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Art in Parallax: Painting, Place, Judgment

A Dissertation Submitted by

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Contents

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, argumentation and conclusions drawn by this thesis, are entirely the result of my own undertaking, except where acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award.

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ENDORSEMENT

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List of Illustrations

Abstract

The point of this thesis is to undertake a critical engagement with the art and life debate. This debate involves, in particular, the question of the location of art. Does art belong to an autonomous field removed from 'everyday life', or is art located amongst the objects and daily activities of our lives? Contributors to this debate usually defend one or the other position; either defending autonomy or arguing that art is, or at least should be, part of life. The debate is located through three historical points: the avant-gardes of the early 20th Century Europe; the neo-avant-garde of North America in the 1950s – 1970s; and American formalist art and criticism of the 1930s – 1970s. The thesis then engages the debate through more recent examples of art where the binary art/life is again the principal issue. Minimalism, Installation art, Site-specific art and Wall Painting are examined in the context of the 'end' of modernist painting. The argument presented by the thesis will be informed by a recently emerging theoretical frame which engages the reception of Kantian and Hegelian forms of aesthetic judgment. This critical context includes the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Zizek; the Marxist-Hegelian theory of the German critic, Peter Burger, and the U.S. formalist critic, Clement Greenberg. The positions held by these theorists and critics will be examined through examples of art from both the modern period and more contemporary works. Through this context, the thesis positions the art and life debate within a structural analysis, arguing that art, including objects of ordinary life understood as art, occupy places within an art structure. The thesis argues that the choice between art and life is not so much a positive choice of one or the other, but rather a choice between one and the same thing seen differently; that is, the one thing seen in parallax.

ART IN PARALLAX: PAINTING, PLACE, JUDGMENT

Introduction

'Negativity is what enables us to see the One as constitutively Two.'[1]

The aim of this introduction is to develop a general overview of the thesis through an elaboration of the reviewed literature. The purpose of the thesis is to critically engage the debate between art and life through the central concepts of place or site, aesthetic judgment, and parallax.[2] Place here refers to the place an object occupies structurally as an art object and not an object used in everyday life. Aesthetic judgment is understood in the thesis, not in the modernist sense of a formal judgment of an object of art, a judgement coming after the fact of art making, but rather as productive of the object actually *becoming* an object of art, and not some other object. The concept of parallax will be employed as a theoretical tool to explain the particular use of the term judgment in the thesis. Parallax, in the context of the thesis involves a way of 'seeing' the one object as either an object of art or of life, where life occupies a different, but related, structural place rather than something directly experienced or unrelated.

The thesis argues that through the break with representational realism in the late 19th and early 20th Century, painting, no longer a means of representing a stable,

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[1] A. Zupancic, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2003, p 159.

[2] The terms 'art' and 'life' are understood through a debate that has been ongoing since the early writings of Roger Fry, Clive Bell and others. It cannot be explained with any degree of sense through a dictionary type of explanation. However, an approximation would be: art considered to occupy an autonomous sphere, is distanced from life which is the everyday world of eating, working, shopping etc. The seminal contributors to this debate will be discussed below as their theoretical contributions arise in the context of the introduction.

pre-existing world of being, could not guarantee a positive reception since the painted picture plane no longer easily mapped the external world, and therefore the criteria for judgment – the degree of verisimilitude displayed by the painting – was no longer the criteria of successful painting.[3] This break represents a separation of painting from the presumed site of painting as external to the picture plane. The thesis argues that the ramifications of the internal focus of painting along with the loss of the presumed correlation between image and real referent is that the products of an artist are not simply judged with regard to the degree of formal quality they exhibit, nor the degree of verisimilitude they display. What is at issue is the very identity of art itself. Each judgment, after the withdrawal from representational realism, is a judgment of identity, not the quality of the representation. Judgment from the late 19th and early 20th Centuries is directed toward the degree of accord between the presented object or painting, and the presumed identity of art, or what the public understands by the word art; what it expects when confronted with an object or painting that aims to occupy the place of art.

The focus on identity does not imply that art actually has an identity that can be isolated and matched to the candidate for art. What it does mean is that when a judgment is made after the withdrawal from representational realism, a comparison is then made between the object or painting put forward for consideration or judgment, and the presumed standard or model of art. As a result of this new form of comparison, a question of identity arises with the judgment, because the new forms

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[3] In the 18th Century the German poet and theorist J. W. von Goethe, could still claim 'The highest demand that is made on an artist is this: that he be true to Nature, study her, imitate her'. J.W. von Goethe, Introduction to the Propylaen, Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Harvard Classics, 1909 – 14: Famous Prefaces. http://www.bartleby.com/39/34.html The specific use of the term parallax comes from the Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Zizek. See *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006.

of presentation still solicit comparison, only now the judge of such work has no reliable model against which to compare the object or painting. Common reactions from the public when confronted by a novel example of art are often expressed as questions like "Is that art?', or statements such as "my six-year-old could do better". These forms of response arise because the painting and the referent of that painting don't appear to correlate. The negative judgment results from the lack of correlation between expectation and presentational content. However, such negative judgments contribute to the object's identity as art, as much as positive judgments.

The theoretical complication to the question of identity is that the identity of modern art does not involve the question 'what is art' but rather 'where is art'.[4] The 'what' is derived from the 'where' or place the object occupies structurally as art. An object becomes an object of art when it occupies a place in what the thesis refers to as the art structure. Any object of modern art can potentially become art, not, the thesis argues, because the division between art and life is erased or that anything goes now, but because the difference between ordinary objects of life, and objects of art, does not involve visual difference, much less an inherent property of the media used. The difference is structural: the place the thing occupies, where it is in relation to other objects in the art structure, and where it is in relation to what is understood as life, determines its identity as a place in the art structure. The thing *is art* once it occupies such a place; once the structure takes notice of it.

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[4] This theoretical point is made by the Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic, Slavoj Zizek. He argues apropos of 'the modernist break in art' that 'the tension between the (art) Object and the Place it occupies is reflexively taken into account: what makes an object an object of art is not simply its direct material properties, but the place it occupies'. See S. Zizek, *The Fragile Absolute – Or Why the Christian Legacy is Worth Fighting For*, London, Verso, 2001, p. 32. I elaborate on Zizek's insight through the introduction of the art structure.

With the withdrawal of art from representational realism, the perspectival system that organised the representation of space from the renaissance to the modern period, gives way to another form of perspective. Successive Judgments which take the form of what the thesis refers to as a parallax perspective, or the way the subject 'sees' the object, places it, in due course, within the art structure.[5] The perspectival system that grounded representational realism in pre-modern art shifts with modern art to a form of judgment *as* perspective, the way something is seen as art (subjective), but equally the way the object of art actually is *as