated profession’.  

It is almost impossible to arrive at the public’s reaction to a new art form; attendance figures at exhibitions mostly reflect the advertising, hype and convenient location. But it can be derived that a museum can bring a community together by the sheer weight of its notoriety, whether through the work exhibited within it or through the museum itself. A museum can create jobs as well as tourism. Obviously in many ways the objects within the museum take a back seat to the hype. But over time, if a museum is created from the beginning to foster ongoing dialogues between various social, cultural and political bodies, the museum and its constructed spaces will continue to be relevant not only to the occupied site but also to a wider community.

1968 was a significant time in art education and the way the museum as a container for historicism was viewed. The riots in Paris, the unrest in British art schools and the social and political unrest in the U.S. may not have been responses to identical forms of provocation but they generated very similar reactions. Sudden revulsion was felt by artists to the commercial aspect of art, and with this distaste for bourgeois trade came the reawakened belief that art should play a role in the political and social life of society. Confrontation, involvement and commitment were words that reached beyond the ivory tower aestheticism of art. People could now see that the museum was not autonomous within a city but could be integrated into the city. Artists could see that “the museum has to accumulate questions as well as art works”  

because, like the creation of artwork, it had to be a site of exploration. It was no longer good enough to believe that museums were unaffected by those things which occur beyond its white walls. Therefore it became necessary for museums to concern themselves with peripheral exploration, so that they maintained a viable and important fabric within a broader cultural environment. This could be done through either through funding or support of public works or through permanent or longer extending installation periods.

Art and criticism has continually focused on the art context: the gallery space and museum have become a forum for diverse operations. This is represented in U.S. conceptual artist Vito

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Acconci’s fantasizing about unseen viewers in *Seedbed* (1972); Flavin, continuing to set up neon lights that relate to a specific space, *untitled (to Jan and Ron Greenberg)* (1972-73); German artist Hans Haacke surveying art audiences visiting Soho galleries and uptown museums with *Birthplace and Residence Profile, Part 1 and Part 2* (1969 – 1970); U.S. artist and art critic Brian O’Doherty analyzing the International style of interior design considered essential for museums and commercial galleries and commenting about the art housed in them, in *Inside the White Cube* (1976); U.S. art critic Lucy Lippard devoting almost a decade to political means of engendering style, particularly the feminist style. It is thus evident that from a diverse field of professionals such as writers, critics, theorists and artists, the museum has continued to be an ongoing site for exploration, which must be continually questioned if it is to remain a viable space for intervention and invention.

A museum has become a necessary symbol of a city and of the culture of that city, all over the world. Yet the museum is fairly limited in its ability to house art, as it is easier to store and show paintings and sculptures than an installation. Artwork is singled out as culturally significant by those who, in any given time and social stratum, wield the power to confer. Today’s museum spaces belong to a select group which has a sizable share in this cultural power. By the very structure of their existence, museums and private galleries can be seen to be political institutions due to their socio-political connotations.

In 1969 the Art Workers’ Coalition instigated a process concerning the rights of artists to maintain control over their work. U.S. artists and critics Robert Morris, Carl Andre and Lucy Lippard were among the leading participants. The museum or gallery space became an area of both political and economic control. To generate more interest in an open-minded and democratic exhibition space they believed there should be equal division between the groups involved, the patrons and the artists.\(^\text{143}\) Installation art and public art have questioned the role of museums and, by working out of the gallery space toward a more direct relation to the critical world, the work has been able to question the commodity of art and raise public awareness.

The policies of publicly funded museums are obviously subject to the approval of the supervising government agency. In turn, privately funded institutions naturally reflect the interests of their sponsors. Moral and political beliefs and opinions govern such spaces. As a

\(^\text{143}\) Lippard, op. cit., p.171.
result, museums relate to the select few who are linked to such a space, and ‘the gallery setting, with its pre-selected audience and social isolation, provides a constant reminder of the continuing gap between art and life’. Fortunately, art institutions and other cultural power agencies do not form a block over all work, so that although public access may be limited it is still not totally prevented. The Dia Art Foundation in New York is an organisation which over the past thirty years has continually challenged the role of the museum. De Maria is one artist who has benefited from the Dia Art Foundation, and his work from the 1970s was more concerned with the conceptual element than with producing objects that could be modified. The work dealt with spatial problems and the command of entire situations on a grand scale. Whether it in Broken Kilometer (1979) or Earth Room (1977), De Maria’s work negated the museum and opened up a new space that was inherent in the work’s function and meaning.

The museum is not a neutral space with many rooms: the exhibition space and its internal site is so visually and/or historically loaded that the work cannot help but address the issues of architecture and space. Something continually overlooked in this environment is the role of the architects. Fundamentally, they govern the way people see the work within the space. So the artist’s function in such a space is to present work that does not challenge the existing space but complies with the boundaries set by the architect. Installation artists of the 1970s challenged the role of the artwork and the spaces in which they were exhibited. The museum or gallery space became the focus of inquiry, rather than the painting hanging from the wall or the sculpture on a plinth. The French theorist, now professor of the History of Art at Harvard University, Yves Alain-Bois, in Painting as Model (1990), reflects that in the painting of U.S. abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock, the ‘form cannot be reduced to the geometric outline of objects, that it is bound up with the texture of things, and that it draws simultaneously on all our senses’. Painting has moved from the two-dimensionality of the white canvas to the three-dimensionality of the white cube, as expressed by O’Doherty in his book Inside the White Cube (1976). O’Doherty outlined how artistic concerns have shifted since the post-war period of the 1960s and 1970s, and he examined the assumptions on which the modern commercial and museum galleries were based. Concerned with the complex and sophisticated relationship between economics, social context, and aesthetics as represented in the contested space of the art

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gallery, O’Doherty believed that ‘artists must construe their work in relation to the gallery space and system’. 146

Minimal art of the 1960s would seem to refer to the gallery’s interior cube as the ultimate contextual frame of reference for the work. This reference was only compositional. In place of an internal compositional reading, the art’s formal structure would appear in relation to the gallery’s interior architectural structure. That the work was equated to the architectural container tended to literalise it. The gallery space in this situation would appear neutral and objectively factual, simply as a materially apart from the art.

Museums, like asylums and jails, have wards and cells – in other words, neutral rooms called galleries. A work of art when placed in a gallery loses its charge, and becomes a portable object or surface disengaged from the outside world. All is reduced to visual fodder and transportable merchandise. Innovations are allowed only if they support this kind of confinement. 147

Museums and the galleries within them impose their own ideals upon the spaces in which artworks are located. Functional, architectural elements of the gallery’s interior prescribe meaning and determine specific readings for the art defined within its architectural frame. Thus all play a role in the viewing of artworks. The gallery space is meant to appear neutral. The lighting that as much as the white walls creates this neutrality, is at the same time used to highlight and centre attention on the artwork on the wall or floor, and is kept inconspicuous. The constructed spaces of the museum thus play a role in the interpretation and receiving of an artwork, more than being simply a static volume for the housing of objects. Flavin’s light installations make use of this double functioning of inside and outside of gallery. His arrangements of light fixtures in a gallery depend contextually for significance upon the function of the gallery, and the socially determined architectural use of electric lighting.

The architectural frame of the exhibition space in Flavin’s installations functions only in situ and upon completion ceases to function artistically. The works take on meaning by being placed in

relation to other works of art or specific architectural features in an exhibition space. For example, Flavin’s permanent light pieces at the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas, have a total integration with the architectural space of the Marfa Buildings as well with as its position within a peripheral scope. Flavin’s lights radically disturb both the surrounding environment and the artworks as well as the movement of the audience through traditional white-walled gallery spaces.

Slowing down the movement of traffic through the use of lights as the only material to light the darkened spaces creates a heightened awareness of the space as well as enabling the space to be the framing mechanism for the work. The architectural dimensions of the space accommodate how the light produced is spread throughout the total space.

As art is internalised within society, the architecture that displays it is defined by the needs of society at large, and by art as an institutional internal need. Art as an institution produces ideological meanings and positions that regulate and contain the subjective experiences of the people within its boundaries. Buren’s work and writing focus on the specific architectural/cultural function of the gallery in producing art’s institutional meaning. All institutional space provides a background with the function of inversely defining what it places in the foreground, as ‘the art gallery is an aristocratic relative of this conventional white cube. Its major task is to place the art object, and the spectator’s focused consciousness of it, at eye-level centre in the interior, and, in so doing, to conceal from the spectator any awareness of its own presence and function.’

Buren’s work is constructed for a particular location, bringing out the innate characteristics of that location’s appearance. For the installation at the Portikus Museum, Frankfurt, Germany, Colour-Transparency: cabanes eclatées no 26A and 26B (1998) (fig.67), Buren created a concept and installation that addressed the architecture of the exhibition space: a

148 Graham, Dan, op. cit., p.22.
rectangle with a central top-light consisting of 80cm x 1.7m panes of opaque glass, set in a metal frame.\textsuperscript{149} Buren explained that the structure and intent of the installation is ‘to create an interdependency between the cabin (structure) and the space in which it is being shown. In each case the two components should be inseparable’.\textsuperscript{150} The success of such work lies not within the colour reproductions of a museum catalogue but in experiencing first hand the work within the space and also the museum space itself. The museum space consists of both that which is situated inside and the location of the museum within a broader environment.

Of course the gradual acceptance of such work as installations and site-specific activity, its salable object-hood in the form of texts, photographs and documents, has never truly revolutionized the use of art in the existing culture. But the use of the gallery space itself has certainly become more flexible. The space need not be merely a showcase for marketable goods, but can at best be considered a public area for certain experimental workshops and reciprocal experiences. Another perspective that should be considered is that of artists like Buren and Zagreb artist Braco Dimitrijevic, who have refuted the gallery space, and by moving outside it have tended to critique and attempted to manipulate our perception of ‘public space’, as in Accidental Sculpture (1968). The environment external to the gallery is still a part of it. By questioning the external site of the museum, artists can garner wider community reaction to their work, which can be neglected by focusing only on the displaying of artwork within the museum space.

\textbf{Education, Probation and Alternative Spaces of Experimentation}

A real problem lies in the fact that the museum and private gallery systems are organised spaces upon which artists have traditionally been dependent. Without galleries, museums, catalogues and publications, what system does art depend on, to travel? Even though artists have moved outside the confinement of the gallery system, they still depend on museums/organisations to support what they are doing. The documentation and plans for many of the earthworks, conceptual, performance and site-specific works are exhibited and sold within the gallery system. Museums and galleries do not necessarily have to be large to have validity. Artist-run-spaces,

\textsuperscript{150} Nollert, op. cit., p.4.
which have consistently produced important exhibitions, can be considered by their audience to be an institution, providing opportunities for experimentation and exhibition not only to artists but also to a wider section of the community. Such spaces imply the existence of a strong foundation which is there to support a community and its varied levels of interest.

As art education is increasingly deprived of resources, and the arts as a unified subject are squeezed out of education by government policy, galleries and museums become a vast potential resource. Yet they abstract history, because what they teach students will predominantly be subjects in which they have a vested interest, and ‘cultural confinement takes place when a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition’.¹⁵¹ Thus a certain view of history may be set in place. The audience or viewers of such shows, the readers of exhibition catalogues and visual art theory books, almost certainly believe that a definitive example of collected works is presented, one which best answers their questions and will solve the problems raised. Obviously, art and being an artist have become more and more popular due to opportunities for studying the visual arts at technical colleges and universities. Senior members of art academies are still able to foster individuals who may appear to have ability within the visual arts. Those individuals are trained because they are either talented or interested in the development of a particular art movement or history.

Today, however, the power lies with the bureaucrats of the art world. They are committees and peers such as the Australian Council, visual art funding organisations that pick and choose the individuals they believe to be best representative of what is happening in that community at that particular moment. This new art has to be seen; it has to be exhibited, preferably in a museum to endorse its credentials as art and later perhaps in some private commercial gallery. There are, of course, funding bodies which aid in the development of projects, but lack of government funding, resources and personnel mean that the work funded is often by individuals who have been assisted in the past. Why? Because they are a safe bet in that they have a reputation of producing a work and so the money does not appear to be wasted.

¹⁵¹ Smithson, op. cit., p.16.
The relationship between the museum and the avant-garde dealer has been a close one in every capitalist country in recent years. Today the notion of exhibition space is one where ‘a thing exists in a certain density, and we can simply go through a rather transitory and selective’ process to decide what seems to be of value and what is not. Value does not seem to be inherent within work that is constantly redeveloped over a long period of time, such as Swiss geometric abstract painter Olivier Mosset’s *Circles* (1966-74) (figs.68 and 69), numbering 200 paintings, as Mosset stated ‘you don’t work in a vacuum as there is always a framework', you work within that is involved with the formal language of your chosen field of practice. What is wanted is a work that symbolises what is happening now, but can be discarded as quickly as it comes, so that it can make way for a new idea, approach or fashion. Substance is not granted a reward but is rather singled out as being one idea by one individual, which will become exhausted quickly. In a world where spaces and places are constantly shifting, fashion, popularity and interest is fleeting, and thus those artists who undertake a commitment to the development of a methodology can become forgotten within the greater scheme of things.

*Your Choice or Mine: Who Decides What is Important, Valuable or Extinct?*

Museums and galleries offer the spectator a passive experience of received notions of taste. Few shows question their underpinning cultural basis and few galleries make enough effort to create access to what they exhibit or what they store. There needs to be a greater push for private galleries to incorporate projects that do not necessarily have economic gain attached, but rather

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152 Jenkins, Kyle, Interview conducted with Olivier Mosset on 19/08/02, 2002.
entail an activation of a particular space and the people who frequent it. It could be asked, how can it be a passive experience to go to a museum or private gallery space? The answer is that the work is there, on the floor or hung up on the wall or on a pedestal. The work is separate from the viewer’s physical space. This separation allows the work to be autonomous from its space, its placement. Private galleries and museums are passive, as they are bound up in all the political and economic meanderings associated with institutions. They have to serve a board of directors who look to increase the level of visitors to the museum and at the same time exhibit work that is attractive to a wider community of people. This is not to say that such a practice is not productive. Increased visitation to any museum or private gallery is a positive move in gaining greater awareness for artists within larger context than that which they occupy within the visual arts. The only problem with limiting the area of focus for a museum is that projects which may question the validity of the space or are difficult in their installation or receivership maybe left on the sidelines, while traditional work such as painting and sculpture is exhibited more prevalently.

Another problem with the museum and private gallery system is the way in which artists can become popular and then subsequently disappear from view. Visual art, like anything else, has periods of stylistic popularity. For example, photography may be popular one year, and then it could be portrait painting the next. In this instance the general public may be presented with an abstracted idea of what is happening in a particular place at a particular time. Work that becomes popular is presented as being the most culturally significant and socially beneficial work. Yet it needs to be understood that a certain work embraces and represents only a certain methodology, and that within any community there are multiple groups, organisations and art movements that make up the cultural fabric of the place.

Of significance here is the role of private galleries in such representation and distribution of visual art and methodologies. Obviously private galleries have a financial commitment in any artist they represent. It is in their interest, then, to persuade museums to either exhibit or purchase such work. This in turn creates a market for the artist’s work but also for the gallery. This creates a monopoly in a cultural scene. It means that the wider community only sees work that is presented within museums and on some occasions in private galleries. Even though artist-run spaces are littered throughout any city in the world, they are predominantly visited only by the people directly involved with the space: artists, directors, friends and family members. There is a need for private spaces and museums to create project spaces for artists who may be working within a set methodology that does not suit a private gallery, or may never be included in curated
exhibition such as Documenta in Germany or any of the Biennales throughout the world. Indeed, project spaces have been organised and are assisting in the development of artists who work on more permanent work. The SM Bureau (Stedelijk Museum) in Amsterdam and Artspace in Sydney and Auckland are just three examples of spaces that aid in the development of projects that may not be deemed suitable for exhibition in museums and private galleries. Such spaces enable artists to produce work that is given an extended period of exhibition. At the same time such spaces can to be manipulated to suit the function of their individual projects. Without more of these spaces the visual arts will be manipulated by the individuals who govern our museums and private galleries, fostering a system that could be described as 'the rise and rise of international curatorial careerism'. In such a system only work that is deemed fashionable at a particular moment is given any opportunity for exhibition or development. In museum project spaces a wider community than that which is involved directly with the arts would receive an abstracted idea of what is interesting and what is not in relation to the visual arts through museum shows.

Perhaps the fashionability of certain artists and galleries was easier in periods when the 'dominant aesthetic' was accepted as the important mode of creativity. In the high point of the 1950s painting movement of abstract expressionism, it was simpler to decide what was of value and it was judged against a relatively limited canon. If you were a minimalist when minimalism was in its ascendancy, then it was easy to dismiss or acknowledge the work of others by those standards. Of course the historic reality of any period is far more fraught and complex than such journalistic bracketing allows. However, there is now a tendency for people to embrace everything. In a way we have a hybrid model of activity. Information is now so easily available through the Internet, publications, television and travel, and artists and their work travel more easily than ever before. As a result artists are able to search out different social, cultural and political groups with which they may have an affinity. The species of the artist has adapted to its surroundings, and museums and their spaces have had to accommodate such a procession of travelling artists and their work.

If more and more cultural artefacts are being displayed, there are obviously many more being produced by a seemingly inexhaustible array of current practitioners. As with independent film and with the fine arts, the issue is no longer one of production but distribution. Almost anyone

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can make work which might well be considered culturally valid. The key question becomes whether the work is commercially distributable or not. The energy that previously went into creation is now devoted to securing allocation and attention. This attention can be obtained either by continually trying to push the work produced or by creating a system where people are educated about varying degrees of activity across a broader spectrum.

The only way forward for museums is through education and a heightened knowledge of the visual arts throughout the community. Challenges to the museum space, and use of its many varied spaces as sites of active participation have allowed artists and art students an increasingly varied and much needed education of built spaces and of works which inhabit such spaces. Increasing access to art in galleries and museums through education and artists’ talks will permit the de-colonisation of spaces that have become subservient to one person’s vision. Developing sympathy for art can start with visits by school groups. For children (and even adults) art can be exciting and need not be mystifying. The Whitechapel Gallery in London has a well-established education program involving both groups coming to the gallery and artists working in the schools. The artists are not spare teachers or cosmetic additions, but are there as artists and catalysts. By responding positively with an active public, such lecturers can foster increased awareness of what is going on, not only within the museum but also in the built environments and possible areas of community based projects.

Thus within the education system comes the notion that artwork is created just to be simple decoration or entertainment for a new cultural mass looking for a weekend activity. One result of this perception is that architects and artists are working simultaneously along the same lines, even though each may feel they are separate. They are working towards exhibitionism. The artwork on the wall or floor must be quirky enough to keep a general audience interested long enough, and the architect must create a structure that draws the people in. This trend has manifested itself in a new style of exhibition space which emphasises a show-like character. Major exhibitions such as Biennales now bring in masses of visitors, and are strategically placed within this newly created exhibition space. Exhibitions become shows. This new exhibition space and its show, the union of dramatized museum architecture, displays architecture and theme based art shows which substantially contribute to the growing number of visitors. These show-like exhibitions and their theatre-like exhibition spaces are a primary attempt to reconcile
the demands of art and the masses. Conflicts naturally arise between architect, curator and artist as they try to win the audience, in this competition for pole position in the public’s attention.\textsuperscript{154}

**Engagement and Necessity of a Museum Space**

By exposing their materials and processes, installations and site-specific works attempt to engage the viewer in an immediate, direct and unmediated experience, that is to ‘move through the space, explore it in different ways. Feel it, look at it, and speak to it. Let the space do things to you: embrace you, hold you, move you, push you, lift you up, crush you’.\textsuperscript{155} Forces applied to the structure of the interior environment give it movement in every direction. Sometimes the work goes beyond just making plastic art (work that is placed upon the architectural support). More importantly, it seeks to create an environment in which work–architecture–viewer dialogue can occur. This can be seen in projects by U.S minimalist and installation artist James Turrell, whose work was a natural viewing platform cut-out of museum ceiling *Space that Sees* (1993) (fig.70), or a total built environment created in a dormant volcano in Arizona, *Roden Crater* (1991–current). Such works demonstrate that it is more important to show what a work will imply immediately in a given place, than perhaps what the place will imply within the work. In this way a function can be set up between what the function of the site or museum (architecture) implies and the meaning of the artwork (visual object), which will appear to be more developed from the tension that is created.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\textsuperscript{154} Weibel, op. cit., p.116.
\textsuperscript{155} Celant, Germano, op. cit., p.120.
In fact, the pseudo-freedom of a work under the pretext that it can be transported from one exhibition to another, regardless of the architecture of the place in which it is displayed, presupposes either that this architecture is familiar or that it is being deliberately ignored. To know the architecture without having seen it is 'to accept working a priori in the context of an aseptic and (so-called) neutral place, cubic, vertical walls, horizontal, white floors and ceiling'.\(^{156}\) This architecture is the well-known kind, found in most of the museums and galleries of the Western world, places architecturally adapted to the needs of the market and allowed by such transportable commodities. In both cases it is obviously a question of a setting in which, under the pretext of illuminating the subject (the work) to make it as autonomous as possible, the architecture is seen as an obligatory frame.

Museum architecture should supply a sense of volume and space, but usually there are many rooms that move very quickly from disturbing architectural details of tubing to post-modern mouldings, to overlays and collages, and turnstiles, but with no orientation to place. It is important to keep a sense of orientation within a built environment, so that not only the artwork but also the inhabitant of such spaces can move around freely without feeling crammed in by the amount of objects stuffed into that space. Most successful within a museum space would be to have more 'life spaces'. That implies a structured balance between the work, the space it takes up, and the viewer. It is important to include these life spaces, as they are 'the dialectical consequence of an activity, taking place, outside themselves'.\(^{157}\) There exists, apart from the exterior relationships, an intimate and inner experience of one's own life space.

Of course, we are still at the stage of a superficial operation, in that the architectural field already has a structure, and the artist transforms it by means of colour and the optical and perceptual use of space. In other words, the structural properties of the field remain the same, and the chromatic transformation serves as a visual lightening or intensification of the field. Every place radically imbues (formally, architecturally, sociologically, and politically) with its meaning the object (work/creation) shown there. Art in general refuses to be implied or to reject the role imposed by the museum, a role both cultural and architectural. The purpose of a museum may well be to create juxtapositions between objects by showing them in the same space, to produce a natural debate or to encourage a mental debate, but instead the audience simply contemplates a single

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157 Celant, op. cit., p.123.
object at a time. Thus the museum turns into an archive of objects that seem to have no
correlation except that they inhabit the same space until they are shifted or placed back in
storage. Museums need to adapt to the changing needs of artists who work within a site-specific
or project based mode of practice. Accumulating different types of space, from a temple space to
a barn to a warehouse, in order to accommodate different types of collection would enable a rich
dialogue of both permanent and temporary projects to be created.

The work of art has a relation to its context, which is in a broad sense architectural, but the work
of architecture also has a relation to its context. Its relation to its city, community and social
space must be decided. U.S. curator Mark Francis believes that a museum’s function should be
‘a place of contemplation rather than of debate. Doesn’t part of the museum’s value within, as it
were, the civic or urban fabric lie in its identity as a space of contemplation and quiet, or retreat
from the hurly-burly of the street?’ 158 Museums should not be secular cathedrals for
contemplation. Of interest for museums of contemporary art should be their potential to include a
larger creative context, in the form not of didactic diagrams but of live activity. Publications
should reach beyond the exhibition catalogue, and seminars should deal with more than just one
area of activity. A prolonged plan is required, to generate activity amongst individuals concerned
with the museum, such as architects, artists, writers, patrons, visitors, directors and curators.
Members of the wider community should also be involved in the debate on issues related to
projects or artwork.

Container or Invention?

The last area to be discussed takes into account the idea of the museum being not just a container
for the preservation of artworks but also a space for the invention of activity and provision of
opportunities for interdisciplinary activity. A way of designing more meaningful museums
should be the real aim of our local, state, and national agencies. The first question to be asked
should be, ‘How do we think an architect ought to conceive the design of a museum?’ From this
an environment can be created which fosters activity beyond the initial excitement of a new
building within an urban space. There are three answers to the question. Firstly, architects should

158 Francis, Mark, Richard Serra: In conversation with Alan Colquhoun, Lynne Cooke and Mark Francis, Museum
be given the opportunity to build many varied and different spaces around and within a museum's design and construction, which in turn can accommodate many varied practices and uses. This would enable a greater cross-section of artists to be able to work within the museum space. Such spaces would permit a greater degree of experimentation and interplay with spatiality, which would give artists who are interested not only in materiality but in production processes and critique of the frame (architectural space) the ability to conceptualise and realise such site-specific projects. Such work, which points to the condition of the frame and simultaneously maintains a certain degree of independence can 'elicit the critical connotations of its context'.

Secondly, permanent museum sites should not only accommodate permanent displays and have spaces for temporary projects, but also should accommodate a level of education for a wider public with regard to the work produced. The Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas has been able to incorporate a level of activity that takes into account the need for the viewing of art over an extended period of time, educating a wider public on the importance of site-specificity and the understanding of our built environments. Once every two years the museum holds a symposium on 'Art and Architecture and Art and Landscape'. Invited professionals from an array of disciplines such as architecture, visual arts, industrial design, literature, critics, curators, are asked to give a lecture on a field of their choice. This has facilitated greater dialectic responses to similar subjects and thus has fostered and nurtured ongoing dialogue between the participants and the audience.

Judd's primary goal with the setting up of the Donald Judd Foundation (started in 1979) was to create an environment, fixed place or site, that could accommodate permanent displays of his

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159 Francis, Mark, op. cit., p.89.
own art. The Foundation was not just for his work but for the work of like-minded individuals. For example, permanent installations have included U.S. sculptor John Chamberlin’s *Chamberlain Building* (1983) (fig.71), Flavin, Russian installation artist Ilya Kabakov, and U.S. pop artists Claus Oldenburg and his partner Cootje van Bruggen’s *Monument to the Last Horse* (1991) (fig.72). Such projects give the viewer an undisturbed environment, in peace and under ideal conditions, in which to view the work and to contemplate the nature of the environment and its broader meanings. Such a museum acts against the modern exhibition machinery, as it sets no limits on space, time or place on the artwork, because the artwork and its environment are continually interrelated. Judd stated, ‘works are time and time again continually travelling to new places, often exhibited in not very ideal situations and always endangered of being damaged by improper handling’.

Lastly, there should be an increased integration of artists into the design of museums. It is only natural that artists should be invited to propose possible museum spaces, for are they the not the individuals who will be using the museum and its spaces? Such a question was raised by the *Espace de l’art concret* in Mouans-sartous in the south of France, in 1997, when it mounted an exhibition entitled *The museum as imagined by the artist*. Against the backdrop of Sybil Alber’s collection of concrete and constructive art, artists were invited to provide statements, ideas and visions for museums and exhibition spaces and to design a *Space for Art*, from their specific reference points as artists. Based on the *Museum for a Small Town* (1942), by German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, which consisted of a well-thought out, modestly sized museum for concrete art, artists were invited to deliver ideas and develop their visions. Artists involved in the project included Buren, Swiss artist and architect Max Bill, Judd, German artists Gerhard Merz, Wolfgang Laib, Katharine Fritsch and 19 others, who presented their ideas in an exhibition at the Kunsthau Bregenz, Switzerland, 1998. The project showed that the practical and theoretical discussions by artists about the spaces and building for art produced in all the responses a constant relationship between work and space. Presented with such models of activity it is hard to believe that architects have ignored them for so long. One would think that architects have sufficient freedom for self-expression in the design of individual buildings and features such as facades and entrances and individual spaces within the total volume, to allow at least one aspect to be given to an artist to develop or design. However, maybe the most

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161 Kob, op. cit., p.7.
commonly held attitude towards art is summed up by German architect Wolf Prix of Coop Himmelblau: 'if architecture, namely building, is art, it is a museum all in itself and therefore has no need for art'.

The criticism of artists towards architecture is qualified to a certain extent by their own projects. The primary concern is natural in relation to museums and the use of architectural means to ensure that each individual piece enjoys maximum autonomy and demonstrates its uniqueness in an unrestricted way. This can be achieved by creating space that includes a limited number of artworks, even to the extent of having a ratio of one work for one room. It would even be possible to have one work for one museum, for example Buren, Marcia Hafif and Walter Pichler's designs for a museum for the *Space for Art (1997)* project and exhibition.

**Constellations and the Invention of Perfect Collections and Spaces**

Museums devote attention to a variety of aspects that often come into conflict with the interests of the artist. They have to deal with a range of complex problems concerning operation, conservation and procurement. Yet museums must reject the staging of events and the staging of art within an architectural framework. The museum of today, like art itself, finds itself in a period of far-reaching change. New forms of art and a new generation of artists place new and different demands, but the function of the museum is not questioned. Thus a museum should present itself as an educational institution whose central purpose should be to demonstrate the content, intention and meaning of the pieces of art. The museums of the 1990s have very often become part of the entertainment industry, supplying a fired-up trade in culture with the most spectacular events. In the conception of the museum as a business, 'the commercial pressure to be successful forces them to implement tried and tested professional strategies, somewhat like a leisure park, in the belief that they need to address their segment of the public'.

Artists should be seen as archaeologists, as they are in many instances developing or uncovering past histories in an attempt to develop or redevelop methodologies that suit their personal practice, the community that they occupy and also communities beyond their immediate one.

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162 Ibid.

163 Kob, op. cit., p.7.
The main problem with museums is that their agenda is too broad, and its priorities and origins in the collection have the effect of making art less visible when standing in front of it. Museums are too complicated to serve art properly, because of the size of collections and the amount of objects exhibited. They function best when artists impose their terms as they would upon a speculative space. The collection, always too large and broad, generates problems of its own irrelevant to any art, as do other institutionalised habits such as the exhibition, the group show, the theme show, and the retrospective. Most art is seen within the context of an installation within a museum, and the mannerisms of that museum's space have the effect of redefining what art is so that it is understood on the basis of how it is seen.

To argue that art should stand for itself, irrespective of its installation, is again to argue that art's qualities are confinable and possess only internal relationships. It suggests that residual notions about the frame and pedestal remain actively in place, even if they are not there. A work of art, however, may fill and define the qualities of a space, being both place and space, occupying the senses and imagination far beyond that which may be defined at a moment or within a glance.

One example of a museum that does not function solely as a museum is the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The Centre Pompidou is a museum, but also a cinema, a library, a train station, a theatre, a drug store and an archive. There is no sacred white cube for the exhibition of art works, but at the same time there is no historical exhibition to deal with. It is just architecture, within which an artist can treat the various spaces as simple geometry. This is one way in which museums could be developed, adapted to changing situations within their community. For example, a museum may develop an accumulation of different types and designs of space, in order to account for the different types of collections and permanent exhibitions as well as temporal projects.164

A museum of art, in addition to carrying out the more common functions that it shares with so many other cultural institutions (of presenting and collecting information and objects), should give a community or environment the mental exaltation that visual art alone, with its distinctive interplay with spatiality, can provide. The museum can provide greater opportunities for artists to be involved within projects, or conversely can organise a constant dialogue amongst artists, architects, funding organisations and government agencies, towards the development of museums for the permanent display of work. To take this one step further would be to create

164 Weibel, op. cit., p.120.
museums that specialise in a particular methodology of art making which is of importance to a particular community. In such a museum it would be necessary to incorporate other disciplines within the collection and exhibition of such projects, to present a complete picture of the development and cross-pollination of individuals across many disciplines.

The most successful spaces are those that are sympathetic to the needs of the artwork exhibited inside and also offer over a period of time a relationship between artwork and architecture. Two museums, which have been the most successful in the development of ideas and collaboration of artwork to site, are the Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich, Switzerland, and the Chinati Foundation, in Marfa, U.S. The Haus Konstruktiv is a museum which acts as a base for the study, collecting and exhibiting of both historical and current methodologies relating to concrete, minimal and geometric art, architecture and design. Such a place focuses the intentions of like-minded individuals, enabling viewers and visitors to the museum to gain a greater understanding and awareness of the projects that have been and are being undertaken in relation to that style of work. The Chinati Foundation, on the other hand, is predominantly an environment created by one individual, Donald Judd, to develop his ideas in regard to architecture and design and to also have a permanent site for the display of his artwork, as well as that of like-minded individuals invited to participate in the project. Within both these museums the most important areas that would successfully develop more evolved museums are permanent sites for the production of art work, with opportunities for like-minded individuals across disciplines to work together to formulate or produce projects. This would enable museums to break through their borders and boundaries in relation to exhibiting temporary shows. In turn the community, artists, architects and the work produced could build a relationship with a particular site, museum or architecture and the many varying spaces.

We are now seeing art withdrawing to private, special, intimate locations on the outskirts of communities and central city spaces. Perhaps the art of the twenty-first century will no longer require a museum but will redefine it: artists will begin to build permanent museums based on architecture and assimilated with their area of construction and the artwork exhibited within. This would cancel out the cultural, economic and political problems encountered by museums between adaptation and resistance. A space will be available for invention, contemplation and integration, rather than the ‘transformation of art into merchandise’.  

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Chapter Six

Reinvigorating the Open Plane:
Public Art, Location and Placement.

A simple order, applied to a complex situation, would make the complexity more easily understandable.\(^{166}\)

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the importance of artists who have undertaken work in the public sphere, and the experimental nature of their practice. The public environment and the outcomes of the projects entail ideas, concepts and production which are directed at an active audience. Instead of the audience coming to work located within a traditional museum space, the work described, from the 1960s onward, was placed within a public realm, not only to question the validity of the art object but also to question the spaces that inhabit our public environment. It is also important to examine the practices of individuals who had traditionally worked within a gallery system in art movements such as minimalism and conceptualism, then moving into installation, earth and public art. They moved outside the confines of the architectural framework of the museum to work directly with a natural environment and the political, social, environmental and cultural concerns that play an active role in such a space.

Through researching different working methods and reigning tenets from the 1960s to the present, the aim of this chapter is to create a concrete dialogue about our built environments and to show that within the public realm many disciplines come together. Thus it is only feasible to consider that if public art is essentially artwork placed within an environment that is architectural, then artists and architects should be encouraged to work together in the development of projects.

In this chapter certain artists and artworks have been chosen because they best represent the aims of the thesis in relation to advancing or encouraging more diverse methodologies amongst various disciplines. The participants considered have shown a renewed and continual interest in an ongoing critical language that has identified, speculated and evaluated the work, uniting its

political, social and aesthetic aspirations. Even though the artists may be from different social and cultural environments, their common link has been the critical discourse of working within the public realm.

Visual artists of various backgrounds and perspectives are presented here because they are working in a manner that resembles political and social activity but is distinguished by its aesthetic sensibility. It is through these strategies that a new or alternative methodology may be found, which connects certain practitioners such as artists and architects and brings them together in the development of distinct models for an art whose public strategies of engagement is an important part of its aesthetic language. This collaboration would enable communities and the built environments we inhabit to become more specialised and at the same time more experimental in nature. The public art under scrutiny is that which addresses political, social, cultural and environmental organisations and spaces, and in so doing redefine those spaces for a greater understanding of the meaning and function of our built environments. Traditional public art, such as a monument in a plaza, is mentioned but only in relation to its historical connotations, as 'much of what has been called public art might better be defined as private indulgence'. Instead the work discussed is less about social intervention and more about social integration.

The construction of new methodologies relating to the conceptualisation of a public discourse is not built on a typology of materials, spaces or artistic media, but rather on concepts of audience, relationship, communication, and political and social intention. The expansion of public sculpture from single site-specific object to entire site has been accompanied by an expansion of the definition of sculpture itself. The tradition of the public monument required monolithic solutions on elevated architectural supports, usually in positions determined by the built environment, and not restricted to echoing the message communicated by architecture. Within such a working methodology, artists are controlled to some extent by the context. There are many things that can or cannot be done in a certain place. The artist must consider the context of the building, the architect must work within the context of the place. Artists working within the public sphere must think more about the architecture as a public form. Artists should be involved in the conceptualisation and creation of the building and the public artwork. In such instances the building may be the public artwork. This can be seen in recent public projects by U.S. conceptual

artist Vito Acconci and his Acconci Studio *Screens for a Walkway between Buildings and Buses and Cars (1996-2000)* (fig.73) at Shibuya Station, Japan, or *Project for MAK Shop (2001)* in Vienna.

![Fig.73](image)

**Vooids in the City**

Artists and writers throughout the continent are currently involved in a redefinition of our continental topology. We imagine either a map of the Americas without borders, a map turned upside down, or one in which borders are organically drawn by geography, culture, and immigration, not by the capricious fingers of economic domination.\(^{168}\)

Everyone is a citizen, an equal part of a social organization, a political, public entity, and an individual in a group. But within a public entity, certain individuals assume power. They in turn, control what happens within the public realm. What can a general public do? They can either accept what is given within their public space or they can attempt to take responsibility and make a more personal response to what is exterior to their home. Exhibitions such as *Mapping the Terrain, USA (1995)*, *Dogging the CBD, Sydney, Australia (1998)*, and the work of German fluxus artist Joseph Beuys at Documenta 7, in Kassel, Germany, *7,000 Oaks (1982)* (fig.74) show attempts to take over their and our public spaces. The exhibitions make their own dynamic

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\(^{168}\) Lacy, op. cit., p.19.
and interactive spaces, ‘while exploring and pointing out the parallels of the work to social and political structures and their impact on each other’.\textsuperscript{169} Public space is equally if not more imbedded with issues ranging from social to cultural and economic.

![Fig. 74](image)

The exhibition, \textit{Mapping the Terrain (1995)} attempted to achieve cohesion between the public space and the space in which the work existed. Another facet of the project was the importance of certain work as referential only within a certain environment and a certain community. Like artwork that is site specific, so too is public art, which needs the concerns of the space where it is sited to give meaning to the work. People who interact with the work have an intimate relationship to the site, and thus the work become a part of that site, just as a cave painting becomes synonymous with its site, culturally and geographically.

Within public art what is needed is a dialectical response to its fashionable nature. Unfortunately, politicians see public art as a process of beautifying environments such as plazas which may seem unappealing to the community. How do we maintain a level of activity that serves the purpose of activating our spaces, while at the same time not questioning it negatively? And how do we define a site but also take into account the interests of the public? English urban designer Kevin Atherton summarised some of the frustrations of public art projects, commenting that gallery owners, museum directors and community organisers when putting together a public artwork exhibition, ‘were carrying over gallery notions in setting up outdoor exhibitions of “temporary” work rather than confronting the issues of art in the public arena’.\textsuperscript{170} It is important to remember that such projects create a platform of change that enable artists to define the issues pertaining to their work while at the same time interacting with a broader audience. This


\textsuperscript{170} Petherbridge, op. cit., p.29.
audience may or may not be museum visitors. Atherton also considered that 'the process is more important than the product. The question is how to maintain the processes'. This process lies within the artist's ability to give an answer to the space. If he or she just accepts the solution of 'plopping an object in the square' then the subsequent work is nothing more than mere decoration, and thus is not site-specific or culturally relevant.

It is necessary to attempt to bring the curatorial issues of museum practice, such as exhibition of work and organisational methods, down to a more practical and social question: how have the projects challenged established class and racial notions of public space? The answer is that there have been waves of strikes, calls, interruptions, demands, non-cooperation, sabotage, resistance, by groups, individuals closing down artist-run-spaces then opening them up again. The normal has been made full of surprise, the ordinary unexpected, the typical unknown, until nothing can be counted upon to be what it is. Our public spaces are made viable by individuals who are not necessarily concerned with a public art that takes up a space for what would be a permanent amount of time. Instead they look to informal, socially driven projects, which within their temporality are able to spread out, educate and inform a wider public. Thus they can change the nature of the project, depending on the site and the situation. Some examples include artist-run spaces which develop a critique that moves into other media such as publications. In Düsseldorf, Germany, Petra Rinck and Ralf Brog have shifted from exhibition of work within a traditional gallery to the production of a magazine entitled SITE. This has developed into the organisation of more collaborative projects which involve a wider social audience than just visual artists.

Historically the climate of the 1970s period has been the opening up of the visual arts into a broader community, and the invention of more public based projects. For example, Food, at 127 Prince Street, SoHo, New York was a restaurant originally opened by U.S. dancer and photographer Caroline Goodeen in 1971. Later that year U.S. artists Tina Girouard, Gordon Matta-Clark, Suzanne Harris and Rachel Law joined the restaurant to help organise activities and sustain the day-to-day running of the business. The restaurant was seen as another public space where like-minded individuals could discuss art, cultural and social issues. A part of the restaurant's activities was a night organised by Matta-Clark, Sunday Night Guest Chef Dinners, which entailed artists taking on the role of chef for the night as well as being in charge of the night's discussions. Artists such as Keith Sonnier, Robert Rauschenberg, Richard Landry, Italo

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171 Petherbridge, op. cit., p.28.
Scanga and Donald Judd all participated in this activity. However, within all the playful meandering of the restaurant there was also a serious side: the conjoining of art into life and the broader use of the space in general through exhibitions, publications and meetings. As French philosopher Henri Lefebvre stated, ‘social space (that) emerged in all its diversity with a structure’, within the cojoining of food, architecture and sociability. In the climate of the 1960s and 1970s came political and social change, which in many ways affected the transformation of opening the gallery system. The social changes already mentioned caused artists, architects and a wider public to think about their public space and their environment. Minimalists were now drawing upon what would later be referred to as conceptualism, performance art, installation art and earthworks or land art, to draw significance to their social environment, either advertently or inadvertently. These environments in turn structured what was displayed within them, and a dialogue began where the traditional baggage of the museum and its politics were exchanged for the politics and social ramifications of more public work.

Foundations and Organisations in Developing Spaces

For the past 100 years the bronze or stone sculpture has been the monument which traditionally functioned as public art. These monuments are referential, with their meaning dependent on history. Such monuments ultimately become dormant over time, being thought of only sporadically, and this has been a continual problem of monuments and public art. Construction of large-scale sculpture for public art was facilitated by the U.S. 1961-69 economic expansion. The strong economy also supported two federal public-art programs charged with commissioning architecturally scaled work. Between 1963 and 1966, the General Services Administration’s Fine ‘Arts in New Buildings Program’ was initiated in response to a report on federal architecture (ordered by President John F. Kennedy), commissioned 44 large sculptures, murals, tapestries and mosaics. The National Endowment for the Arts, founded in 1965, established its ‘Art in Public Places Program’ to match grants. With its ‘Percent for Arts Program’ initiated in 1959, Philadelphia became one of the first U.S. cities to require a percentage of a public office building’s construction costs to be spent on art.

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173 Ibid.
174 Better, Suzan, op. cit., p.82.

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It must be realised that there are problems with the idea of the public. An exhibition of whatever medium, and to a certain extent the work within it, can be considered public. A museum, even a private gallery to a degree, is public. The work produced can be read as public, but because it is confined within architectural space this space acts as a frame, and whatever reputation the museum or gallery may have is attached to the work. Therefore, the reading of the work can only be considered conditioned by its site.

Permanence and Shifting Sands: The Changing Roles of Public Interventions

Aesthetically, types of art concerned with site, address and audience have been influenced by the writings of the French group the Situationist International (1957-1972). This underground movement consisted of artists and writers who were charged by political events, their central figure being the French artist, social critic and filmmaker Guy Debord. In Debord’s 1967 book, The Society of the Spectacle, he concentrated on themes of mass construction and the degradation of everyday life into pure spectacle. The group had an active engagement with urban issues and the psychological impact of the built environment. The main advantage of such working methodology is its capacity to shift and readdress spaces as they change. Although our built environments are made out of concrete their meanings and function are not, and practitioners and groups like the Situationists have continually shifted their models of working, still maintaining the original conceptual aims and intentions.

A city is an organism that changes constantly, and with this change the meaning of many public art works has been lost or misrepresented. This is particularly the case with public art as its relevance is specific to site and time. Society can abandon such pieces as they lose relevance. All public art is inherently linked to a culture’s history, representing a collection of emotional events which merge with an architectural background. This type of work can also be politically charged. An example of this is the way in which the Nazi Party from 1926 to 1945 in Germany used monuments as key instruments for propaganda and overall domination. German architect Albert Speer’s Stadium (1935), designed for the Nuremberg Rally, emphasized the shift away from the statue to great urban spaces in which crowds provided the aesthetic impact. U.S. minimalist artist Richard Serra’s Titled Arc (1981) focused on public controversy and private emotion, with an intensity unheard of previously in public art projects. The Berlin Wall, for so many years the site
of graffiti and unauthorised murals, became both an object to be smashed and a source of historical trophies for public and private commemoration. These works occurred in a distinct cultural space, each with its own specific historical and political determination.

Public art’s purpose is to be sited; it is not necessarily concerned with the current fashion or style of art practice. These works present themselves in public spaces and seek meaning through their relationships with the complementary practices of architecture and urban design. U.S. installation artist Barbara Kruger’s *Untitled (Questions)* (1990), like Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko’s slide projects, treat the public space as both a target and a weapon for their artistic interventions. It enables an artist to become a manipulator of signs rather than a producer of art objects, and the viewer to become an active reader of messages rather than a passive consumer of the aesthetic form.

![Fig.75](image)

French Conceptual artist Daniel Buren’s *Untitled* (1968), U.S conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth’s *Kiscelli Museum* (1993), and U.S conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner’s *Smashed to Pieces (In the Still of the Night)* (1991) (fig. 75) have been able to intervene in a socio-political vein. Through the presentation of their work the artists seek alternative audiences and spaces to those which have traditionally inhabited galleries or museums. These artists have been able to open the conceptual critique of the art institution by intervening in this social space. Signs and temporary structures function for a given period of time and then disappear. The ‘hit and run’ strategies, to use a cliché, of such art are mirror images of the techniques implemented by Situationists.
International. It is important that such work is shown and operates in the streets outside the confines of the gallery, as 'the value of the work is in its immediate use at whatever time it is found'.\footnote{Jenkins, Kyle, Interview conducted with Lawrence Weiner on 23/12/02, 2003.} These artworks, which have been created within the modern culture and at best conform to the requirements for total revolutionary change, have been labeled by Marcuse as 'anti-art'; 'artistic endeavors that are so opposed to the mainstream of Western artistic tradition that they cannot be accommodated within the existing institutions'.\footnote{Battock, Gregory, Marcus and Anti-Art, Artsmagazine, Vol.43, No.8, Summer, 1969, p.17.} 'Graffiti' written (drawn, painted?) on the walls and streets of Paris during the May Rebellion in 1969 was 'anti-art' because it was entirely spontaneous and, though visual and pictorial, was not conceived with any deliberate artistic intent. However, these unorthodox activities, shown in the public thoroughfare, raise questions in the minds of viewers. The ephemeral condition of such work is a necessary component; it is the best way that art, the public domain and architecture can come together. The various works described were often intended to divert the conventional function of the gallery from 'showing objects' to using it as a place to experience space.

In its early stages conceptual art implied, directly or indirectly, a critique not only of the object but also of the circle of art market, art critic and art institutions that surrounded it. Those individuals who chose to work in a public sphere were dominated mainly by U.S. artists. The concurrent social, economic and political changes (described previously) had produced an environment which made constant flux and change an everyday occurrence. U.S. artists such as Dennis Oppenheim, Walter de Maria, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Judy Chicago and Adrian Piper dealt with one or more of the changes that were occurring in the public environment at that time. By removing the commodity of the image as artwork, they were for some time able to prevent the art market and its value system from burdening the work. They moved outside the architectonic site of the museum or private gallery space to deal with public space. From this they were able to produce work that was concerned with the conceptual intentions of their projects and the receivership of a wider community, rather than with the importance of producing an art object. This represented an opening up of the art process, which had become constrained by what was considered culturally important or not.
French conceptual artist Daniel Buren’s striped canvases were unchanged in nine years, whether presented in a gallery, as *Inside (Center of Guggenheim)* (1971), or outside in a public space, as *Untitled* (1968), or a mixture of both outside and inside (private and public), as *Untitled* (1969), implying a rhetoric on the idea of public and private space. By opposing the two, inside and outside, the gallery with its specialized audience becomes a symbol of private, exclusive territory, while the stripes in public space (metro, advertising billboards, sandwich men) force a new dimension to public space. The canvases do not alter the space as such, rather they enforce the reality of each space. The content passes from one generation to the next; it is the subtleties of presentation and site that make the work so dynamic and thought provoking.

The public space is an entity that is accepted by people, whether as a community or as individuals, in an unquestioning way. We are conditioned to read it as being unusable for private activity, because it is meant to serve everybody. However, Zagreb artist Braco Dimitrijevic’s work activates its space by being site-specific yet at the same time completely selfish in relation to its aims and construction. His artwork alters our perception of both the presentation of work within the public realm and the space in which the work is placed. Through the work we see the inversion of the personal and the public.

The notion of public art is an ideal of the artist working for the betterment of society. Such an ideal is utopian, but Wodiczko has worked in such a vein for nearly his whole career. Whether it is his objects for homeless people, such as *Homeless Vehicle* (1980), or his projections onto the facades of buildings, which examine the relationship of image to architecture, Wodiczko and his works have continued to question our social space and those in power who construct such spaces. The projections underscore the role of architecture as a vehicle of authority. By working outdoors, Wodiczko has been able to interpret both iconography and ideology of urban environment. Projects such as *AT & T Long Building* (1984) and *South Africa House* (1985) (fig.76) demonstrate that buildings represent visions of a particular dominant history. Wodiczko’s preoccupation with architecture and the public sphere does not necessarily limit itself to a concern with individual buildings but extends to the built environment and the way buildings and the space interact to shape the social setting.\(^77\)

What is More Important: Private or Public?

The shift from private space and the concerns of the artist with the work have now moved to a public space, shifting the context of the work’s meaning to the context of how the work is installed, displayed or exhibited. As a result the artist and the work must take into account everything that may happen within that particular space.

Access to public spaces, Arts Council grants, museum patronage and college lectures become crucial conditions for the maintenance of effective art activity within the public realm. Bureaucracies are not willing to take risks and invite artists to create challenging projects for site-specific environments, maybe because they wonder what they will be left with. There would be a glut of traditional objects placed randomly within a space, having no connection to the site except that they take up a particular amount of space. However, Marcuse believes that ‘the artist today should not be concerned with any type of work that can be accommodated by commercial or technological institutions. The artist should not collaborate with industry but rather provoke it. After all, collaboration does not lead to the essential condition for freedom’.

Marcuse further claims that ‘capitalist progress not only reduces the environment of freedom, the “open space” of

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178 Battock, op. cit., p.18.
the humane existence, but the “longing”, the need for such an environment. But it is important for more artists to move beyond the confines of the museum and deal with a more active audience. Even if people walk past and do not think twice about the work, at least the artists have the opportunity to engage a wider community than those who go into museums and private galleries.

The real opportunity within such projects is that artists can raise questions about the built environments, especially those spaces that have no function other than being blank spaces, like plazas. Serra has continually challenged the spaces in which his projects take place. He has always taken into account the elements, whether natural or built, that control the site, as seen in work such as *Shift* (1971-72) (fig.77) and *St. John’s Rotary Arc* (1980). Whether it is seen as a negative or a positive is beside the point, for it is of more importance to consider the concepts of such work. The intention is to bring the viewer into the sculpture. The placement of the sculpture will change the space of the plaza. After the piece is created, the space will be understood primarily as the function of the sculpture.\(^{180}\)

\[^{179}\]Ibid, p.19.

Tadashi Kawamata’s environmental installations *Work in Progress in Zug (1996–1999)* (fig. 79). These works have dialectical approaches to the public space in which they are situated in, yet at the same time they show divergence of style when dealing with the public realm. This divergence is outlined by U.S. art theorist Gregory Battock in his article *Marcuse and Anti-Art*, as ‘the order and organization of society, which have shaped the sensibility and the reason of man, have also shaped the freedom of the imagination.’

Work that is difficult, that does not fit into a traditional role of visual art discourse was termed ‘anti-art’ by Battock. Such work demands a reception that cannot easily be awarded to it. Ultimately because this type of work is disruptive toward contemporary standards, and unacceptable to persons of ‘scholarship’ and ‘reason’, it is representative of notions concerning the radicalism of art proposed by avant-garde artists of the 1970s. As described in Chapter 6, performance art, happenings and in particular land and earthwork artists fundamentally abandoned the museum and private gallery system to produce work in a more diverse landscape. U.S. art critic and theorist Barbara Rose explained the U.S. fluxus artist and composer John Cage’s aesthetic as follows: ‘For Cage the radicality of art is defined not in terms of its form, but in terms of its disruptive function within a given social, political, economic or psychological frame work’. In order for a statement to be awarded the ‘anti-art’ label it must in some way demand a change in prevailing receptive capabilities. It must ask something of its site and at the same time have a position with regard to its site.

Does Permanence Represent Value-Added Meaning?

The debate about permanent and temporary work shows the divide between practitioners wishing to define a practical and ideological base for making and placing art beyond the gallery and the theoretical and entrepreneurial aspirations of curators involved in making art projects beyond the gallery. Two approaches deal with the criteria that must be taken into account with public space. The first is exemplified by the exhibition organised by Belgium curator Jan Hoet, the *Chambres d’Amis* project in private houses in Ghent, 1986. It consisted of many houses and grounds which were used for an exhibition of public art and possible outcomes of working outside of the

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181 Battock, op. cit., p.19.
182 Ibid, p.18.
museum system. Although some projects were successful within the exhibition, Hoet noted, ‘some artists didn’t try to change the house, or the attitude of the people – they simply said, “I’m here”. They treated the house as a museum’. 183 This is an example of the attitude of some artists who are invited to participate within a public space. From such work the public are presented with the impression that the work was conceived prior to the knowledge of the site. Thus the work has little or no connection with its environment. A divergence of aims is evident. On the one hand are the artists who actively participate and address the question of who constitutes the ‘public’, issues of class, gender and race; on the other hand matters of corporate prestige and notions of the ‘monument’ are traditionally investigated. Within such a project artists and curators have equal responsibility in the field to produce work that is amalgamated with its site. If one individual within the exhibition or project fails to take into account all the issues prevalent in the public space, the project has failed to fully integrate itself with its environment.

The second project, to be discussed is Tadashi Kawamata’s ‘Work in Progress in Zug’ (1996–1999). English art critic James Lingwood believes that it is a ‘naïve idea that art can redeem public space simply by occupying it’, 184 and Kawamata’s project goes beyond simply placing the work within its environment. Rather, it involves active participation by the way the people in the town of Zug, Switzerland, use their public space. Within Kawamata’s public projects, the work does not object to the built environment it occupies but rather accompanies it. The design for the project in Zug was based around the idea of creating spaces to be used by the community and tourists who visited the town. The development of the project was ‘left open for further modification and concretisation, but clear enough to serve as a model’. 185 Kawamata wanted to create an interplay of action and reaction with the public. His objective was not to occupy the town but to use a certain number of installations or use a certain number of cubic metres of wood that would enter into a dialogue with the public and its space. The work’s site-specificity was based on the transient nature of the city of Zug, and its use as a trade route for political, religious, economic and cultural organisations through Switzerland. In response to the nature of the town, Kawamata’s project was to construct simple, unobtrusive, site-specific wooden structures which would serve to make walking and sitting more pleasant, while at the same time providing public space with a new, more relaxed ambience. Its functionality would also allow physical participation in the work, due to the simplicity of the constructions. Because the artist virtually

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183 Petherbridge, op. cit., p.28.
184 Ibid, p.27.
reached out to the people and asked for their involvement, the segregation of work and viewer was abolished. Kawamata’s project in Zug enabled the public to have an active involvement with the project. The public was a partner in the inception of the work and thus could be regarded as a mediator in the service of society. Essentially they were constructing a new way of viewing the city through the creation of the benches, walkways and viewing platforms. Therefore the project linked various private spaces with public ones and places of art with those of everyday life, as a result of which the city of Zug could be viewed and used in a vastly different fashion.

To Be Up Close and Personal

The most positive aim that came out of the shift of visual art into the street, parks, fields and plazas was that ‘the public should get the chance to inform themselves about art’. The belief that art can function as a tool was the radical re-conceptualisation of sculpture, opposing its contemporary definition as something large, metal and abstract. Within this re-conceptualising, each artist entered a dialogue with the traditions of commemorative monuments and with the more recent conventions of public art. Sculpture in Environment (1967) was the first exhibition in New York City to temporarily move large-scale sculpture into the public arena. The show centred on the placement of sculptures throughout the city of New York, where works by U.S. artists Alexander Calder (on West 135th Street), Alexander Liberman (in Battery Park), George Rickey (at the New York public library) and Barnett Newman’s Broken Obelisk (1963-67) (in the forecourt of the Seagram Building on Park Avenue) were exhibited. In Sculpture in Environment the new prominence of sculpture and of public art converged. Over the show’s opening weekend, the actions of two artists who were to redefine public sculpture coincided. Viewed in tandem, and triangulated to Sculpture in Environment, U.S. conceptual artist Claus Oldenburg’s Central Park Dig (1967) and U.S earthwork artist Robert Smithson’s Entropy and the New Monuments, Passaic (1967) were projects which illuminated each other. Together they described interests shared by many artists in the late 1960s in the U.S., and the social mood of

187 Petherbridge, op. cit., p.29.
the time. It was a mood of breaking free from the powers which had an invested interest in what was going on.\textsuperscript{188}

Both Smithson and Oldenburg in their work participated in rethinking the notion of the monument. They made work that addressed the ‘breakdowns and fractures’ that the U.S. was experiencing under the impact of the Vietnam War, widespread social unrest and the rise of the counterculture. In reference \textit{Central Park Hole}, Oldenburg wrote,

\begin{quote}
by not burying a thing the dirt enters into the concept, and little enough separates the dirt inside the excavation from that of the outside, so that the whole park and its connections, in turn, enter into it. Which means that my event is merely the focus for me of what is sensed.\textsuperscript{189}
\end{quote}

This shifting of context was an important idea in the development of public based activities. By working in a public space, artists were able to leave the confines of the museum and private gallery system which at times became stifling due to the political nature of the institutions. Thus working outside, artists were able to convey their concepts to an audience unencumbered by any architectural support. This method of presentation enabled artists and their concepts to deal directly with an active audience.

However, there are two distinct types of public artwork. The first is the traditional plaza, which is supposed to have meaning through cultural significance or to be considered artistically important at the time. These works offer nothing more than a stagnant history lesson, as they do nothing more than generate physical graffiti on our urban sites.

In contrast, earthworks are consciously developed and sited within a space, enabling the work and the space to have an active engagement which is permanent. To find such works one must search, like an anthropological discovery. As with anthropological ruins these works are imbedded within meaning and context. They offer a developmental activity that is completely separate from any other needs except that which constitutes it. Such work is completely bound

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{185} Better, op. cit., p.85.  \\
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid, p.125.
\end{flushright}
up with the space it occupies. The work, the concepts, the inception of the plans the physical impact of the site upon viewers are the important facets of this work.

Within the public space there are two different working methodologies. The first is work which voluntarily takes a secondary position or back seat to the site, sitting atop a granite, cement or equally weighty plinth. It allows the site of its placement to dictate its concerns and the terms of its viewing. The second is the work which asks something of itself and the site of its placement, such as Richard Serra’s *Street Levels (1986–87)* (fig.80). Its meaning and character are upheld within the permanence of its site. It may be contrasted with a public artwork like Jeff Koons’ *Puppy (1995)* (fig.81), which is completely autonomous in its site. It can be placed in front of any prestigious museum or in someone’s back yard because all its concerns are inherent.

![Fig.80][1] ![Fig.81][2]

**Nothing is Meant to Last Forever**

This last part of the public art chapter deals with the problem that occurs when a work is conceived for a space, and the people who occupy and control that space no longer want the (supposedly) permanent work, although it may have complete understanding and integration with its space and site. ‘To remove the work is to destroy the work.’¹⁹⁰ It is with this assertion that Serra sought to shift the terms of debate by convening a public hearing to determine the fate of *Tilted Arc (1981)* (fig.82), his site-specific public sculpture in the Federal Plaza, New York.

Serra’s sculpture had been commissioned by the General Services Administration (GSA) Art-in-Architecture Program and permanently installed in the plaza. ‘A difficult work of art requires time to ingratiate itself with its public’,\textsuperscript{191} was a standard line of defence of Serra’s when defending the destruction of his sculpture *Titled Arc* during the public hearing in March 1985. What happens when an artist takes a positive position in creating the work, and uses the space to raise questions about its immediate environment and about the very nature of installing the work in a public space? Inevitably those in power who have an invested interest in that particular space become threatened by anything, especially art that tries to undermine whatever function the space used to have. Serra’s *Titled Arc* was destroyed on March 15\textsuperscript{th} 1989. The regional administrator for the GSA (the organisation responsible for inviting Serra to create a permanent site-specific sculpture for the plaza), William Diamond, declared, ‘this is a day for the people to rejoice, because now the plaza returns rightfully to the people’.\textsuperscript{192} Yet the only emotions which should be felt are embarrassment and sadness, because once again an important site-specific work that engaged the space within which it was situated was removed. Perhaps a sculpture with little or no importance to the site will be installed and celebrated.

Another Serra work that also displays the inherent problems of placing a permanent site within a public realm is *Slight Point* (1971-1975), installed at the Stedelijk Museum, the Netherlands. When asked what was lost by the work being built in the back court of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam instead of its intended location, Serra replied simply, ‘what happened with *Slight*  
\textsuperscript{192} Serra, op. cit., p.194.
Point, was that it lost all relationship to a pattern of circulation, which was a major determinant for its original location at Wesleyan, the Netherlands. Serra recognized that even public art was generally granted the function of aesthetic enhancement only in the seclusion of museum-like sites, removed from normal circulation patterns and placed, as it were, on ideological pedestals. As a result the work when modified or moved loses all its intentions and becomes just another traditional sculpture with little meaning outside of itself.

However, both Tilted Arc and Slight Point represent, in terms of public art, the fact that through their greatly increased scale and their public settings they no longer use the traditional principles of Modernist sculpture. Rather, these works now come into conflict with another form of construction, that of the architecture of their surroundings. They do not play the subsidiary role of adornment, focus, or enhancement of their nearby buildings; they attempt to engage the passer-by in a new and critical reading of the sculpture’s environment, and thus give people new ways of experiencing their urban spaces.

Serra’s statement that ‘a difficult work of art requires time to ingratiate itself with its public’ is essentially at the core of the notion of artwork having a permanent site of activity. The reason is that many works are ephemeral in context. They are exhibited for a short period of time and then moved on. Thus work is not given the luxury or necessity of having a relationship with the space it inhabits. But over time, whether it is an installation which obviously has a very personal connection to its space or paintings on a wall, work has an ongoing dialogue with the space it occupies. U.S. artist Mark Rothko’s paintings were permanently installed in the Rothko Chapel in Houston, and U.S. pop artist Andy Warhol’s works are installed at the Andy Warhol Foundation in Pittsburgh. The gallery spaces inside the museums are not necessarily part of the work, but they were designed as permanent structures to house the work. A relationship exists between the building and the work. You cannot separate them as they are linked, and you do not see the work without thinking about the place in which it is situated.

This same permanence can be seen in the Chinati Foundation and also in the earthworks of the 1970s, where locations are an important element within the work. Obviously if the environmental placement is taken out of the work, nothing but a plan remains. The work’s environment is its frame, just as a painting is framed by its dimensions.

194 Serra, op. cit., p.194.
In Seeing Where We Are Going to Ask Why Are We Going There

It is important to note that in implementing a system to engage artists more within the public realm, everything that can be done in the smallest group, the local area, should be done before anything is delegated to a wider area. By working within a small space, concerns can be developed and then expanded towards a wider community. If artists cannot produce work that is successful within an immediate environment with which they have a direct relationship, how could they be invited to or be willing to work on site-specific projects in other communities?

Community response, codes of practice, percent legislation, space versus place, and communication media are all elements that need to be in place for public spaces to engage more positively in projects and interventions within the public realm. The environmental structure of a community should not be left open for any one person or organisation to command or control. Secondary organizations, such as legal aid for artists participating in public programs, should be in place for support if needed, and also for participants to know their obligations and rights. Ongoing activities and programs should be established between federal, state and local government agencies and the individuals within the communities. However the most important facet of public art and the use of public space is to consider projects that are temporary in nature, rather than permanent works that may do more harm than good to the site. Temporality is the most important element in public art. It enables the art to be relevant to the current environment and the public affairs that govern the ever-changing space. In a time where our living spaces are continually under construction, such work and its interventions enable the public to repossess the city through activities, action and application.

Assimilation can also be encouraged through a work's role in a larger civic improvement program, where recognizable content or function provides a means by which the public can become engaged with the work, even though its style or form might be unfamiliar to them. The work's identity as art is subsumed by a more general public purpose, helping to assure its validity. The personal sensibilities of the artist are presented in forms that encourage widespread public empathy. Thus cultural bureaucrats appear to be more tolerant when dealing with artists and their work, because even though an artist and the work produced may seem to work against the site, given time such work will show positiveness towards its location. Public artwork by U.S. artists Michael Asher, Weiner, Smithson and Serra has contributed to a materialist critique
of art in which their work resisted the ‘disintegration of culture into commodities’.\textsuperscript{195} Thus they have been able to develop site-specific pieces that engage positively with their chosen sites of installation.

Implicit or explicit in the public artist’s activities is a need for a larger social agenda and for a connection of the role of artists to community groups, public space, and practitioners in other disciplines. The notion of sustaining or continuing a connection through artwork to public space is essentially a personal responsibility that should be used as a tool in educating and engaging community members, students, fellow artists and other disciplines. For there to be an ongoing consistency of methodology within a public sphere, a system of work needs to be created which is relevant to each individual site. One-off projects are no longer viable in the interpretation of our urban spaces. The issue of continuity and time in general is a crucial one for public art, taxing the resources of a funding and support system built around time-limited installations and exhibitions in controllable spaces such as museums.

The emotional and physical demands on artists are high in this labor-intensive work. The financial costs of developing the work over an extended period of time and of continuing contacts after the piece is finished are rarely built into budgets, and artists who work in regions outside their own are faced with constant questions to be resolved. Some resolve them by working locally within their communities, and others build relationships that accommodate the distance. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the artwork presented within this chapter is the factoring of the audience into the actual construction of the work. The work activates the viewer, creating a participant, even a collaborator. It could be stated that all art takes its audience into account in some way, but work that takes its site, context and placement into account integrates the viewer or individual in its conceptual production.

Where before the audience was prepared through various museum programs in order to like the work of public art, or such a work was left for a time to soften the blow so that reactions to it were mediated in some way. In this public art the audience is very much engaged, from the start, in the process of making.\textsuperscript{196}

\textsuperscript{195} Serra, op. cit., p.152.
\textsuperscript{196} Lacy, op. cit., p.37.
Project and public art integrity is based not on artists’ allegiances to their own visions but on an integration of their ideas with those of the community. The presence of a diversified audience in these works leads back to issues of reconsidering the possible uses of artwork in the social context and the role of the artist as an actor in the public sector. In finding new ways to work, artists must draw upon models of education to incorporate other disciplines, community groups and site-specific projects within a total synthesis of interpretation, invention, installation and validity when undertaking public projects. Such collaborations replace being paid by a funding body to produce a work that can be shifted independently from one site to the next, never really having any place with which it is identifiable. Site-specific works which are temporal in nature need to be explored, and more commitment and correspondence amongst groups involved within the public space are needed.

In the end, the inherent merit of a single and particular work is not the sole concern. Rather, artists need to envision a new form of society or shared project in which others who are not artists, working in different manners and places, are invited to participate and collaborate. The artwork produced in such a case must be seen with respect to that vision and assessed in part by its relationship to the collective social proposition to which it subscribes. Art becomes an individual’s statement of values as well as a reflection of a mode of invention and seeing.

Whether it operates as symbolic gesture or concrete action, public art must be evaluated in a multifaceted way to account for its impact on action, consciousness, the artwork and projects produced, as well as on the definition of art and its role in a public space. Central to this evaluation is a redefinition that challenges the nature of art, in that it functions not primarily as a product but as a process of value finding. A set of philosophies and working methodologies is incorporated, which aid in and contribute to a larger socio-cultural agenda.
Chapter Seven

I Was Not Made for These Times:
Architecture and Spatial Articulation.

Architecture...To understand architecture, not through the eye, not through the brain, but more through the body. I think body feeling is so much more important to understanding architecture.\textsuperscript{197}

The aim of this chapter is to consider how spatial articulation and the development of more conceptually based projects have become central in the development of architecture. By engaging historical events, issues and figures in architecture, the spaces architecture constructs and its critical references to social, politico-economic and semicologic yardsticks are considered. Space, after all, is an inherent architectural principle, but it has been reduced to a product of discourse. Within this chapter it is shown that certain architects and participants from other disciplines have continually evaluated the architectural discourse through projects in which they have been able to ask questions about the nature of space itself. The discussion takes into consideration the place (the site and architecture) in which a work comes to rest (develops) and the integral parts of such work, which question both spatial design and felt response. All the consequences of such links are considered. It is a matter of challenging and reinvestigating both private and public spaces, and through either disfiguring or embellishing the place or site the architect and the architecture can precisely indicate the intentions of proposed built environments.

This chapter also raises issues related to the idea of society continually reinventing its needs. Examples of working methodologies of particular practitioners are discussed to show that they have been able to read the mutations that have taken place and thus have been able to reinterpret certain phenomena through new visions, incarnations and manifestations. A further aim in this chapter is to develop the idea that planning is not just the attempt to do something immediately,

but also an attempt to imagine or create conditions that allow different forms of density, diversity and scenarios to be developed.

Another issue discussed is the idea of blankness or the void within architecture. This means that leaving areas and space empty, undecided or undetermined, within not just a building but a wider urban environment, can allow the objects and constructions that are produced to take on new meaning through their isolation within the community. Yet at the same time they can be connected through their geographical relationship to each other. Instead of architecture being focused on the notion of packaging space through ideas, or on an ambition to show how a building is put together (as in the Pompidou Centre in Paris with its elements of construction – pipes, bricks, insulation – displayed on the outside of the building), what if the space was left open to such an extent that on entering the building, an individual may not know where the outside environment stops and the interior of the building begins, as in U.S. conceptual artist Vito Acconci's *New World Trade Center* (2002) (fig. 83).

![Fig. 83](image)

Architecture is a representation and expression of a society, in that the buildings constructed within it identify the city, such as Sydney, Australia with the Opera House, Washington, U.S. with the White House, London, England with Buckingham Palace, or Cairo, Egypt with the Pyramids.
Architecture is the expression of every society's very being...Great monuments rise up like levees, opposing the logic of majesty and authority to any confusion: Church and State in the form of cathedrals and palaces speak to multitudes, or silence them.  

In relation to the issue of architect representing a society, the architectural monument may be seen as an embodiment and abstract representation of the human body. Through modulation, measurement and proportion, architecture, which constructs spaces for the use of individuals, at the same time can become more and more abstract and isolated from its environment. We can lose our sense of belonging to a particular environment, space, culture or society if elements such as architecture, which define that particular place, are continually shifting and changing. Much like site-specific artwork, buildings need to be constructed for permanent installation and over time can develop a synthesis with their environment, regardless of cultural styles. Or a city needs to be made of a modular system of construction much like the circus, where tents are erected and pulled down from town to town.

Another form of architecture discussed is that of museums. In most museums the architecture is independent of the art, representing one particular ideology while the art on display represents (most of the time), something completely different. The aim in this chapter is to show through various working methodologies and projects that architecture must be, through planning and construction, an artwork all in itself. There are two possible outcomes. The first is that the architecture can be a utilitarian space having only its own needs. The second is that the architecture and the art must be designed in relation to each other. The work placed within the interior must be taken into consideration when designing and constructing the building. The museum’s architecture and the artwork must be complementary to each other, and so to think of such a museum would to automatically think of the artwork. Obviously it may be considered that this already takes place in a minor form: if one thinks of the Louvre in Paris then the Mona Lisa painting comes to mind.

The aim is to encourage the production and conceptualisation of varying spaces through the collaboration or involvement of artists within the design and construction process. Architectural concerns of enclosing and delegating space are similar to those of minimal artwork and practices.

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Thus new methodologies and projects could arise from greater interaction between the two disciplines, as they have similar starting points of production and conceptualisation.

Abstract Borders, Boundaries and Spaces

Architecture creates boundaries out of what would otherwise be perceived as unbounded space. The main essence of architecture is that it must serve a need to enclose space in order to provide shelter. Space and its use in architecture plays an important role in the way people use and interact with the built environment. Urban planners, administrators of political territories, religious organisations and prison wardens are all concerned with spatial distribution and use. The distribution of domestic space also forms an integral part of the social and the political history of our community. Whether we are aware of it or not, architecture is a part of everybody’s personal history, because it encases all the experiences we grow up with, such as work, play, birth, learning, teaching, and worship. A central idea in the analysis of habitable space is the space people construct for themselves to shape their lives. A major difficulty that continually confronts architects when they are working with an external space outside the confines of a private site is that the building produced is ‘often in reality deformed by interpretations’. This can be seen in Danish architect Jørn Utzon’s Sydney Opera House (1957-1973) (fig.84), which was completed by the architectural team Hall, Littlemore and Todd in 1973. Utzon’s original ideas were an imaginative and expressive building consisting of a set of reinforced concrete shells, where the spaces within the interior and exterior of the building complemented each other. However, the final interior bears no relation to the exterior, Utzon having resigned before the work could be completed. The original design was changed and his original concepts abstracted by various governing bodies, architectural and social opinions. Yet the Sydney Opera House still remains one of the most dramatic and inspiring architectural images of the twentieth century, showing how architecture is capable of making great statements through spatial intervention.

Architecture’s foundation includes consciously assembled components in which forms and spaces have reference to daily life and everyday forms. The space that boundaries partition depends on the type of culture and era, as humans artificially create architectural partitions where they do not appear in nature, and so architecture partitions in a very visible way. The most important variables that influence the interaction between architecture and the use of space are components of culture. Buildings can also be used to celebrate or articulate a particular moment in history. Nazi Germany took links between architecture and society very seriously. Monuments of the Third Reich, such as Munich Temples, and Haus der Deutschen Kunst, Munich, were created by the Nazi party’s official architects, Paul Troost and Albert Speer, who used extreme scale to coerce people’s sense of personal and national responsibility, making them a part of the malleable mass. Their architecture’s sheer scale and composition of space made it alienating and threatening. Dutch architect Jonas Salk built buildings such as The Louis Kahn Building, the Salk Center, or La Jolla, because he wanted his buildings to be considered as monuments more than as dwellings.

In direct contrast to this, space can be used as a material that links people to nature and buildings. Space is seen as an important material that bridges gaps between nature and people. The Uluru National Park Cultural Centre, Uluru, Australia (1996), or any of Australian architect Glenn Murcutt’s buildings, such as House – Yirrkala Community, Northern Territory, embody an understanding and inventiveness towards Australia’s environment. Murcutt’s

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buildings, in particular, have prescribed a rationalisation of space and function, and those buildings and the interior space of the architecture give the occupant the feeling of opening up as they enter the space. The English architect Henry David Thoreau believed that the only honest house is the whole house exposed before a person, so that, in such a house, no one room is hidden. He wrote, 'I sometimes dream of a house whose inside is as open, where to be a guest you are presented with the freedom of the house'.

Acconci echoes this theme in his public work projects, which are designed to be a complete integration of the inside of the building with the environment external to it, such as the New World Trade Center (2002). Acconci's architectural designs, like those of Thoreau, focus on the opening up of the building, providing a space unencumbered by planes or angles: free-floating space. Traditionally designed houses are carefully designed spaces with cells within their interior. Such architecture dislocates our interaction with space, as it is broken down into fragments. This is the way we generally receive information in a world where information is transferred by so many different mediums.

Fig. 85

Fig. 86

Within the field of architecture, there are examples that display the production of intimate spaces, such as Italian architect Claudio Silvestin's Men'swear Shop, Austria (1993), English architect John Pawson's Faggionato Apartment, London (1999) (fig.85), and Australian architect Kerry Hill's Ooi House, Margaret River (1998) (fig.86). They exemplify austerity and simplicity, allowing the walls within the building to support rather than to inhibit the space. The French theorist Gaston Bachelard, in his book Poetics of Space (1958), outlined the role of architecture in social behaviour. He believed the house to be a metaphor of humanness. It is an

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essential space, a dwelling that encloses an immediate well-being and allows us a level of freedom and security, whether psychological or physical, because 'we have to say that we inhabit our vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root, day after day, in a corner of the world.'

'Architects have always said that architecture should be harmonious and somehow it should put things in order.' The Swiss modernist architect Le Corbusier in the 1920s showed architecture that consisted of 'free standing residential towers in an unbroken park landscape and the open city with unbound freedom of movement'. His concept was of unrestricted spaces enabling a city to become wide open. But to create such a city, Le Corbusier believed that, 'all architecture of the past was just the dead weight of history that killed everything new and therefore must be swept away.' This type of design would allow cities to keep some type of cohesion; thus the grid formation of the city is a formula that has allowed our urban environment to become regimented so that it can be deconstructed and constructed more easily.

However, cities cannot be rebuilt every fifty years. In such environments is one of two things occurs: Firstly, buildings are vacated regularly, creating voids in the environment, as in New York, or secondly, buildings are erased and erected, regardless of their ability to function, as in Sydney. There are two reasons for such changes to our urban environments. People are drawn to major cities because they hold all the resources, providing greater contact with the outside world and with more people in a smaller area. Also, cities are continually looking to redefine themselves through the people who hold power. In many ways, heads of bureaucracies such as government agencies, multi-national corporations, and urban designers now see buildings as the new type of monument. In the nineteenth century a bust of an important figure of the state was a recognisable and valued commodity. Now not just buildings but great buildings which redefine our urban environments are seen as an essential part of any city plan. Buildings such as German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building, New York (1954-58) (fig.87), Dutch architect Gerrit Rietveld's Shroder House, Utrecht (1923-24) (fig.88), U.S. architect William Van Alen's Chrysler Building, New York (1928-30) or U.S. architect Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, Bilboa (1998-99), are all synonymous with their place, site and public

207 Ibid.
space, and have thus become an essential component of their urban fabric. But in general in our urban environment, ill-conceived buildings for particular spaces merely show us the inadequate function of urban planning and cause our social space to be in continual flux.

An important part of spatial articulation can be seen within the Dutch movement De Stijl, which included artists, architects, designers, and writers. The participants emphasized the links between the nineteenth and twentieth-century architectural traditions of visual art and architecture and the collaboration of the two. The collaborative links, particularly in Holland in the early part of the twentieth century, were strengthened by the progressive attitude of both theory and practice towards social housing. De Stijl influence on architectural developments in Holland was most acceptable when it was absorbed by more pragmatic architects, who tempered its refinements and abstraction with the traditional and humanistic concerns for material, scale, variety and texture. Examples are Dutch architect Jan Wils’ *Papaverhof housing estate in the Hague* (1919) and English architect Dick Greiner’s so-called *concrete village (Watergraafsmeer)* on the outskirts of Amsterdam, commenced in 1921, which was also humanized by variations of form, detail and scale.\(^{208}\) This is also prevalent in English architect Wright Berlage’s concern for the expressive nature of materials in his architecture, demonstrating an extension rather than enclosure of space.

Considerations and Constructions

Cities evolve through a gradual layering of events, nature, economics and politics. A building that is relevant today can become a meaningless structure tomorrow as newly constructed buildings are placed in its wake. The human mind is endlessly ingenious and inventive. Although some architects may have believed that their buildings had completely integrated themselves with their surrounds and would remain for a considerable time, time does not stand still, a city continues to evolve, and thus a building becomes outdated within the fabric of its urban environment. The architecture which has lost most in public esteem, but still makes up the bulk of modern architecture and characterises the modern city, is mass housing such as apartment blocks and office developments. Buildings such as Japanese architect Minoru Yamasaki’s *Pruit Igoe Flats, St. Louis* (1955), demolished in 1972, or his public housing project in Liverpool, England, 1958, demolished in 1979, are two examples of architecture which became outdated because of the current social and urban environment of the city; both were eventually destroyed.

U.S. artist Gordon Matta-Clark (who turned to architectural deconstruction in the 1970s) and Canadian architect Melvin Charney (who now creates installations for exhibition) have shown that ‘architecture is a form of knowledge, not a knowledge of forms’.\(^{209}\) Whether it is Matta-Clark’s physical dissections of buildings, *Circus or The Caribbean Orange* (1978) (fig.89) or Charney’s built facades *Les Maisons de la rue Sherbrooke* (1976) (fig.90), they have no interior; such works have opened a state of enclosure in architecture which is preconditioned not only by physical necessity, but also by the industry that proliferates in suburban and urban buildings, as a

\(^{209}\) Tschumi, op. cit., p.83.
context for ensuring a passive isolated consumer. Such work is still a very physical act, yet Matta-Clark and Charney have shown that taking away architecture’s function of housing allows it to become a site of exploration, where architecture can be considered and created without being built.

Therefore it is not a matter of carrying out a work of architecture, nor a matter of choosing an architectural style to suit the point one wishes to make. Architects and individuals in other disciplines must be included in architectural projects, so that more coherence can be brought into the built spaces. To limit one’s area of choice can lead to a proliferation of urban environments where people feel isolated from the areas they inhabit. It is not a problem of architecture on one side and art unknown to it on the other. Neither is it a question of art submitting to architecture, or of architecture wedding art. The problem is set by architecture in an attempt to conceal itself and to support (artificially) whatever uses it may encounter. The value of such architecture is that it can assert itself freely, within the soft shelter, environment, which receives it.

An example of triumphant architecture (anti-neutral), is the Guggenheim Museum, New York (1956), by U.S. modernist architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Subversion within the built space consists of accentuating what is already in place, thus making any other situation inside the Museum untenable, except the one chosen by the subversive work in question. U.S. minimalist artist Dan Flavin’s untitled (Tracy, to celebrate the love of a lifetime) (1992) uses the curves of the Guggenheim Museum to frame the light pieces. Flavin has stated, with regard to architecture and his work, ‘I don’t want to impose separate sculptural ego dumps as public works. I don’t want to rival architecture and public spaces insistently’. The concept of artworks becoming decoration or ‘add-ons’ for architecture, or conversely trying to undermine the architecture where they are placed, has become obsolete, a negative response to our varying urban environments. Between public artwork and architecture an integration of needs is required, in which one cannot differentiate between one or the other when viewing or experiencing the particular environment.

The Guggenheim Museum in New York, although enveloping and welcoming, excludes any art that is exhibited within it, as the structure is sympathetic only towards its own needs. Any work

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venturing unconsciously into such envelopment is irrevocably absorbed, swallowed up in the spirals and curves of this architecture. Such architecture is damaging to art as it constrains, and by the same token very clearly reveals the limits of the so-called art.

Conceptual Inventions

Architecture contains an exciting new area of discovery. As we enter the twenty-first century, computers and cyberspace have enabled architecture to break away from its materialisation, allowing architects (who have been taught to produce functional work) to create work on a more conceptual level. Computer software such as Hyperhouse or ArchiCad has enabled architects to design in a computer generated virtual space. Architects such as Swiss-French Bernard Tschumi in his Le Fresnoy, Tourconing (1992), or U.S. Peter Eisenman, in his (computer drawings and models) Building Skin (1995), have shifted the practice of architecture to cyber-construction. Such methods of working seek to release architecture from the constraints of being object-oriented to being textual. These methods have shown that architecture can be created more freely without economic and political functional problems. This process can be seen as assimilation or another reality. U.S. architectural critic David Goldblatt has stated that architectural discourse like Eisenman's and Tschumi's is an architecture interested in 'generating questions, conversations, about what such questions might mean and in what new ways they might be approached'.

French postmodernist theorist Jean Baudrillard writes that 'nothing was real, everything was mediated, all was simulation, therefore reintroducing coherence was very simple, it was an homogenous simulation'. However, our social space and the development of architecture is more complex than that, because some of it is real and some of it is simulated, and the two constantly play off one another. This makes a diverse medium from which to build. Such work will always be questioned as to its function, because architecture has always been bound up in functional thought and will continue to be for many years to come. The design process facilitates free thought and it means that buildings can be produced out of such utopian ideas. The Ferry

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Terminal and Museum (1992), Japan, designed by Japanese architect Shin Takamatsu, has shown the advantages of such work. The building, through its geometric volumes, has been able to contain and use space in a gestural way.

In the twentieth century new technologies led to a rapid structural transformation of the urban environment. New emerging artefacts and the changing relationships within the historical urban environment have often been misunderstood and unjustifiably taken for urban chaos. Changes in technology have evolved new forms at such a pace that their values have not been able to keep up with the change. Much of the dissatisfaction voiced towards the urban environment has its origins in values which may have been compatible with prior conceptions of order, but which are not consistent with values of today or with contemporary social processes. Instead of re-examining their value systems, architects have often struggled to back-pedal and design environments to conform to their unchanged world views. This attitude is manifested in the frequent attempts to hide new emerging forms behind familiar facades and images in order to make them acceptable. For example Max's Petersham Inn, Sydney, with its heritage-listed façade, now sits in front of a new apartment complex The Citadel (2002), which has been constructed within its shell.

The design vocabulary at the architect's disposal has increased tremendously. Technological innovation has brought not only new materials, production and management techniques but also automation, communication, and transportation technologies which in turn have extended architectural possibilities beyond traditional concepts, allowing the spaces within the building to be aligned with the conceptual framework. Gehry has stated that 'truth of materials is silly in an age when one can build anything one can draw, and it may therefore be more fruitful to think instead about truth to ideas, in the sense in which Leonardo de Vinci said that the idea was in the drawing.' Gehry developed his structures through a system of design and construction that allowed the building to constantly flow, where the building asks questions of the continuous spaces and their relationships, as in the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles (1987-2003) (fig.91), and Experience Music Project, Seattle (1995-2000).

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Industrialized building techniques are predominantly dependent on the repetition of a great number of identical parts. This is the same as a systematic approach to construction. By further developing concepts through the use of new techniques and materials, a completely different work may be achieved, even though it may seem similar. By repetition, parts that are identical allow an ongoing development to be maintained through a process of stages. This can be likened to U.S. minimalist artist Donald Judd and the way his sculpture can be seen as a rearrangement of elements in the architectural environment, recalling either buildings under construction by its use of plywood in *Untitled* (1993), or the stainless steel and Plexiglas elevators in skyscrapers in *Untitled* (1992).

Rather than worrying about protracted developments, architects should be starting to expand their areas of concern, employing new technologies and new forms that go beyond the traditional realm of buildings as finished entities. Architects have, for example, been blinded for far too long by the idea that architectural form is the only means by which to communicate the content of a building. They must forget their preoccupation with legibility and ‘image-ability’ of form and the philosophy of ‘form follows function’. Instead, by opening up the borders and barriers of architecture, new ideas, interventions and methodologies could be produced, with individuals from varying disciplines being invited to contribute to projects or conversely being given a project to work on independently. Another question must be, ‘Is there really any need to build as extensively as architects tend to do?’ Obviously architecture is a job and architects have to work within the requirements of the client and what is requested. However, maybe the ideal model in which architects and artists can work together or for the invention of greater ideas is through
local, state and national governing bodies providing financial support to assist in the funding of projects, debates and subsequent increased opportunities.

Computer technology has created a multiplicity of different points of research and design. Communities are now appearing in cyber-space without any form of physical construction, and architecture must begin to question its relationship to social space either in a physical or cyber-reality way. Models and computer designs are fundamentally the foundation from which buildings are created, so they can be considered the language of architecture. Such techniques, coupled with more architectural imagination in the presentation of buildings, should lead to a more diverse range of architectural projects in our urban spaces. In buildings, most activities take place in unspecified areas that can accommodate and be interchangeable.

History Repeating

The modern movement in architecture is really the history of two conflicting conceptions of the role of the architect. On one hand the architect is seen as an engineer, while on the other the architect is seen as an artist. Functionalism, from the Russian constructivists through Le Corbusier, culminating in the State Bauhaus, Weimar, Germany (1920) and German architect Walter Gropius, can be seen as a method of resolving this conflict as well as the contradictions between two bourgeois value systems, humanism and technological operationalism. The solution, as envisaged by the Bauhaus, lies in subjecting the architectural work and people’s needs to a ‘scientific’ analysis in order to produce a functional system. Human needs are social needs and should be incorporated into a unified (total) formal (aesthetic) program. An abstract language composed ‘scientifically’, like the basic elements of physics, would be used to produce a material architecture built from a language of elemental, ideal forms. Thus architecture that is created for a particular space should remain concerned only with the problems within its site. Any external area is left to be just that – incidental. This methodology links both 1960s minimal art and post-Bauhaus architecture, as both are comparable in their abstract materialism and their formally reductive methodology. They share a belief in ‘objective’ form and in an internal self-articulation of the formal structure, in apparent separation from symbolic and representational codes of meaning. Both minimal art and functionalist architecture deny connotative, social meanings and the context of other, surrounding art or architecture.
This working methodology is prevalent in the work of Dutch De Stijl architect and artist Theo Van Doesburg, who conceived of dynamic structures that were intended to express the triumph and interpretation of nature and the building site, while at the same time challenging the forces of gravity and demonstrating the idea of matter with the architectural discourse. The opportunity to investigate these ideas came in 1923 when, in collaboration with other members of the De Stijl movement, Dutch architects Cornelis van Eesteren and Rietveld, he produced three remarkable models for an exhibition of De Stijl architecture held at Leonce Rosenberg’s art gallery in Paris. These complex structures were made up of interpenetrating, interlocking and overlapping cubes and planes that were defined by colour and hovered, seemingly weightless, in space. The structures were deceptively simple models that implied a revolution in the architects’ conception of internal space. They initiated concern for spatial contrasts, spatial dissonances and spatial supplementation which preoccupied Van Doesburg for the rest of his career. The nature and implications of such architecture defied tradition, replacing the conventional box volumes with planes that explored rather than enclosed space. It was duly described and defined in various articles and manifestos such as The New Architecture: Towards a Plastic Architecture (1924). This architecture does not attempt to combine all functional space-cells into one closed cube, but projects the functional space-cells as well as overhanging planes, the volumes of balconies and so on. As well as taxing the ingenuity of the engineer, such architecture made new demands on other individuals such as painters who were involved within the total building process.

Van Doesburg stated that ‘the equilibrium of the architectural relationships becomes a visible reality only through the use of colour. The task of the modern painter is to integrate colour into a harmonic whole by placing it, not on a plane surface of two dimensions, but within the realm of space-time’. 2.15 Van Doesburg’s vision of architecture was concerned with space being broken down and recreated or re-expressed through a dynamic use of colour, and the ‘grand vision of placing man within the painting instead of in front of it’. 2.16 These links can be seen to be further developed in painting, where artists in the 1960s concentrated more on site-specific wall works, such as Sol Le Witt’s All Combinations of Arcs from the Corner and Sides, Straight Lines, Not-Straight Lines, and Broken Lines (1973) (fig.92). The architecture of the site rather than the support of the traditional painting frame framed these works. Viewers, rather than having a two-dimensional experience of the work, were now able to enter the room and thus enter the work.

2.15 Naylor, op. cit., p.100.
The work was now three-dimensional in that it used an architectural frame, although it might be still conceived and installed two-dimensionally on a wall.

Fig.92

By the end of World War II, two Bauhaus architects, Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, emigrated to the U.S. and established themselves as influential teachers in large university architectural departments. Gropius was at Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design, and van der Rohe was at Illinois Institute of Technology. They informed and trained a new generation of U.S. architects, such as Eisenman, Michael Graves and Leoh Ming Pei, in Modernist architecture that was concerned with simplicity of design and material, and in time would be called the ‘International style’. Van der Rohe’s classicism was based on an apparent truth to materials – that is, materials being seen for what they were, instead of being disguised by the use of ornamentation, wedded to an idealised, and highly abstract, notion of space.

The International style of architecture was recogniseable in the production of tall commercial buildings distinguished by clean lines and sheer reflecting surfaces. The buildings functioned ideologically as a neutral and objectified rationale for U.S. capitalism, although the style and its participants would wish it to be seen as merely as an abstract (not symbolic) form. This symbolic rationale existed in the U.S., for its activities and the form of its corporate architecture (and art) were reflected during the post-World War II period. This style was also expressed in the architecture of Swiss-born architect Le Corbusier. His working models, which were first created in Weimar, Germany, in 1922, were the basis for organising space independent of external influences, where everything important was contained within the site. Le Corbusier termed these works Architectonic sculptures, and he described them as ‘practical demonstrations of his convictions that inner space should be expressed through outer form; that no preference should
be shown to any single facade; and that form should not be absorbed by or express the landscape.²¹⁷

Spatial clarity within designs as well the development and organisation of simplicity within the works produced was a major influence on 'the American artists of the sixties and seventies', who 'reproduced this pattern, becoming the cultural engineers of International art'.²¹⁸ From the 1960s onward the minimalist art movement redeveloped and re-contextualised the earlier discoveries by movements such as Russian constructivism, De Stijl and the Bauhaus.

The link between visual art and architecture is important within the development of a total synthesis and design, with regard to the understanding and construction of urban environments. With the invention of democratic, re-composable, open modular units, a new language of not only architectural but visual art discourse was set up and made available by the inventions of the members of De Stijl and the Bauhaus. The simplicity of the designs and architecture produced is fascinating, precisely because it ignores so many environmental aspects and subscribes to the commonly held attitude, less is more, made famous by van der Rohe.

Integration, Clarity and Respect

It has been widely recognized that in contemporary architecture and urbanism certain essential features are missing and that architects have not been capable of creating environments that are as satisfying as the naturally evolved cities of the past. Delving into the past would not have been necessary had it been realized that much of the visual boredom of the new cities could be attributed to the attitude of selection and control of environmental aspects. The nature of our spaces depends entirely on their value. A value system that produces architecture within a particular site or space celebrates 'the activity of those in power, often at the expense of large numbers of disadvantaged others'.²¹⁹ Obviously one cannot generalise, because every community, site and space is totally different, and so the work produced for each space cannot be

²¹⁷ Naylor, op. cit., p.100.
²¹⁸ Graham, Dan, op. cit., p.24.
²¹⁹ Ward, Anthony, Reconstructing Architecture, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996, p.27
treated with a traditional architectural vocabulary, as this vocabulary is geared to dealing with buildings as opposed to the total environment.

Confronted with the necessity to let go of the traditional and limiting concept of architecture in order to cope with the new and more complex emerging environment, architects such as Dutch Rem Koolhaas, and U.S. Richard Gluckman and Frank Gehry chose to ignore and reject those aspects of the environment which they felt lay beyond the traditional scope of architecture. In particular Gluckman creates architecture in which the viewer is compelled to consider his or her place in real space and time. Less architectural detail and décor within the design allows for more emphasis on the basic architectural components: structure, scale proportion, material and light. Gluckman’s ‘approach is neither reductive nor neutral’. 220 Instead it allows the environment and the space contained within the architecture freedom to remain unencumbered by the weight of the building; his architecture remains totally site-specific, as he chooses through it to ‘let the spaces be what they want to be’. 221

The spatial and social functions of building and the urban environment are subsumed in the formal disclosure of its technical, material and formal construction. The opening up of our urban spaces may lie in an increased use of clear rather than non-reflective glass for construction. The glass gives the viewer the illusion that what is seen is seen exactly as it is. Through it one sees the technical workings of the company and the technical engineering of the building’s structure. Its architectural façade gives the impression of absolute openness, a transparent openness to the environment (it incorporates the natural environment). In attempting to eliminate the disparity between the façade (which conventionally mediates its relation to the outside environment) and its private, institutional function, this type of architecture appears to eliminate the distinction between outer form and inner function.

In his current architectural projects with the Acconci Studio, Acconci has adopted the theme of allowing the outside in and the inside out. His projects for the restructuring or design of urban environments, in particular the proposal for the redesign of the Twin Towers, New YorkCity (2002), can be seen as ironical, considering the current social climate and the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Acconci’s redesign of the Twin Towers was to effectively blow holes through the building, allowing the inside to become linked with the outside and vice versa. Thus

221 Ibid, p.178.
there would be a total integration between the public space of the outside and the private space of the inside. Normally a façade of a building is designed essentially to confine and isolate the interior space of the building from the outside. This distinction allows the interior to function autonomously from any outside distraction. Yet Acconci opened up the building to new uses, reconfiguring and redesigning the existing functionality of the spaces within the building. Thus the surrounding buildings are incorporated within the architecture.

The Application of Standards and Conceptual Models

The difficulty with applying constructivist standards to present-day architectural/social problems is that they impose a blinder on reality, because they take into account only their concerns. Thus what may appear to be site-specific architecturally may also appear to be disjointed from the external environment. In rejecting the reductivism and utopianism of modernist architectural doctrine, U.S. post-modern architect Robert Venturi and his collaborators John Rauch and Denise Scott-Brown propose an architecture that accepts the actual conditions, social realities and given economics of a particular situation. This means that commercial buildings in a capitalist society would take the syntax of the commercial vernacular seriously, including the building’s relation to the surrounding built environment, the program of the client on whose behalf it is built, and the public’s reading and cultural appropriation of the building.

Unlike modern masters like Van Doesburg, Gropius, Le Corbusier and Lloyd Wright, who advocated invention and unconventional solutions, Venturi advocates using known conventions. In dispensing with the myth of the ‘heroic and original’ building, Venturi believes that architecture ‘in its search for new forms and expressive use of materials has simply fuelled the surplus economy of late capitalism and helped to provide large corporations with the alibi of high culture.’ Venturi’s ideals reflect the theory of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan that ‘nothing is new, everything has been done before. By repeatedly doing something over and over again, this produces newness’. So using existing foundations of architecture can produce newness, by reworking the existing structure. This theme is also related to that of the U.S. minimalist artists, in particular the work of Judd, Carl Andre and LeWitt, whose sculptures or

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222 Graham, op. cit., p.25.
industrial objects are continually re-evaluated and redeveloped using the same standardised units and materials. Examples include Judd’s plywood boxes Untitled (1986), Andre’s rolled steel metal squares 144 Magnesium Square (1969), and LeWitt’s aluminium open cubes Modular Floor Structure (1966).

Venturi also questions the relation and socio-political effect of art and architecture on its immediate environment. Using the conceptual themes of the U.S. visual art movement of the 1960s pop art, Venturi appropriates the understanding that not only can the internal structure of the architectural work be seen in terms of a relation of signs, but the entire built (cultural) environment with which the building is inflected is constructed from signs. Pop art acknowledges a common code of schematic signs, conventionalised meanings and symbols that link vernacular, environmental signs to artistic/architectural signs.224

If both the cultural and the ‘real’ environment are seen in terms of a culturally connected semiotic coding, and if in practice an abstract work also functions, symbolically, in relation to other cultural signs, then a ‘new realism’, whose basis is the function of the sign in the environment, is necessary. Signs in architecture can be denotative, referring to a building itself, connotative, representing what is to be found within the building (literally or metaphorically), or alternative (perhaps contradictory), meaning elsewhere. There is also an acknowledgment that meanings in architecture are not inherent to or exclusively framed within the building itself but already exist as part of the environment in which it is placed. Thus both Venturi and Rauch build conventionally, but they use this conventionality unconventionally to express human conditions in a realistic discursive manner.

Generally, architects’ views of ideal contemporary environments concentrate on a limited number of aspects, their proposed designs resulting in diagrams reflecting a simple order that uses vocabulary no different from the traditional. Many of these contemporary diagrams look as if they do not allow for anybody other than the designer to be involved in the decision-making process leading from blueprint to reality. Many aspects, however, which cannot be foreseen at the design stage, must be allowed to evolve and be resolved as the need for new solutions arises. If the design is not a straightjacket for future developments, complexity and visual excitement

will naturally develop as a result of complex urban processes. Thus the architect’s concern with visual excitement and traditional ornamentation will be rendered redundant.

Architectural form has become more a symbol than a direct reflection of the internal functions of a building. Today, however, with more complex and faster changing functions, a building having become a sign or symbol can be quite limiting in regard to the type of function that can take place inside it. There is little need for a store that sells milk to take the form of a milk bottle or for a hot-dog stand to look like a super-size hot-dog. Once a store has taken such a shape its image will make it difficult to adapt to another function. This kind of form symbolism is a leftover from the time when architectural form was the only means by which to convey the message of architectural content. The aim, then, is to build an autonomous volume that can be modeled into whatever function is necessary. But by taking this function what are we left with? Are we left with a one-dimensional model or idea, which can become obsolete as time progresses? Or should architects stay true to their concepts and create architecture that is more concerned with ideas than use or commodity value? Obviously economics play a large role since funding of projects is essential.

There have been exceptions where individuals have been given the support and freedom to bring to fruition their proposals. For example the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art funded the U.S. artist Jorge Pardo’s 4166 Sea View Lane House, Los Angeles (1998) (fig. 93), and the Australian architect James Brearly developed Australian artist Stephen Bram’s redesign of a warehouse in inner city Melbourne. One may ask whether such designs open up the very nature of building. Does it question its own validity, and by doing this does it raise more issues about why we find it necessary to repeatedly build? When such architecture is produced, is it purely for the conceptual purposes of developing and interacting with a formal language of architecture through spatial articulation? Plans, models, and diagrams obviously play a role within the conceptual framework of architectural design, such as Matta-Clark’s Propuestas (1978), and Conical Intersect (1975).

Buildings need people to truly experience them. To understand spatial linguistics and the interaction between planes, surfaces and space is an essential component in a relationship with a building. Two-dimensional representations of space do nothing other than refer to something specific. Examples include the construction of Gehry’s *Bilbao Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao* (1998), or any of Matta-Clark’s physical dissections of built spaces, such as *Conical Intersect* (1975) (fig.94). Documentation provides a sense of the planes and sheer volume of rooms, but not the relationship of room to room, space to space and the basic dimensions of the way the walls wrap around the rooms, creating volumes that act as blankets around the inhabitants. These sensory experiences are what art, in particular minimalist sculpture, and reductive aesthetic and architecture have in common. Giving artwork the same permanence as a building enables a built-up relationship to take place. It allows the viewers of both an artwork and a building to have an inherent relationship with the art object and the architecture and the environment they inhabit.

The English architectural theorist Christopher Alexander, in his book *The City is Not a Tree* (1965), states, ‘man is not capable of conceiving intricate organizations in their total complexity but tends always to reorganize them mentally into simpler structures’.\(^{226}\) If this is so, one should not try to design an urban agglomeration as a finite package. Architects, however, accustomed to architecture as a finite product, have become upset when their creation is altered during the process of use. Similar concerns are raised by minimalist artists, in particular installation artists, who conceived their work for a particular space, museum, or site. If the artwork is bought and leaves the space, in essence it becomes null and void because its meaning is dependent on that particular site and architectural framework. The most successful architecture is concerned with a design that is centred on what might be called an adaptable and self-organizing structure, which

makes allowances for aspects that may not have been considered an inherent part of the architecture, and for activities that are not directly related to the immediate functions of the building, such as U.S. architect Peter Blake’s *Pin Wheel House, Water Mill* (1953).

It must be appreciated that an attractive environment will not be achieved by the replacement of the existing environment with an architectural diagram. This would only create monotony. Complex and diverse environments that provide increased richness of life resulting from expanding choice will not come about from the simple transformation of one man’s views into glass and concrete. Allowance must be made for the coexistence of what is already built with the new artefact. The resulting relationships will turn the environment into a complex agglomeration that can be enjoyed and experienced in constant change. Of course, we are still at a stage of a superficial operation, in that the architectural field already has a structure, and the artist transforms it by means of colour and the optical and perceptual use of space. In other words, the structural properties of the field remain the same, while the chromatic transformation serves as a visual lightening or intensification of the field.

The reorientation of space in modern architecture can be best exemplified by the ‘space architecture’ of Austrian architect R. M. Schindler and his radical communal dwelling in West Hollywood (1912-22). Artist Jorge Pardo has cited Shindler’s house as a significant inspiration for his own Los Angeles ‘house sculpture’. By shifting contexts for processing the physicality of the space, Schindler demonstrates through his architecture how the concrete structure of the environment becomes a blueprint for the elimination of excess and an opening up of the space. This methodology is paralleled in the work of U.S. minimal architect and artists Tony Smith and Charney. Both architects moved from traditional architecture to making structures or objects which dealt with architectural language, such as spatial demarcation, and the idea of what is it to build. However, at the same time their work is shown within the museum and visual art context.

For all the solidity and weight that a building presents, its very nature is continually under flux. How can any building be integrated into its environment when the environment it is entering has such an ephemeral quality? If a building’s very nature is governed by the elements which surround it, does it lose its meaning or purpose if anything is changed on its periphery? Really the best buildings are those with a total integration policy. Buildings which take into account the very nature of change and thus are able to continually reshape themselves but also keep their original context can be termed ‘total architecture’. Acconci’s architectural and public works deal
with and answer such problems in relation to the buildings and their external environments. Most of the constructions entail the notion of inside and outside integrated into a total environment. The use of a park as a positional figure around the building means that the building will always remain site-specific because it is designed to be placed within the park. Other projects also include the use of natural light, brought into the building by using wedges which run down the interior, creating an abstracted enlargement of space, reminiscent of U.S. artist James Turrell’s light installations *Space that Sees* (1993). In Acconci’s building proposal there is a viewing platform running within the multiple floors of the building, yet the building from the exterior seems completely insular. Its whole process cannot be changed by any peripheral construction because its entire meaning is self-contained.

It is time to reconsider our priorities in planning and architecture. As a first step, we should make sure that we do not waste resources trying to make the environment comply with outdated environmental concepts and old-time aesthetic values. The way we look at the environment becomes far more important than the environment itself. Unfortunately, people have not been trained to look at the environment in an unbiased way. Architects have generally been dissatisfied with the existing, and their proposals advocate the overpowering or neglecting of the present order rather than the understanding of it and the intention of living with it. Matta-Clark attempted to reconstruct and make use of abandoned residential housing and industrial buildings that had become obsolete. His ‘cuts’ as he called them, attempted to reclaim the notion of architect by having a very limited life span before becoming obsolete and non-functioning, as bigger and better buildings were built to show off economic grandness. Matta-Clark deconstructs through his cuttings that which has been constructed yet abandoned, and in turn makes it useful once again. Shifting the building’s intentions enables the building (which is concrete in construction) to become exposed to new modes of thought and production.

In Venturi’s book, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, he notes that the mid-sixties de-emphasised architecture as an isolated, integrated proposition. Venturi in turn provides modern architecture with the possibilities of creatively exploiting ambiguity, radical juxtapositions, and seemingly contradictory designs.227 If we want architecture to be part of life and not remote from it we must learn to accept its vulgar vernacular and we must learn to integrate it rather than try to transform it. Artists could teach architects a lesson about integration.

of the vulgar and common into design. They could free architects from the still common preconception that within the field of architecture, everything that is unplanned and not designed is undesirable. Although a simple order applied to a complex situation can make the complexity more easily understandable, the environmental structure of a homogeneous and simple society should never be applied to more advanced social orders without carefully checking its applicability. If we want to learn from architecture created without architects, we have to only turn to our anonymous environments in the commercial and industrial vernacular to see how a proliferation of building styles has made our urban environment look like a papier mache of images.

When, Where, Why, and for How Long?

Architecture of any sort is the inevitable background, support and frame of everyday life. There no longer exists architecture peculiar to a particular place, because theory, style, design and meaning are easily transferred throughout the world according to social, political, economic or private need. But this situation only creates more dysfunction within our built spaces. There are only two answers to this problem. The first is to have community, city, state and national organisations which consist of architects, artists, urban designers and cultural theorists. That is, we need people who are able to create through plans, publications and projects a greater awareness of building and a more coherent built environment. The second option is to create a sleek disposable architecture. It would be a soluble architecture that can be taken down like Bedouin tents in a night and reassembled in a day, so that it will not litter the earth with built garbage. This type of architecture would continue to become durable because its very nature would make it autonomous of any site, yet at the same time non-intrusive in its space. Durability is a major concern for architecture because as a building becomes redundant its value is lost, and more often than not it is destroyed.②⑧

An architectural tradition is composed of references to an ideal type of construction which accommodates particular circumstances. The historical, in the form of an architectural allusion, signifies an ideal; but its specific meaning has relevance only in its relation to its surroundings

②⑧ Antin, David, op. cit., p.19.
and present-day meanings expressed in the environment. This is never neutral, but an active, present representation of ideological views which explain the past in relation to present reality. To expand the range of architectural vocabulary, architects must abandon their limiting ideologies and concern themselves with the integration of many environmental factors which they have so far considered to be outside their realm of concern. This lesson cannot be learned from the buildings of the great masters, but rather from the integration of cross-disciplinary concepts and designs. To learn from the vernacular is by no means a new suggestion: architects have often studied native architecture. But by displaying its rhetoric and social function openly, and by using contradictory conventional codes in the same building, architecture can incorporate its needs with the needs of the space in which it is situated. In this, 'the architect has finally discovered the medium of his art', 229 and a richer dialogue of spatial articulation and felt responses towards our urban environments can be produced.

Architecture is a dangerous profession because it is a 'mixture of impotence and omnipotence, in the sense that the architect almost invariably harbors megalomaniacal dreams'. 230 However, the architect must rely upon others, and upon circumstances, to impose and to realise those fantasises and dreams. The world continues to flow and vary at a rapid rate, and for architecture to become more integrated with its site and environment it is only natural that other individuals from various professions must be approached in the development of architectural ideas.

Architecture is a science that must be accompanied by a great diversity of studies and knowledge, by means of which it judges all the works of the other arts. 231

The search for unity through intense use of very few architectural forms and materials can transcend and at the same time incorporate individual spaces and environments. Limiting the number of choices within a particular site will provide a level of clarity with regard to the project. Two points are discussed in finalising this chapter. The first concerns the construction of architecture in relation to its site-specificity and the notion of modulation or temporality. The second concerns the visual arts and the construction of museums. Museums are discussed

229 Pestorius, op. cit., p.5.
because they best represent an example of two needs being met by the production of architecture. The museum can be seen as a metaphor for urban architecture in that the building should be premised on the needs of the individuals using it. Such a system of construction would facilitate a synthesis between the building’s use and its function.

It is not a matter of choosing the best-designed or most popular style of architecture for any given space. Rather the architecture must be able to be used in relation to its own ideals. When we say architecture, we include the social, political and economic context. Architecture of any sort is in fact the inevitable background, support and frame of any work of art or any city and its various communities. It is no longer a viable option to think of an architecture conceived without considering the architecture peculiar to its location. Obviously, within any city buildings are erected in relation to the space available. Stylistically, however, they seldom take into account the surrounding buildings. Instead they remain independent of their climate. When their survival becomes useless and absurd they are torn down and redeveloped. This is not to say that certain buildings should not be discarded. However, in such a situation it is possible that a once stable and cohesive environment can become disjointed as one part of the whole has been taken away.

The best form of architecture and maybe the most successful for our fluctuating urban environments could be that of simple, modulated and temporary structures. Simple in design, material and inception, such dwellings would incorporate a wide variety of uses because they are not designed with a particular culture or community in mind. Such an example can be seen in the project organised by the Serpentine Gallery, London, with its annual architectural commission.
for a temporary structure. Such a project enables both architects and artists to propose possible architectural concepts that can be installed and then moved to another location after exhibition. In 2002 the Japanese architect Toyo Ito designed a building, the *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion (2002)* (fig.95), which was devoid of windows and doors, and thus opened the interior of the building up to the exterior of the site it which it was situated. Ito believes that 'the notion for temporary projects is liberating in many ways. One need not be so strict about function nor worry about how it will age. It seems it might offer the clearest expression of the concepts of architecture'.\footnote{Ito, Toyo, *Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2002: Toyo Ito with Arup*, telescweb.com, London, 2002, p.2.} Such architecture represents a continual redeveloping of ideas through a procession of architectural constructions. It would enable our built environments to become less burdened with buildings which are not considerable in their intentions, and it would also allow artists and architects to work more freely on projects because there is less at stake in the construction of a temporary structure. It would also mean that professionals from various communities and countries could and would be given more opportunities to produce architecture in varying locations. This would allow focus on the most important issue, the encouragement of an open dialogue amongst individuals in wide-ranging places and disciplines.

Essentially architecture is a language in which one building after another, after another, after another, makes a kind of referential and structured sentence out of designs and intentions. To understand any language one must build up a knowledge and familiarity with it. If greater importance is placed upon the integration of buildings with each other within an urban environment, as well as the integration of the function of a building with its possibilities of use, a greater understanding of our built spaces should develop. Such a perspective, providing more opportunities for people other than architects to formulate and create architectural concepts, intentions and constructions, would create a more open, active and diverse discourse not just within architecture but within all the other areas directly affected by it, such as museum practices, artwork, public art and interventions as well as urban development. Such a discourse would aid in the development and structuring of more interesting habitual spaces.
Chapter Eight

No Man’s Land:
Interdisciplinary Activity and the Act of Collaboration.

Why hang things on a wall when the wall itself is so much more a challenging medium. It is the rigid mentality that architects install the walls and artists decorate them that offends my sense of either profession.

This chapter will explore the collaborative relationships between artists, architects, and the similar disciplinary activities, which lay within both a private and public space. What will also be discussed are the lack of projects between artist and architects. In researching this field of activity, the De Stijl movement (1917) in the Netherlands, will be discussed as it offers defining areas of discussion and projects that have been successful in the integration of visuals art and architectural concerns. At the same time examples must be shown of trends that have occurred in Australia, and the projects, which have taken place between artists’ and architects’.

It must be noted that collaboration does not necessarily mean a shared work between two people of separate or similar practice. But the term takes into account as a whole, the history separated from any individuals, but taking up an entire idea or ideology of work. Of course architects and artists do have a history of collaboration within their own fields. Architects collaborate on every construction project undertaken, due to the nature of their work. Engineers, builders, urban planners, public and private clients all play a role in the design, development and ultimate realisation of building projects. Artists also collaborated with people in the realisation of their own projects. This can occur in two ways. Firstly either as an equal partnership between individuals such as English artists Gilbert and George, who have worked together their entire careers on producing work, or through an inadvertent collaboration where individuals from other disciplines are used for their knowledge in assisting with the realisation and production of work. This can be seen in the minimalist artists of the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. artists Donald Judd or

Richard Serra, who used industrial fabrication techniques to construct their work. In this case one individual assumes more power than another in the finalisation of the work.

The aim is to give broader definitions and outlines, and then define them by the works, which have been produced. The two disciplines so far as the twenty-first century is concerned have not managed to achieve any sustained basis for a mutually beneficial exchange of shared ideas. Isolated, and inconclusive moments when avant-garde art has embraced architectural theory and practice can be seen for example in Italian artist Sant ‘Elia’s’ contribution to Futurism, the State Bauhaus, Weimar, Germany, and the remarkable dualism of the Dutch movement, De Stijl. In particular projects by artists/architects Theo Van Doesburg and Gerrit Rietveld for the De Stijl movement, as well as Bauhaus artist and architect Le Corbusier’s twin loyalties to painting and architecture are two historical examples. Within a contemporary context, collaborations such as that between Australian painter Stephen Bram and Australian architect James Brearly as well as U.S. artist Jorge Pardo’s 4166 Sea View Lane, in Los Angeles (1999), will be explored to show the benefits of such mutual working activities. However these examples are simply the exceptions that prove the rule that these media remain segregated activities.

There are areas of this discourse, which have shown a positive paradigm in the development of more activity amongst both discourses. In setting up the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas, U.S, Judd has created a framework and place for an ongoing dialogue about art and architecture. In a place where ideas about art and architecture are combined, enables a blurring of both disciplines and allows a freedom of conferring methodologies to take place.

Historically the relationship between art and architecture more often than not has been far from symbiotic. A traditional melding of painting, sculpture, and architecture was evident in the Renaissance period, and remained apparent even well into the early twentieth century, but it has changed in contemporary times. While architects and artists share common affinities, their education, training, and product are more often than not quite different, in that architects try to produce a functional object while artists tend to design that which is more conceptual in content, and can be deemed to have a decorative function.

To clarify issues facing contemporary art and architecture and to also discuss possible outcomes for the development of mutual working practices, certain artists and architects will be discussed because they exhibit an ability to engage in a mutual dialogue through a presentation of ideas,
philosophies, and their work. The main focus is that of inclusion and collaboration. Specifically projects by U.S. artist Frank Gehry and Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre De Meuron acknowledge influences from artists they know and work with, either through collaborative involvement or through friendship and association. U.S artist Claes Oldenburg and Dutch artist Coosje Van Bruggen have also worked with architects (Gehry at the Chiat/Day advertising building in Venice, California), *Binoculars (1981)* (fig.96), and thus such projects will be researched as they represent a model for working which can be a blueprint for further collaborative projects.\(^{234}\)

![Image](image_url)

Fig.96

The outcome for the chapter is to present two working methodologies, which occur in the collaboration of art and architecture. The first is the way art is often set within the environment of building or the topography of place. In such circumstances the context of architecture and the city is a presence or a background for the work. The second is that work, which combines both place and work, establishing an immediate point of reference. Such work instigates discussion and project development by provoking or inspiring dialogue that comes out of the space, which has been found and shaped by the work. Both will offer starting positions for discussing the potentialities and agonies of placing sculpture in public architectural settings. For artwork to be completely synthesised with its setting or space then it must become or the artist must become a principle designer or developer of that space. In such cases there should be no difference between the architecture and the artwork. Or more importantly between what is decoration and what is essential.

Motives Which Shape the Environment

Within the commercial environment, artists are often commissioned to add their own contributions to building projects. However the production of work is constantly concerned with integrating the motives that shape the physical environment with the objectives that determine visual and plastic art. But the hoped-for dialogue rarely evolves beyond a very superficial level. Architects seldom regard the areas in their buildings earmarked for the artist as anything more than decorative ghettos, and many artists who are interested in the development of cross-disciplinary activity, have nothing but scorn for the great mass of commercially motivated architectural developments. There appears to be little hope of regaining the intimate sense of cooperation and cross-fertilization, which enhanced the relationship between art and architecture during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, when common goals were established and the closest forms of collaboration eagerly welcomed. Yet there are opportunities for cross-disciplinary activity to take place.

Fig.97

Fig.98

More than ever our urban environments are continually changing, and thus there are more opportunities for artists to be asked to contribute not just within the decorative aspect of the building but also the conceptualisation of the building itself. A successful example of how two separate concepts have come together are the warehouse conversion in Prahran, Melbourne (1999) (fig.97), by Melbourne contemporary artist Stephen Bram and Melbourne architect James Breary. By working with Bram’s three-dimensional geometric paintings and experiments, UNTITLED 3 POINT PERSPECTIVE (1998) (fig.98), Breary has devised something one step further than the re-invention of surface that stemmed from Bram’s two-dimensional work. Usually art is brought to a space already conceptualised by an architect. Within Bram’s wall
painting at Anna Schwarz Gallery, Melbourne, the work becomes a rearticulated surface, while the collaboration in Prahran, Brearly’s vision is a virtual structure much larger than the limits of the site itself, and it becomes the order for architecture inscribed within its bounds. As Bram stated in regards to the act of collaboration, ‘I’m actually not interested in collaboration for its own sake, but is something to be used strategically’. This project shows that there are exciting opportunities not only for the production of conceptual discussion but also of spatial investigation through building, where collaboration between art and architecture can work effectively.

Over time artists have consistently worked together on projects formulating concerns to produce a single work, such as English conceptual artists’ Gilbert and George, who have collaborated their entire career, producing both sculptural installations, performances and photographic documentation work such as The Singing Sculpture (1973) (fig.99), performance at the New South Wales Art Gallery, and a magazine sculpture (1970). Such collaborations involving artists can redefine the value and the qualities of public space. This can be seen in the collaboration of the artists Christo and Jean-Claude. Over a period of 20 years they have worked together on projects which consist of the wrapping of both plastic environments, such as buildings Wrapped Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland (1968), and Wrapped Museum of contemporary Art, Chicago (1969) (fig.100), as well as the natural environment, coastline Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, One

\footnote{Jenkins, Kyle, Interview conducted with Stephen Bram on 29/09/02, 2002.}
Million Square Feet, Sydney, Australia (1969). Within all these works the artists involved are working towards a common goal of producing a single work which best represents the conceptual concerns undertaken. However, Australian artist and theorist Charles Green raises another idea in his book The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism (2001), by two people working together the work produced can be considered a third hand, because ‘artist couples developed a third authorial identity effacing the individual artists themselves’.  

For too long many artists, urban planners, architects and the community have narrowly viewed public art as a physical object rather than a process that can define a community’s identity and social space. The reason why most public art fails is because bureaucracies commission the work to be just simple decoration of plazas or to complement an architectural site, instead of developing cross-disciplinary collaborations and socially interactive work. Such bureaucracies are not generally interested in contemporary art, which takes site, space and time into its meaning. They are more comfortable with the traditional presentation of art such as paintings hanging, or sculpture placed on a plinth.

The integration of disciplines enables a heightened response to specific problems and sites within our urban areas. Such work sets up a series of ongoing challenges from one collaboration to the next, and enables the issues between architect and artist to differ and remain vitally alive in each case. However the problem which seems to be obvious with artists and architects working together on a site or proposal is that people, expect new understandings of artistic or architectural authorship to appear in collaborations between the two disciplines. Such understandings may or may not be consistent with the artists’ or architects solo productions. Yet perhaps the real problems between architects and artists working together is only the language used. Art functions within a private space where work is executed and bought predominately for private consumption, whereas architecture is produced for a public space. Even when the architect is commissioned to design a private residence certain building rules and regulations must be followed when considering the buildings construction and inception. A building can be viewed by a wider range of the community for the majority of time, whereas a painting obviously is locked away behind closed doors. However collaborations between the two could lead to a new

238 Green, op. cit., p.10.
understanding of spatial demarcation and a shift to a new understanding of artistic and architectural identity could result.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston, U.S. in 1979, instigated collaboration between six artists and a team of architects from the U.S firm I.M. Pei and Partners. The project aimed to challenge the traditional role of art in architecture and it was comprised of artists and architects working on six aspects of the new arts and media technologies' building's design. The project's experimental quality enabled a free flowing dialogue of differing sensibilities, design and experience to be housed within one building. The building became a laboratory for such collaboration. This is really the ideal notion of collaboration because, with the technological complexity of modern life, our whole existence is not made up of one element. 'Artists and architects must begin to understand each other' 239, so that collaboration can be both more easily available and the outcomes productive to the community.

In 1984 the South Australian and Tasmanian Governments in Australia, implemented a policy where one percent of the cost of new buildings, or a maximum of ten thousand dollars, was available for artworks. These percentages for art schemes have been closely based on those from overseas. Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, France, Britain, Canada and thirty-one states of the U.S. have all implemented legislation and policies to aid artists, with expenditure ranging from one half to two percent of the building value. The Victorian Ministry of the Arts in 1986 initiated a public art's committee consisting of artists, builders, architects, union and ministry representatives as well as local council officials. In the early seventies the state of Victoria appointed an Australian artist, Harold Freedman, to produce murals for various locations including Spencer Street Railway Station. Another example of other collaboration is the ceiling of the Great Hall of the National Gallery of Victoria, which was designed and created by artist Leonard French and architect Sir Roy Grounds. Other collaborations include the Australian artist Tom Sanders who specialised exclusively in the architectural arts and Australian artist Imants Tillers' collaboration with architects on the New Federation Pavilion in Sydney's Centennial Park. Group Five, a group of sculptors from the University of Melbourne and Victorian Arts Centre; have specifically addressed themselves to architectural firms in an effort to re-unite the architectural and sculptural arts. Even though such examples seem rewarding and are a move in the right direction, the work produced can still be seen as a type of architectural mistletoe or

decoration. Typically such commissions are awarded to established or developing mainstream artists who are believed to be capable of producing work on a grander scale or, should that be, safer scale.\textsuperscript{240}

The problem for artists who are involved in a collaborative process with architects is that many feel inexperienced at collaborating with architects on such large-scale projects. This is not saying that every artist may feel this way inclined, because certain collaborative projects enable a level of freedom to the participants involved, even to the point where the architects’ involved within the project take a secondary position to that of the artist. In 1964 the Swiss architect, painter and sculpture Max Bill who’s practice focused on concrete geometric functionalism, built the \textit{Vidy Theatre (1964)}, which was a section of the Swiss State Exhibition at Expo ’64 in Lausanne, Switzerland. In 1991 the Swiss Confederation invited five architects to devise a project for a new museum for contemporary sculpture, which was to be built next to the Theatre. The invited participants were Swiss architect Bernard Tschumi and Italian architect Luigi Snozzi as well as Bill. The project offered a collaborative and sympathetic development which not only took into account the original building but also the needs of the new construction, as it offered ‘another function, another epoch’\textsuperscript{241}, to the existing site.

Another project which needs to be discussed in relation to artists working on architectural sites and projects, where they are the predominant figure and the architects involved become secondary to the project, is Pardo’s house, at \textit{4166 Sea View Lane, in Los Angeles (1999)}. Even though it is a fully functioning two-bedroom, three-bathroom house, where Pardo himself lives and works, he does not consider it to be a building but a 3,000-square foot-sculpture built on a steep plot of land overlooking the Pacific Ocean in Los Angeles’ Mount Washington District.\textsuperscript{242} The house is an interchangeable space that, rather than conforming to the bounded object of artistic or architectural inquiry, attempts to instead raise questions about the identity and value of the art and architectural object. As well as questioning the roles of viewer and context in mediating and defining such categories and experiences, as Pardo stated ‘it proclaims its vulnerability, it poses problems it manifests decision making’.\textsuperscript{243} In 1999 the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art held a viewing of the house in its ‘Focus’ series of exhibitions.


\textsuperscript{242} Bush Kate, \textit{4166 Sea View Lane}, Parkett, No.56, 1999, p.152.

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid, p.152.
Pardo exhibited thirty-nine minimal pendant lamps, which illuminated the glass and red wood pavilion rooms of the building, and this insertion created questions about the function of the house. Was it a public sculpture, a piece of architecture, a case study into building, a temporary exhibition, a museum commission, a highly stylised minimal do-it-yourself house, or Pardos’ home? And what, at the conclusion of such an exhibition does the building become? The interesting areas of investigation, which come out of such a project, is the fact that Pardo is not a professional architect. It is through this de-specialised nature of authorship, which allows the building to become more than just a built environment but rather a considered site of experimentation, which has similarities to installation art and sculptural interventions. The house at Sea View is cunningly indefensible as architecture, and yet, with its overt display of functionality, neither is it simply apprehensible as art. Unlike Judd’s Marfa, Texas buildings, which ‘stage its artistic self-sufficiency in it austere isolation’\textsuperscript{244}, in effect replicating the hieratic space of the museum around itself. Pardo’s house stands in, not apart from, the world. The extent to which in many ways it disappears into the world, or radiates out of it, is precisely the shifting space in which its ‘art’ occurs. It’s for that reason that the house makes reference to local architectural vernacular, in order to build relationships with other external objects within its environment. In essence the building camouflages itself, and to also insinuate itself within a real and vivid context.\textsuperscript{245}

One problem, which can be raised between the conjoining of visual art and architecture, is that architecture is primarily concerned with the expression of true propositions, while visual art is focused on the creation of a work of art. In saying this the question must be raised - ‘What are artists qualified to do?’ For visual artists who live in countries such as Australia, where opportunities for the interaction between disciplines are rare, the skills needed to interact with and develop a critical role of communication with other disciplines is very limited. The Bauhaus in Germany, Black Mountain College and Rhode Island School of Design, in the U.S are examples of institutions which have developed cross-disciplinary studies for students, enabling them to have a certain level of knowledge and development when undertaking projects with other disciplines. Sydney College of the Arts and the Architecture Faculty at the University of Sydney have attempted to undertake cross-disciplinary studies for students, which comprised of a two-day interdisciplinary project in 1997 (April 10 – 11). Such an event could be seen as an exciting opportunity for people to work with other disciplines. But the brief handout and the

\textsuperscript{244} Bush Kate, op. cit., p.153.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid.
aims of the project were just a cover, as the main goal of the project was to produce work, which was relevant to the Olympic games. In many ways it was just a day for the architectural students, and the architects who were designing the Homebush site, to push their own ideas on how great such a project was going to be, and for the visual art students to offer some aesthetic advice on what would look good. Once again, art was relegated back to a decorative function with little or no conceptual input.

Inclusion and Collaboration

The fascination of a city as a site for exploration is not only by architects but also artists as well. This was displayed by so many of the painters who constituted the international vanguard in the first two decades of this century, gradually became linked to an awareness of how the spatial experience offered by the ‘urban machine’ could be incorporated within the legitimate territory of art. This development could be seen in the collaborative series of projects carried out by two members of the Dutch movement De Stijl, artist/architects’ Theo Van Doesburg and Van Eesteren. It was De Stijl’s aims and efforts, to weld considerations from the preserves of both art and architecture into a new, cohesive unity. But alongside this marriage of practitioners from either discipline, artists alone saw increasing possibilities in extending their work through to environmental proportions, which gave them the opportunity to integrate their ideas into a formal structural work. Up until then artists had always been seen as, suppliers of architectural ornament. Obviously the notion of artists and ornamentation is still carried through to today. The De Stijl practitioners through their collaborative and solo projects were researching the prospect of making and articulating both private and public space, and were looking at the ongoing investigation of space as an entity to be walked through and experienced in a way, that ‘possess unavoidable parallels with architectural strategies’.246 The emergence of spatially oriented work such as Pardo and Bram during the last decade, suggest a way forward for artists who want to think in terms of a total arena rather than art as an object at the mercy of its immediate surroundings.

Confusion to collaborative projects in regards of when and where they should be allowed is related to the confusion of politics, public action, and economics. When dealing with such projects the individual is turned into an economic being, and as a result architecture is most always considered to be a more viable option because of its structured economic framework. However it is incredibly stupid that the opportunities for fostering collaborative projects should be entirely focused on such economic value. The benefits from such projects enable conceptual fertilisation to take place not only within artistic and architectural frames of reference, but also within the wider community and in social and constructed environments.

Many architects believe art should serve architecture as a decoration, and because of this art chosen by architects is often second-rate compared with the buildings themselves. The U.S. modernist architect Frank Lloyd Wright chose U.S. sculptor Richard Bock to do work on his buildings. The artist emerges, 'in this context as a decorator in the tradition of the medieval craftsmen'.\(^{247}\) For artists to overcome such a problem they need to be integrated into the design process, like the way in which English sculptor Gareth Jones and English architect Will Aslop have been collaborating since 1985, on building projects in Britain. When this occurs, no separate piece of art results, however this method of working is the most difficult to sustain as it needs designers and architects who have the ability to respond to each other.

**Mapping**

The idea of establishing a series of physical relationships between the space of an indoor environment and plastic-visual experiments carried out in that environment, dates back several centuries to the monument when the artist, having been allotted a certain space within a building decided to use it as an integral part for his or her work. In terms of the analysis, including space as an integral part of the visual artwork does not merely just include partially ‘decorating’ the surfaces of volumes of a given environment with Fresco, mosaic, painting or sculpture. It means taking on the space in its entirety, in order to give it structure or pick out its features by means of a plastic-visual modification. Such works are not the type, which concentrate on a particular detail ignoring the whole; on the contrary, they are consistent with the shape and structure of the

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\(^{247}\) Halbreich, Op. Cit., p.9
overall space in question. Judd stated in relation to his sculpture and architectural projects, ‘inside the given space, a relationship between part and whole. This means that we can disregard all fragmentary works’.\textsuperscript{248}

U.S. artists and critic Suzanne Lacy organised a conference in Toronto, Canada, in December 1991, entitled, \textit{Mapping the Terrain: The New Public Art}, which looked to provide solidarity between artists, critics and administrators, in pursuing a theory to articulate such public practice. The program, \textit{City Sites: Artists and Urban Strategies} (1989), sponsored by the California College of Arts and Crafts, influenced the idea for such a project. In \textit{Mapping the Terrain}, Suzanne Lacy states, ‘these examples are meant as a reference, and the reader is invited to join with the writers in considering the connections and differences encompassed by the work’.\textsuperscript{249} Sphere Press, gallery, records, is a Sydney publisher concerned with collaboration and it is an example of the rich dialogue that can be stimulated by such a merging of disciplines. Their publications entitled, \textit{Mapping (1997)}, sees artists, architects, urban designers, builders, interior designers and computer engineers all contributing a chapter on what space and the mapping of space means to their work.

The problem of collaboration lies in the different form of languages used by both disciplines. Architects are taught to think on a functional level, while artists or installation artists’ in particular produce work that is more on a conceptual level. This is not saying that the two should not attempt to work together. By collaborating, both disciplines are able to expand the limits of their collaborators. The importance of such work is in the language, documentation and publications, which result from the projects. The most challenging and creative thinking occurs during the explaining process. The final work can be considered a by-product of this collaborative process.

The production of space can be categorised as artists, architects, musicians, film makers all contributing ideas which lay down foundation of thought and spatial articulation. The intentions of the exhibition \textit{A Space: A Thousand Words}, held at the Royal College of Art Gallery, London in February 1975, was to go beyond these categories and bring together different sensibilities and pre-occupations, not in order to create false relationships between them, but to hold the ideas up to one another, as from a distance. Space became the common denominator after careful

\textsuperscript{248} Judd, Donald, \textit{Architektur}, Westfälischen Kunstverein Munster, 1989, p.208.

consideration of how this ‘concept’ is felt. For the first time since the Bauhaus and the nineteen-twenties of De Stijl and Russian constructivism, there has been a coming together of dancers, musicians and artists; and the resulting cross fertilization of concepts and sensibilities makes it difficult for those wishing to relocate the categories into either theatre, music auditorium or art gallery. For instance, the beginnings of an idea could sometimes be found in a musical piece of the U.S. fluxus artist and composer John Cage, before it moved to other media. Alternatively its origins could be found in the more formal enclaves of minimal sculpture. This enabled a varying degree of responses and in doing so the exhibition audience could see how intentions and preoccupations interacted with means and places.

When looking at the possibilities for artists and architects to work together, the most successful outcomes come from viewing history and the projects, movements and participants who have been able to find common ground with each other. As a result produce work, which not only added to our constructed environments but also questioned the very nature of spatial articulation. Conditions favourable to a return to environmental art reappeared at the end of the nineteenth century with the emergence of Art Nouveau, which synthesized the arts and once again made it possible to see homogeneity in art and architecture. This was evident in 1912, when the Italian Futurist artist Balla developed his use of iridescent, interpenetrating colours ‘in an environmental field’ at the Lowenstein House in Dusseldorf, Germany.

Superficial Operations: De Stijl, Van Doesburg and Oud

Of course, we are still at the stage of a ‘superficial’ operation, in that the architectural field already has a structure, and the artist transforms it by means of colour, optical and perceptual use of space. In other words the structural properties of the field remain the same, and the chromatic transformation serves as a visual lightening or intensification of the field. Van Doesburg’s aim was to ‘break-up all symmetry, not allow the eye to rest on any point, to obliterate all the contours of the walls, to establish a systematic, incessant pattern of referring and cross-referring between the various elements’. Each part of the building, the entrance, the foyer, the staircase, was defined by colour, Design for a hall in a university (1923) (fig.101). Every surface was

painted so as to create continuity between ceiling and walls, walls and floor. What Van Doesburg method of production showed was that the ‘concrete fact’ was the basis of both spatial knowledge and spatial occupation. Every artist is concerned with the inter-relationships between objects, images, kinetic effects, factual characteristics, and given space. The art-architecture dialectic has to date, been built upon a multiplicity of attitudes which, have not regarded the environment as the ‘place of a person.’ This relationship exists between artistically ‘totalised’ space and the exhibition visitor; in other words it ‘happens’ after the environment has been constructed. It is important to add that these ‘life spaces’ are the dialectical consequence of an activity, taking place, outside them. There exists, however, apart from the exterior relationships, an intimate and inner experience of one’s own ‘life space’.  

![Fig. 101](image)

To investigate such issues of the demarcation and construction of space and the various relationships it has in regards to its inception, then the best possible example can come from the De Stijl movement in the Netherlands. It should not in theory, be difficult to evaluate De Stijl aesthetics, or to relate the ideals of its members to their various achievements. It was, after all, a proselytising movement: its members set out, in the words of the first manifesto, to achieve ‘a balance between the universal and the individual’; and such a program, involving the practical achievement of a philosophical ideal, naturally required both justification and clarification. Every significant De Stijl gesture, whether in art, architecture or design, was explained and defended, either in the De Stijl magazine first published in 1917 and edited by Van Doesburg, or in the numerous books and papers published by its protagonists. The question must be raised why the level of justification within such a project?” A reason could be that due to the climate of the early twentieth century works of pure art were accompanied by theoretical exposition, as to

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252 Celant, op. cit., p.122.
253 Van Doesburg, op. cit., p.108.
explain and defend the revolutionary innovations, which were being made. Van Doesburg believed that, ‘the periodical hopes to make a contribution to the development of a new awareness of beauty. It wishes to make modern man receptive to what is new in the visual arts’. The publications provide a theoretical accompaniment to the practical artistic and architectural achievements of the group. This showed that the members of the De Stijl movement were truly modern artists’ in that they were not just an artist of a craftsman, but resembled as Van Doesburg stated, ‘a research scientist in his intellectual activities’. This showed that the truly modern artist has a contribution to make to the reshaping of the aesthetic concept and awareness, not only to the visual arts but architectural discourse and the built environment.

As its interpreter, and since Van Doesburg was the only member of the De Stijl group to work both as an architect and as a painter, he consistently maintained that architecture should demonstrate the values inherent in abstract art. It is worth considering his ideas and achievement in some detail, when looking at possible avenues of collaboration. It is their achievements, and in their own and subsequent interpretations of these achievements that the ambiguities lie, and they cloud any clear-cut or simplistic interpretation of the movement and its philosophies.

Within De Stijl there remained a fundamental schism between the experience and intentions of the painters and those of the architects. And it was this schism, concerned both with the ideal and reality of translating concept into form, which provoked most of the controversies and resignations within the group. The basic question is – ‘Can the harmonies and values of painting, which have been conceived as a metaphor for spiritual convictions, be translated without compromise into three-dimensional form?’ De Stijl philosophy, as first formulated by Van Doesburg and Dutch Modernist painter Piet Mondrian, insisted that this was possible. For although superficial analogies could be drawn between the elimination of representation in painting and the elimination of ornament in architecture, the resulting stress on the straight line and the right-angle (the horizontal and the vertical) was inspired by individual rather than collective convictions. This had arrived at abstraction either through analytical Cubism or through the simplification and stylisation associated with Monumentalism. The resulting concentration of elementary forms, therefore, held a meaning that was personal to each artist and represented for each of them a radical break with historical and personal, contemporary precedent.

255 Ibid.
True torch bearers were the painters who had destroyed their past and transcended nature, convention and tradition in order to create a new and universal aesthetic. Inspired the precedent set by the painters, they embraced architecture, graphic and industrial design, and express its functional and aesthetic purity in new forms as well as in new materials. However, divergences and differences had already begun to emerge among the De Stijl disciples, for attempts to put the ideal into action had pinpointed the differences between the architects’ and painters’ intentions, their conceptions of space, form and function. The Dutch architect members of the group such as Rietveld, Jan Wils, J.J.P Oud and Bart van der Leck were working within a tradition that did not admit the painter as a form-giver, but reduced his role to that of form-enhancer or interior designer. Van Doesburg had already assumed in 1917 and 1918 when he designed stained glass windows, tiled floors and colour schemes for work by Wils and Oud, that a complete synthesis of art and architecture could be achieved. These projects of the collaboration between practitioners, showed different levels of practice and concerns inherent in both disciplines were in fact not separate but informing each others work. There was no separation between the building that was designed to live in and the design or structure of the painting. Both had inherently the same intentions of articulating spatial construction through a geometric framework.

Modern painting reduces corporeality to flatness and through the space concept it arrives at the destruction of the natural associated with the plane, and the spatial relationship. Architecture constructs organic corporeality in closed relationships. The architectural plane is the delimitation of light and space.256 Van Doesburg's architectonic ideas, where through the incorporation that was attributed to painting, all the architectural members of the De Stijl group came nearest to a consistent matching of ideal with achievement. Through the concentration of the kinetic nature of colour and the relationship of colour and form to architecture had encouraged Van Doesburg to think in terms of three rather than two dimensions. This can be seen in his remarkable architectural experiments of 1922 and 1923, collaborating with Dutch architects Cornelis van Eesteren and Rietveld on such projects as Design for a hall in a University (1923), Project for private house (1923), and Architectural project (1923). This sort of collaboration indicated compromise rather than co-operation. Mondrian himself would never indulge in what he called mural art, which he believed ‘destroyed rather than enhanced architectural form’.257 However

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257 Ibid.

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‘Mural Art’ has a similar nature to painting, in that, murals are completely concerned with what is within it. The peripheral space of the gallery, room, building or outside environment is alien to the work. Even if the mural is depicting a scene of the place it is situated in, it is only a representation, where a wall painting is completely integrated with the architectural space and the environment in which it is situated.

A more purely conceptual approach to a flat urban site can be seen in Australian architect James Birrel’s *small power generating substation (1957)* (fig.102), where the glass facade ‘mural’ is not simply the decorative geometric design it perhaps on first glance appears to be. Rather it operates as a schematic rendering of electrical currents as the imagination might understand the internal workings of the building itself, and hence evokes the civic role of the site through what is effectively a Constructivist painting into the space of architecture.258

![Fig.102](image)

Another Dutch architect/artist and member of the De Stijl movement who was interested in interdisciplinary activity, was Oud, who’s projects concentrated on the expression and articulation of abstract forms derived, from both fine art and architectural sources. Oud described his architectural and painting projects as being inspired by Cubism, although its articulation of standard units is more reminiscent of the contemporary painting of Van der Leck and Mondrians seminal compositional paintings such as, *Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue (1927)* and *Composition of Red, Yellow and Blue (1935)*, and indeed recalls in its dependence on the form-giving properties of light and shadow. This was transferred to his buildings, which were designed to express spatial volume. Unlike Van Doesburg, Oud was concerned with the purity rather than the dematerialization of form. He wished to create an essentially man-made

environment, which demonstrated the puritan virtues of order, economy, efficiency and cleanliness; and in achieving this vision, the practical. Van Doesburg however was concerned with space rather than with matter. His designs of the twenties are a unique demonstration of De Stijl spatial concepts in three-dimensional form, and apart from Van Doesburg himself no other architect within the group had his instinct for giving shape and substance to abstract concepts.

It is through this constant investigation and redevelopment of space, shape and abstract concepts that, colleagues and collaborators were able to understand, absorb and conceptualise their theories almost as soon as they were formulated. This may be due to an inherent understanding of the structural and spatial qualities of the materials and site that was being used. By using materials and geometric elements that explore, defy and define space (rather like Vantongerloo's sculpture and the designs for Leonce Rosenberg), architecture was able to become complete bounded with the materials and its site of inception. This was outlined in Oud's *Holländische Architektur*, which was published by the Bauhaus in 1926, as an ‘unfolding, of the stimulating qualities of sophisticated materials, the limpidity of glass, the shine and roundness of finish, lustrous and shining colours, the glitter of steel.’ Such architecture was more bound to matter more than ever before. U.S. minimalist sculptors such as Sol LeWitt, Dan Flavin and Judd would 40 years later become intensely interested and concerned with such industrial techniques, materials, and methods of production.

What De Stijl showed was that regardless of training or background there was an ever-expanding opportunity for professionals in different fields. Out of this came a rich dialogue of concepts and objects. Conceptual innovations in painting and architecture can be linked between Rietveld and his *Schroeder House, Utrecht* (1923-24), which showed a display of spatial aspirations within a total design concept. This was partially influenced by the collaboration with Van der Leck, who in turn was influenced by and collaborated with U.S. Modernist architect Frank Lloyd Wright in making copies of his furniture for the *Huis ter Heide* (1917).

The De Stijl vision of painters, architects and engineers, all collaborating to produce a total work of art, is an achievement in the integration of ideals and concepts within three-dimensional forms. Attempts to conceptualize the theories of De Stijl in this century have been at best quixotic and at worst disastrous.
De Stijl: Abstraction or Architecture? The style, with its stress on impersonality and abstraction, was all too easy to bastardize, and the concern for space rather than enclosure, technique rather than texture and efficiency rather than emotion resulted, in an age of expediency, in spiritual bankruptcy.²⁵⁹

Maybe they were not after spiritual level headedness. Perhaps the aim was to completely rid the work of anything, which wasn’t concrete. Reducing the work down to the most rudimentary geometric elements, the individual practitioners were able to conceptualise a model of working and production that could be acted upon, or worked upon rigorously. The advantages of this were that their concepts could be redeveloped continually through collaborative work with other professionals in other disciplines. Even though spirituality doesn’t seem to have any importance within such a working environment, it could be argued that the work wasn’t bankrupt of spirituality. The work was about redesigning and redefining those spaces we inhabited, and in doing so was a total integration of art and life. Thus the work had an inherent spirit, as it was founded within a concrete reality.

The tectonic and spiritual may be a crucial term in the constructivist lexicon, but it is also being advanced within architectural discourse today, such as U.S architectural theorist Kenneth Frampton. His argument is similar too that of Serra, as Frampton formulates the scenographic kitsch of much post-modern architecture, insists on the bodily and the tectonic to protest the ideologies of the virtual and the simulacra in capitalist exchange today. But his argument is also ontological: ‘the structural unit’, Frampton states, is ‘the irreducible essence of architectural form’.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Naylor, op. cit., p.102.
A major advancement that has aided artists in regards to shifting their practice to a more public space has enabled them to produce a more concise understanding of the differing spaces, which are constructed within not just a museum and the various galleries inside, but also the exterior of the building and our natural environments. This experience can be seen in two differing works, such as U.S. artist Gordon Matta-Clarks *Office Baroque (1977)* (fig.103), and Dutch artist/architect Krijn De Konings *Centraal Museum Utrecht (1999)* (fig.104), which offer similar felt experiences, as both take away from the architecture and at the same time add onto the existing structure. It is a total integration of art and architecture together to form an environment. The integration of such concerns can also be seen in the ongoing collaboration of U.S conceptual artist Vito Acconci with U.S. architects Steven Holl in *Storefront Renovation (1993)* (fig.105), and Steven Brown on *Franklin Court (1976)*. Both show a collaboration of mutual working methodologies while at the same time working within their own personal guidelines.
The Implementation of Materials

By using industrial technological advancement, artists have been able to bring the industrial frame of reference to art, where it has transformed the parameters of material and process and the siting and viewing of subsequent work. This has enabled the expanding of the gallery space vis-à-vis studio, and an opening to distant landscapes and spaces, and the subsequent encounter with urban architecture. Due to industrialisation this has enabled artists and architects to expand their productivity. They no longer have to use marble, plaster, brick etc. Now, manufactured materials such as aluminium and rolled steel enabled artists and architects to produce objects, which are essential to the conception of new methods of conceptualisation and construction. This has enabled more developed thinking, which now has more interest within concepts and the interactions between the objects and the space it inhabits. Traditionally the works produced and their meaning was self-contained within the object. What this has done, (which has been shown in the sculpture and installation art chapters) is that artists who are concerned with architectural issues in regards to the production of their work, such as spatial design, the placement of the object within space and site-specificity, are able to easily evolve into wider concerns on a much grander scale. Why, because the conceptual concerns, which govern such projects, will stay the same, and artists have had more experience within collaboration than most architects have. Rosalind Krauss has argued that the logic of the shift of the art monument into more site-specificity is essential in understanding both private and public spaces as the work produced 'sits in a particular place and speaks in a symbolical tongue about the meaning or use of that place'.

Fig.106

261 Foster, op. cit., p.190.
The use of a collaborative system enables artist and architects to reach a final outcome, which is in synthesis enables a more highly developed understanding of a particular site or concept. Unlike say a public art work by U.S. 1980s pop-artist Jeff Koons *Puppy* (1995), or Australian architect Nonda Katsalidis' *Richmond Silos, Melbourne* (1997) (fig.106), which are completely autonomous to their environment. The artwork by Koons could be placed in front of any building and the building by Katsalidis could be placed relatively in any area that was big enough to house it. All the concerns of the work are inherent within itself. However in regards to this passive resignation other than artist and architects working together, there is the idea of the artist working with the building, and the building working with the art. One example of public art, which deals with such concerns, is Serra's *Torqued Eclipse* (1998), permanently installed inside the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain. The work was commissioned and made for the biggest freestanding gallery in the world, in collaboration with Gehry who designed and built the Guggenheim Museum. So the problem with such a space is how do visitors view exhibitions when entering the room, as Serra's sculpture sits within the middle of the space, dissecting the room in half. Also how do artists exhibiting within the space deal with Serra's piece? Do you hug gently to the gallery walls hoping that you can in some way ignore the curved rolled steel sheets? Or do you work with it, asking something of the building as well as Serra's permanent sculpture.

U.S. artist Robert Rauschenberg's retrospective in Bilboa in 1999, showed in this space his biggest work. The world's longest painting, which consisted of multiple parts stretching the entire circumference of the space. The work hugged the curved lines of the gallery walls as if hanging on for dear life. The work was compelling in that it connected with the tilting of Serra's sculpture as well as the geometric composition of Gehry's architecture. All three appeared to try not to fall in on one another. Serra's by sheer weight of the steel as it curves and bends, Rauschenberg's, as the elements which make up the painting by not falling off the wall by virtue of its shear length and uncompromising size, and Gehry's building as it appears to be falling apart because of the fluctuating plains and spaces with the architectural design and construction which make up the gallery space. In the end what we do have to look at in regards to the experimental nature of such an exhibition and gallery space? You have three very separate methods of construction, yet they all share a shared response in that they are fundamentally trying to work out problems of the space between not just plains and angles within their own work but also that which is inherent between the work and space such as Rauschenberg's painting, Serra's sculpture and Gehry's building which houses both the works. Even though the work in many ways still appears autonomous to its site, it still enables all three disciplines to
engage in an open and active discussion of spatial declaration. Two are working together (the sculpture and architecture) and the third (painting) is trying to work in opposition, yet at the same time working with the space.

**Accommodate the Distance**

Since the major excursion of art into 'real space' and the collaboration of art and architecture was witnessed predominantly in the early 1920s and then 1960s, it still has on-going areas of inquiry for many artists, and it is now possible, through exhibitions, publications and projects to rethink what is at stake from an interdisciplinary viewpoint to continually re-contextualise our built environments. It is this fusion of spaces both imaginary and the 'real' through the collaboration of art and architecture, that new and interesting developments and possibilities of construction can be developed. Such possibilities aim to effect the organic entry of art into life and to allow people a heightened understanding of the spaces inhabited and conceptualised about.

Even though the distances between the oeuvres of artists and architects may seem apparent, there is common ground, which they do share, and through projects where individuals are invited to work equally with each other, within either an architectural or artistic framework, a level of healthy activity can be achieved. Such collaborations enable individuals to pose questions and challenges for other disciplines at the same time resolving problems within their own discourse. The best example to finish this chapter on would be the collaboration, which was mentioned before between Bram and Brearly, on the *warehouse conversion in Prahran Melbourne* (1999). Architecture needs to come to terms with new ways of modelling our universe and so the collaboration between Bram and Brearly opens up a way ahead by operating between art and architecture, but from secure bases in each tradition. However at the same time challenge and redevelop the spaces that are inhabited and the spaces, which are conceptually based propositions.

Only a collaborative process can effectively pull artworks out of the realm of decoration, and make it a meaningful and integral presence in the community. It is always a question of whether the art will work with the architecture in a positive paradigm. It may seem like a fundamental
question but the work must be chosen to fully articulate its artistic role as well as meld with its surroundings through the architectural manipulation of volume in space. A problem, which has occurred amongst architects and artists, is that of interest and understanding. If individuals are invited to participate together and they do so only on the premise of being interested in their own work what can happen is that the art becomes decoration and the architecture if violated by the artwork, shifts in its original function. So the positive outcome is for any collaboration is through a discourse that operates on equal terms for both participants. In doing so those individuals participating in such projects should think about what is going to make this habitat or this building or this situation function on as many levels as possible.

By infecting a building and injecting different aesthetics and uses throughout a space through collaboration, enables individuals to produce private spaces in the midst of a public environment. The real question must lay in the fact that there are so few artists who are working with architects and thus the amount of dialogue being produced is very limited. As a result the diversity in the conceptual and built projects becomes minimal and thus there needs to be more encouragement towards a greater development of social, spatial and linguistic entities.

Whenever a project is built, the collaborative activity that is generated is extended as it enables another dialogue to enter the arena. The real understanding of collaboration and the spaces, which are being dealt with, must be in that the space in a city is not just the public space but the city itself as a whole. What needs to be understood is that if our cities are to be relational for all the divergent communities within it, then it is problematic to think that only one discipline or conceptual discourse should and can be responsible for the design and production of such spaces. As a result artists, in particular, should be invited to participate more readily on the design and construction of spaces whether on a conceptual or physical level. This would lead to more diverse and positive artwork and architecture being designed within our constructed spaces but would also serve to integrate the two more successfully allowing a complete synthesis between the artwork and the architecture. Such working methodologies are about breaching the gaps between art, architecture and constructed spaces rather than allowing them to remain separate and to grow further apart. It should be a principle in the design and construction of urban and public spaces that 'you can't have one without the other'. There should be no art without architecture, and no architecture without art.
Chapter Nine

Conclusion

A Change Is Going to Come: The Development of Symbiotic Spaces

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.\textsuperscript{262}

It is not until one looks back on particular projects, movements, concepts, concerns and decisions that a complete evaluation can be undertaken of the success of those models. 'No matter how far out you go, you are always thrown back on your point of origin'.\textsuperscript{263} In this research it has been shown that the most successful exponents of interdisciplinary and collaborative projects have been those who have continually redeveloped the experimental nature of their work within their immediate field of activity and also within the context of other disciplines.

Art does not merely reflect culture; it is that culture, through the decaying city and our human condition. Yet art is much more than the immediate societal environment. Above and beyond, it is conceptual in content. Manifestations of thought and radical abstraction have aided in the development of new methodologies in architecture and visual art as seen in De Stijl, in Russian constructivist movements and in the State Bauhaus in Weimar. Such developments have allowed previously unknown avenues of thinking to develop. In the 1960s it was the idea that a concept rather than an object is the essential component of any work. Thus artwork in a particular methodology should be able to be placed within a permanent site, enabling the site and the work to become adaptable to each other.

Earlier representations of space in art have been discussed, from the simple planes of paintings and sculptures to the disappearing perspectives of early Renaissance art. From the surfaces of

cubist paintings to the enormous space constructions of minimal sculpture, much recent art has insisted on the body as a direct measure of space. The relationship between the viewer, the artist and the work plays an important role, since the viewer is now an active participant in the realisation of the conceptual framework of the work. The architectural space, and the space between the work (either the object or painting), add force to the proposition that certain buildings have the capacity to obliterate distinctions between art, architecture and design through a harmonic approach to site. When informed by the historical relationship between constructivism and minimalism, the combining of art and architectural concepts appears to be a natural development. In both movements art functions in a more considerate relation to the environments within our public spaces, internally and externally.

The task of the work of art or architecture is not the resolution of social or ideological conflict in a beautiful artwork, and not the construction of a new ideological counter-content. Instead, artwork directs the attention to the seams in various ideological representations, and attempts to provide coherence between the artwork and the architecture. The danger in speculation of this kind is, admittedly, that it could end up celebrating the importance of interdisciplinary discourse without bothering to retain an equally necessary understanding of how art and architecture differ from each other.\textsuperscript{264} It is important that individuals within both disciplines should be clear with regard to their own aims when undertaking such collaborative projects. However, the breaking-down of barriers between the two disciplines is a positive move in the development of improved models of production. The final purpose of any exchange between architecture and art should be to facilitate an enhanced understanding of their respective singularities, even if it is brought about only by pushing their points of connection as closely together as the fragmentation of contemporary culture will allow.

In place of the universal ‘meanings’ of architecture and art (psychological, social, functional), one should try to construct a more solid, more immediate world and working methodology between the two. First it is through their presence that objects and gestures impose themselves, and this presence continues to dominate, beyond any theory that might attempt to enclose it in a sentimental, sociological, or any other system of reference. In the future, it is hoped, more interactive, relational studies will be undertaken. Such studies will, of necessity, seek out new areas for investigation and turn into art certain peripheral works that have been regarded as more

\textsuperscript{264} Graham, Dan, op. cit., p.29.
than engineering and less than art, such as aspects of city planning. Traditional models of scholarship have tended to advocate that individuals should develop a productive methodology to what is demonstrable within the area and objects that have been studied. If we choose to treat such work as being merely the object of modern scholarship or taste, we are in danger of shutting ourselves off from what it might have to say to us in relation to the shift within a public and architectural context. In this respect past artists, by continuous waves of calls, interruptions and demands, have continually redeveloped and contextualised criticality within the development of a mutual space for an art and architectural discourse.

After the twentieth century, more of the same will follow. This means that if there is no heightened level of activity amongst disciplines our urban spaces will continue to be developed by only one particular discipline. Such working methodologies only segregate disciplines. The consciousness on which the foundations of society are constructed is constantly presented through the physicality of the surrounding environment. This is apparent in city developments where the layout of the environment has been considered within a pre-determined framework. Constructed monuments create their meaning through their relationship with other monuments within this social space. The notion of culture is that people create the various cultures they inhabit, constantly carrying with them the capacity to transform society and create new environments. The monumental size of our urban environment exerts a constant force on people’s psychology and behaviour.265

It is through an engagement of strategic challenges to the city with its structures and media that people’s perception of social space is mediated. Aesthetic engagements, critical or physical, enable people to question the symbolic, psycho-political and economic operations of our environment. Because our culture and social space are interwoven with multiple meanings, it is unlikely that one discipline can give a universal definition. The collaborative process, more specifically that between art and architecture, facilitates a more diverse understanding of the environments which are inhabited. Either through institutions or organisations fostering interdisciplinary research, like the U.S. project space Storefront for Art and Architecture, or collaborations between artists and architects, such as that between English artist and architect Will Aslop and Gareth Jones, a rich language or dialogue can be set up between the two.

265 Plato, op. cit., p.303.
However, it is not a good idea for an artist to work with an architect in a ‘half-hearted’ manner. That can lead to ill-conceived work, placing a black mark against the whole collaborative process. Such work would undermine the process, as the result returns to a decorative function that creates voids in our environments. This is precisely what should be questioned: ill-conceived constructions which infiltrate and litter social space. In contrast to the alienation of disciplines, collaboration envisions a space where different people can come together and discuss issues of common interest. This is done by engaging topics that cross over into specific practices, artistic, critical, theoretical, philosophical, historical and political, and that illuminate these discourses individually and rationally in the present.\[266\]

The most successful collaboration results from an equal meeting of all disciplines involved in a project. The ultimate result would be for artists to work with architects at the planning stages of a building or project. Because buildings have an immense presence in space and time it may be difficult for the general public to comprehend the models and language of architecture. Therefore architecture needs to integrate itself more conceptually with people’s understanding, to retain relevance. The arts are also deeply imbedded in our culture, having already a functional structure, representation and the production of decorative objects. It may thus be difficult to understand why both disciplines need to expand their function into other areas or research when they already have a firm history within themselves. Installation art enables an audience or individual to have an active engagement with the work conceptually or physically, just as people have with the built environment, an active engagement that is an essential component in understanding our social space.

If people are to understand our differing cultures and social spaces, disciplines need to drop their self-imposed hierarchical positions and integrate themselves more with each other. The space in which this occurs is an exciting area of research for so many disciplines through architecture, installation art, public art, the museum or collaboration. It must be asked, why has Australian society not encouraged it more?

The possibilities for interdisciplinary collaborations have been recognised by virtue of what other countries are doing. It is more evident than ever that if we are to understand our culture and respond to it productively, the collaboration of disciplines is an essential component of such an

understanding. However, mistakes are continually made by both disciplines when creating work in the public sphere, as the projects are often too ambitious. Because Australian society does not have a firm history of collaboration we need to develop projects on a smaller scale if they are to succeed. A dialogue between art and architecture should be encouraged through exhibitions, projects and publications in Australia, otherwise the urban environments will continue to be one-dimensional, with people acting as viewers in a space controlled by those in power.

At particular moments in this research a stubborn sense of economy and precision has appeared in relation to individuals being interested in collaborations, from conceptual choices to technical execution. The obvious difference in perceptual modes of production should not prevent further development to occur between art and architecture. Through geometric paradigms which have occurred within work by the U.S. minimalists such as Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt and Gordon Matta-Clark, and within architecture from periods such as Dutch De Stijl, from architects Gerrit Rietvald and Theo Van Doesburg to more recent architects such as Swiss partnership Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Mouron and U.S. Frank Gehry, a synthesis of concerns, concepts, intentions and work has shown that through spatial articulation, aesthetic models can embody the ongoing concerns and methodologies of both disciplines.

The connection between both disciplines lies in spatial articulation through simplicity of form and function. Simplicity represents a tactic to make the necessary aesthetically compelling, and to break out of redundant architectural and artistic discourses. Simplification is not merely a question of excluding that which is unnecessary; it is also a search for that which is generally valid, comprehensive and open. Simplicity of design obtains its specific significance according to the artistic process used. This means that in the minimal work which has been discussed throughout this research, such as that of Judd or Van Doesburg, it is less important that the means used to create an object are made absolute, but rather that the visible relationships between them are linked to make a coherent whole. Reduction within both art and architecture can be understood as a process in which ‘the less variety of technical and functional forms, the more the heroic-semantic character of the construction fades into the background and is replaced by relational forces which underlie the concept of a spatial structure’. 267 This suggests that the means do not provide the content, but rather specific relationships between elements express specific elements of content. These relationships can either occur within a singular work or can

link, say, an artwork, public space, and the architecture constructed around it, such as Matta-Clarks 'cuts' and U.S. minimalist Richard Serra's *Torqued Eclipses* and *Prop pieces*.

Architecture can no longer be viewed as a background for paintings and sculpture and a space for exhibiting ornamentation; similarly artwork can no longer be viewed as decoration for our public spaces and architectural forecourts. Through a coherence of activity, more breadth can be given to constructed spaces, making them positive rather than oppressive. It is the separation and isolation of both disciplines which create oppression, as objects become isolated within a sea of objects. De Stijl, Russian constructivism and the Bauhaus have shown the positive developments that can occur in the meeting of individuals and disciplines enabling mutual concerns to be developed and resolved. The major concern is that architecture must not dominate art, nor it be subject to art, but instead a singular work must be produced which takes into account mutual concerns within both fields.

It must be recognised that all elements within our built environment, people, space, materials and the character of the environment, can be integrated because they have a direct relationship to each other. Artists are obviously people and people have an ongoing day-to-day relationship with everything within their immediate environment. Then surely it is problematic to say that 'only architecture can build and art can decorate'. Art today is no longer an architectural afterthought, or an object to attach to a building after it is finished, such as U.S. sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens' *Sherman Memorial* (1903), but is a total engagement with the building, and is an essential element in the experience of a particular space through artwork to architecture, to site, to viewer, such as Serra’s *Fulcrum* (1987). The two activities of art and architecture are symbiotic. Projects and permanent sites for exploration such as the Chinati Foundation, Marfa, U.S., best exemplify and attempt to encourage more interdisciplinary activity amongst individuals. In this way more positive outcomes will occur within the conceptualisation and construction of our built spaces and environments.

U.S. architectural theorist Kenneth Frampton believes that 'architecture can be saved from cultural indifference and formal weakness only if it remains steeped in its own inherent nature, as art is in a process of throwing overboard its own aesthetic categories'. 268 Frampton's argument must be countered, as today more than ever the bringing together of architecture and art is viable

268 Frei, op. cit., p.148.
and necessary. If a practice and discipline are concerned only with the triviality of being devoted to themselves, how can any new methodologies, concepts, projects or positive dialogue be created? Our public spaces, either natural or built, are made not of one but of many elements that combine to make a whole. It is not the purpose of artistic processes connected with architecture to make buildings into aesthetic objects, but rather to set them in a cultural framework by working on the meaning to be given to them. Collaborative practice should not be understood as a redundant activity in which one takes refuge from indifference towards a project. Rather, through simplification, a formula and methodology can be produced which comprehends the maximum understanding of our constructed space.
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Appendix A

Interview: Olivier Mosset (Switzerland), 19/08/02

1. What does making painting mean to you?

I make paintings. That’s what I do, but it is to others to say what it means. What it means to me is private and I have no interest in making it public.

2. What type of work do you do, and do you classify it as being one thing more than another e.g. painting or architecture. Or, do you believe that you produce a kind of construction dealing with concepts and concerns in which the final product or painting is a visual answer to a problem you have set up?

What I do is basically "painting". Somehow, if there have been some questions and answers, the concepts or the concerns are lost when the final product is done.

3. Do you think your projects are continuations of linear conceptual concerns that are upheld over a period of time, and which are self-explanatory like Judd’s ‘specific object’ for example?

They should be self-explanatory.

4. Do you believe your work is about display, presentation or representation?

It is more about presentation than representation.

5. When you work with historical inquiry, it functions as a foundation for future action to proceed. Do you agree? Have you ever been directly concerned with any historical inquiry and what was it specifically about?
Of course we can't escape history or some actual socio-economic conditions, but that's not what the work is about.

6. Does you practice embrace formal concerns like unity and simplicity? Are formal concerns intrinsic to your practice? If not why not?

Of course we can't escape history or some actual socio-economic conditions, but that's not what the work is about.

7. What kinds of projects have you been involved in that have allowed you to extend your own practice?

I have done projects, which were not exactly paintings, but I don't think it really extends my practice. It is just something else.

8. Do you believe that by working with other people, through projects that your own work becomes more informed. Do you believe that another person's work can set up questions about your work that may not have been asked before? Such as the notion of two people who work in different mediums can present questions of representation and conceptual framework, which cross over into another mediums concerns?

I have worked with other people and it was always interesting. I am not sure that my own work became then more informed, but I'm interested in other people's work.

9. Do you think its only looking back that one can see the limits and define them or clarify the choices that were made?

Looking back does that, but sometimes it is here and now that you can see the limits of your choices.

10. What type of work are you doing now?

I'm supposed to do some paintings for a show in New York.
11. What types of choices are available to you now, that weren’t when you were first starting out?

Within certain limits (technical or economical), I can do whatever I want. That was also the case when I was starting out.

12. Do you feel your new work has changed the basis of criticism that has been directed towards how your work as a whole is viewed?

No.

13. Now that we have entered another century completely, is there any discernable difference in contemporary art making that you have observed? If not, why has little changed in your opinion?

It is changing all the time. New works are being made, etc. At the same time, it is very much the same thing.

14. Have the formal concerns informing your practice, changed or been manipulated in anyway as time has gone by?

Not really.

15. Do you think you make objects, which increase in value? Or do you think the economy of your work is inherent within the work?

There is an art market and, I guess, I’m part of it, but it is not much of my concern.

16. Do you think there is a formal language within your field of work?

Something like that.

17. Do you think everything you need to know is within the made work, or is it the visual framework that provides the foil?
You don't work in a vacuum. There is always a framework.

18. Are you limiting your artistic activity or your boundaries by formalising what you do?
   I don't think so.

19. What do you feel is the aim of your art?
   N/A.

20. We have always been given limits about what art is. How are you deciding what art is today?
   As Judd said, if you call it "art", it's art.

21. Do you believe that form and content play a role in your production, and how does your intentions relate to those concerns?
   As far as I'm concerned, form is content.

22. Do you think location is important in regards to the nature of the work?
   Everything is important.

23. Have you always worked within combinations and permutations?
   Not really.

24. How do you think your work is judged? Do you believe there is any judgment system suitable to your practice?
   I'm not really interested in judgments.

25. Is there any historical precedence in art that relates to what you have been doing?
   I don't know.
26. Many years ago you made an artistic decision to make a specific kind of art. How has this "invention" withstood the years and what resistance does it offer today?

In a way, we are still doing the same thing.

27. In the conceptual framework of ideas within which you work, are these ideas turned over and worked in various ways, further is there a limit to that in your opinion?

That's not exactly the way we work.

28. Is there anything else you would like to say about your artwork or your contemporaries' practices?

No.
Appendix B

Interview: Stephen Bram (Australia), 29/09/02

1. What does making painting mean to you?

Painting is very important to me and at the same time it's quite peripheral. It provides a forum in/with which to experiment with relationships. That concern is not confined to painting practice (although it is most fully developed there). It can translate from painting to other activities – which maybe then become part of painting?

2. What type of work do you do, and do you classify it as being one thing more than another e.g. painting or architecture. Or, do you believe that you produce a kind of construction dealing with concepts and concerns in which the final product or painting is a visual answer to a problem you have set up?

More the latter – naming is not that important. That’s what I mean by saying that in some sense painting is peripheral. It’s true though that I’m interested in the idea of (say) a painting acting as a literal annex of an architectural space – I suppose as far as that’s true I must think they are different things – so that that makes some sense.

3. Do you think your projects are continuations of linear conceptual concerns that are upheld over a period of time, and which are self-explanatory like Judd’s ‘specific object’ for example?

If I understand the question, I believe they may be self explanatory but also that no explanation is sufficient – every such explanation is partial and occasional – subject to change depending on the viewer. The work is maybe like a machine, which sets a process in play. What’s self-explanatory is just what the process is – not what it does.
4. Do you believe your work is about display, presentation or representation?

It’s about representation and (more particularly) reference – how something refers to something else – not just through representation, but also allusion and indication. A pointing finger refers but it doesn’t represent. A picture of a snowfield represents a snowfield and it refers to a snowfield.

5. When you work with historical inquiry, it functions as a foundation for future action to proceed. Do you agree? Have you ever been directly concerned with any historical inquiry and what was it specifically about?

How could I disagree –? I’m not that inclined to historical enquiry myself though. I’ll find out as much as I can about an artist that interests me – Lawrence Weiner or Andre Candere for example, but what I like about these artists is that their work acts here and now. Perhaps the best way to engage with history is to resist its effects. I like the essential.

6. Does you practice embrace formal concerns like unity and simplicity? Are formal concerns intrinsic to your practice? If not why not?

A formal concern is a concern that can be articulated. If you can state it it’s formal. I don’t think simplicity is a formal concern though – it’s an appearance. Unity is an idea that interests me. I’m interested in the idea of identity – where does one thing stop and another one start. What’s proper to a thing and what’s not – is something equal to or does it exceed itself?

7. What kinds of projects have you been involved in that have allowed you to extend your own practice?

My practice has allowed me to get involved in projects and prevented me from getting involved in them. Circumstances have allowed me to extend my practice - for example familiarity with certain kinds of tools or software, getting to know particular people.
8. Do you believe that by working with other people, through projects that your own work becomes more informed. Do you believe that another person’s work can set up questions about your work that may not have been asked before? Such as the notion of two people who work in different mediums can present questions of representation and conceptual framework, which cross over into another mediums concerns?

This is always the case but it’s not a question of working with people (of collaboration) but just of working as an artist – the viewers work (of encountering the work and engaging with it) always sets up questions about the work that could not have been foreseen by the artist – that’s part of the function of the work – it has to address the viewer – be capable of being seen by them in their (relative) autonomy. I’m actually not interested in collaboration for it’s own sake. It’s something to be used strategically – when it could result in a work despite its limitations.
That’s with the exception of the kinds of collaborations that are invisible and conventional – with the viewer of the work, the maker of the support and or materials, and all of those responsible for the conventions/perceptual habits/language by which things are read etc.

9. Do you think its only looking back that one can see the limits and define them or clarify the choices that were made?

Yes things have to grow into meaning or significance – is that what you mean?

10. What type of work are you doing now?

A specific kind of painting and various things related to that kind of painting.

11. What types of choices are available to you now, that weren’t when you were first starting out?

I don’t know what you mean – I have more opportunities but many less choices. When I started out I could have done anything. Every option had the same value – an unknown potential.

12. Do you feel your new work has changed the basis of criticism that has been directed towards how your work as a whole is viewed?
Nothing I’ve ever done has even slightly affected the criticism addressed to my work. People like it or they don’t like it. A few people get it – one or two critics or writers – significantly more artists and some friends - but they always got it.

13. Now that we have entered another century completely, is there any discernable difference in contemporary art making that you have observed? If not, why has little changed in your opinion?

It’s just a number – why should anything change? In the Jewish calendar it’s five thousand seven hundred and thirty something…. I’m waiting for the year 6000.

14. Have the formal concerns informing your practice, changed or been manipulated in anyway as time has gone by?

They’re becoming clearer – I understand formalism very differently now.
At the beginning of my practice I equated formalism with Greenbergian formalism – I didn’t like that – because I couldn’t (and still don’t) see how
Painting is only about colour and flatness for example – or even for that matter exactly how painting (or anything) can be (or be about) any one thing. I also think that the idea ‘what you see is what you get’ – ‘or art about art’ - is tautological and nonsensical.

We’re human and we can’t see anything that’s not of interest to us. ‘Painting as painting’ is a completely algebraic statement (and interesting even so) – It means nothing more than x as x. But that’s no reason to reject formalism – on the contrary it’s more of a reason to practice it. Eliminating what’s superficially important is a way to understand/ engage with other things.

15. Do you think you make objects, which increase in value? Or do you think the economy of your work is inherent within the work?

To some extent I think it doesn’t matter what I think. Undoubtedly my work is subject to various kinds of valuation by people. It may increase in value or it may not. I’d hope that it would. I would want the economy of the work to be inherent in it – in other words I’d like to value it under any circumstances – is that what you mean?
16. Do you think there is a formal language within your field of work?

Again I don’t think what I think matters – I act as though there is. In other words I believe some things are communicable and can be defined. I’m sure there’s not just one language though – and nobody knows or is capable of knowing all of them.

17. Do you think everything you need to know is within the made work, or is it the visual framework that provides the foil?

The work and the visual framework are part of each other. The work existing alone is incomprehensible except to a god like observer who doesn’t exist. Is it contradictory to say I agree with the statement ‘the visual framework provides the foil’?

18. Are you limiting your artistic activity or your boundaries by formalising what you do?

Yes I’m limiting it/them by a responsibility to meaning and no – if there are no boundaries there’s no articulation so there’s nothing to be limited.

19. What do you feel is the aim of your art?

Impossible to say.

20. We have always been given limits about what art is. How are you deciding what art is today?

My knowledge, thinking and practice guide me. It’s easy to say that art’s something different to what you’re told it is – the hard part is living according to that belief.

21. Do you believe that form and content play a role in your production, and how does your intentions relate to those concerns?

Aren’t they everything? – I guess I think the experience of the work should result in and from some new understanding of the interrelation of those things.
22. Do you think location is important in regards to the nature of the work?

The aspect of form I'm most interested in is the relationship with the location. Every one of my works is structured by its relationship to two or three points in space. In the case of the architectural/wall painting work these are fixed and in the case of the panel paintings they move with the painting - just in case you meant something different to me by 'location'. - The room space or site where a work is made or exhibited for example. To me this is a room, space or site - a location is something very precise which is infinitely small and which exists equally in relation to the space human beings inhabit and as an idea.

23. Have you always worked within combinations and permutations?

N/A.

24. How do you think your work is judged? Do you believe there is any judgment system suitable to your practice?

It varies from place to place - I don’t think many people judge the work, as I’d like it to be judged. I believe there is an optimal way of relating to the work. It depends on being aware of certain aspects of it. I don’t know if this would be what you’d call a judgment system.

25. Is there any historical precedence in art that relates to what you have been doing?

Plenty.

26. Many years ago you made an artistic decision to make a specific kind of art. How has this "invention" withstood the years and what resistance does it offer today?

I think it's going fine. What do you mean by offering resistance?

27. In the conceptual framework of ideas within which you work, are these ideas turned over and worked in various ways, further is there a limit to that in your opinion?
Yes they are. No there’s not. Unless they suddenly seemed immediately obvious – it wouldn’t be worth working with them then I suppose.

28. Is there anything else you would like to say about your artwork or your contemporaries’ practices?

No thanks Kyle – is there anything you’d like to ask me about my responses to your questions?
Appendix C

Interview: Sol LeWitt (U.S.), 01/01/03

1. *What does making either sculpture or wall drawings mean to you?*

   A way of explaining the world to myself.

2. *What type of work do you do, and do you classify it as being one thing more than another e.g. painting or architecture. Or, do you believe that you produce a kind of construction dealing with concepts and concerns in which the final product or painting is a visual answer to a problem you have set up?*

   I attempt to make art – not solve problems.

3. *Do you think your projects are continuations of linear conceptual concerns that are upheld over a period of time, and which are self-explanatory like Judd’s ‘specific object’ for example?*

   I think that I should give a key to the system (in the title e.g.) that would enable the viewer to understand the work.

4. *Do you believe your work is about display, presentation or representation?*

   It's about transferring ideas from my mind to yours.

5. *When you work with historical inquiry, it functions as a foundation for future action to proceed. Do you agree? Have you ever been directly concerned with any historical inquiry and what was it specifically about?*

   I have not been directly concerned – but indirectly with my viewing of, and reading about art.
6. Does you practice embrace formal concerns like unity and simplicity? Are formal concerns intrinsic to your practice? If not why not?

I do embrace unity and simplicity and other concerns.

7. What kinds of projects have you been involved in that have allowed you to extend your own practice?

My work proceeds from one work to the next.

8. Do you believe that by working with other people, through projects that your own work becomes more informed. Do you believe that another person’s work can set up questions about your work that may not have been asked before? Such as the notion of two people who work in different mediums can present questions of representation and conceptual framework, which cross over into another mediums concerns?

I am very interested in how various people understand my work. Their understanding can inform my thinking.

9. Do you think its only looking back that one can see the limits and define them or clarify the choices that were made?

I can learn by looking back and understanding my thinking in the past by my thinking in the present.

10. What type of work are you doing now?

    Wall installations, three dimensional forms and drawings with colour.

11. What types of choices are available to you now, that weren’t when you were first starting out?

    As my thinking proceeds, I can conceive new ideas.
12. Do you feel your new work has changed the basis of criticism that has been directed towards how your work as a whole is viewed?

Not at all.

13. Now that we have entered another century completely, is there any discernable difference in contemporary art making that you have observed? If not, why has little changed in your opinion?

Much has changed and much has remained the same.

14. Have the formal concerns informing your practice, changed or been manipulated in anyway as time has gone by?

Formal concerns change as my thinking has changed in time. New ideas need new forms.

15. Do you think you make objects, which increase in value? Or do you think the economy of your work is inherent within the work?

I don’t think of value (too subjective). By economy do you mean simplicity of means and execution? Yes.

16. Do you think there is a formal language within your field of work?

Yes, but it changes as I go on.

17. Do you think everything you need to know is within the made work, or is it the visual framework that provides the foil?

Each person understands the work according to their own perception. The artist also.

18. Are you limiting your artistic activity or your boundaries by formalising what you do?

I don’t formalize what I do.
19. *What do you feel is the aim of your art?*

To transmit ideas as best I can.

20. *We have always been given limits about what art is. How are you deciding what art is today?*

As one proceeds in making art, one defines the limits of one's art.

21. *Do you believe that form and content play a role in your production, and how does your intentions relate to those concerns?*

Form is used to explain content.

22. *Do you think location is important in regards to the nature of the work?*

The location is one context of the work and is important.

23. *Have you always worked within combinations and permutations?*

No. Not always.

24. *How do you think your work is judged? Do you believe there is any judgment system suitable to your practice?*

Each viewer understands the work in context of his own ideas.

25. *Is there any historical precedence in art that relates to what you have been doing?*

Art is a continuing process – All art informs all art.

26. *Many years ago you made an artistic decision to make a specific kind of art. How has this "invention" withstood the years and what resistance does it offer today?*
My work evolves from one idea to the next – New art offers resistance.

27. *In the conceptual framework of ideas within which you work, are these ideas turned over and worked in various ways, further is there a limit to that in your opinion?*

Ideas are always reworked in the artist's mind.

28. *Is there anything else you would like to say about your artwork or your contemporaries' practices?*

I try to follow ideas as they occur to me hoping I can work them out, and that they lead to good art or at least not bad art.
Appendix D

Interview: Lawrence Weiner (U.S.) 23/12/02

1. What does making work mean to you?

The relationships of objects to objects in relation to human beings.

2. What type of work do you do, and do you classify it as being one thing more than another e.g. painting or architecture. Or, do you believe that you produce a kind of construction dealing with concepts and concerns in which the final product or painting is a visual answer to a problem you have set up?

Sculpture.

3. Do you think your projects are continuations of linear conceptual concerns that are upheld over a period of time, and which are self-explanatory like Judd's 'specific object' for example?

NON LINEAR Conclusive Questions.

4. Do you believe your work is about display, presentation or representation?

Presentation.

5. When you work with historical inquiry, it functions as a foundation for future action to proceed. Do you agree? Have you ever been directly concerned with any historical inquiry and what was it specifically about?

The work does not rely upon precedent for its existence.
6. Does you practice embrace formal concerns like unity and simplicity? Are formal concerns intrinsic to your practice? If not why not?

All sculptures are formal.

7. What kinds of projects have you been involved in that have allowed you to extend your own practice?

The making of art.

8. Do you believe that by working with other people, through projects that your own work becomes more informed. Do you believe that another person’s work can set up questions about your work that may not have been asked before? Such as the notion of two people who work in different mediums can present questions of representation and conceptual framework, which cross over into another mediums concerns?

I do and again I have always worked at some point with others. Film, Joint exhibitions, books, music etc.

9. Do you think its only looking back that one can see the limits and define them or clarify the choices that were made?

As there is no defined concept of what art is other than an earth science there is no need to rationalise the result.

10. What type of work are you doing now?

Sculpture.

11. What types of choices are available to you now, that weren’t when you were first starting out?

Eating regularly.
12. Do you feel your new work has changed the basis of criticism that has been directed towards how your work as a whole is viewed?

Yes.

13. Now that we have entered another century completely, is there any discernable difference in contemporary art making that you have observed? If not, why has little changed in your opinion?

The means of presentation are more open.

14. Have the formal concerns informing your practice, changed or been manipulated in anyway as time has gone by?

As the purpose of sculpture is to find ones place in the sun and the sun is still there, no?

15. Do you think you make objects, which increase in value? Or do you think the economy of your work is inherent within the work?

The value of the work is in its immediate use at whatsoever time it is found.

16. Do you think there is a formal language within your field of work?

Formal (But with no reason to accept the rules as they are stated).

17. Do you think everything you need to know is within the made work, or is it the visual framework that provides the foil?

The work remains a conclusive question.

18. Are you limiting your artistic activity or your boundaries by formalising what you do?

No (I do not participate in an academy either as student or teacher).
19. What do you feel is the aim of your art?

To present the relationships of objects to objects in relation to human beings that allow the needs and desires of the receiver to determine the metaphor of use.

20. We have always been given limits about what art is. How are you deciding what art is today?

I do, I do not decide.

21. Do you believe that form and content play a role in your production, and how does your intentions relate to those concerns?

There is nothing that is not determined by form and content.

22. Do you think location is important in regards to the nature of the work?

Wheresoever the work find itself it should be capable of functioning.

23. Have you always worked within combinations and permutations?

Never did, never shall, wouldn’t know.

24. How do you think your work is judged? Do you believe there is any judgment system suitable to your practice?

By its use by whosoever is the receiver.

25. Is there any historical precedence in art that relates to what you have been doing?

Don’t know where, don’t know when.

26. Many years ago you made an artistic decision to make a specific kind of art. How has this ‘invention’ withstood the years and what resistance does it offer today?
My decision was the material form NOT KIND OF.

27. *In the conceptual framework of ideas within which you work, are these ideas turned over and worked in various ways, further is there a limit to that in your opinion?*

All activity turns as the world turns.

28. *Is there anything else you would like to say about your artwork or your contemporaries’ practices?*

Use it in reasonable health.

Interviews with the following practitioners have taken place between 01/10/02 to 31/01/03. The other interviewee’s were Lauren Ewing (U.S.), James Brearly (Australia) and Jan van der Ploeg (Netherlands).

All these interviews have been conducted in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans and in line with the Human Ethics Committee, The University of Sydney. Reference No: 2991 Protocol No: 02/06/14

Chief investigator Associate Professor Brad Buckley.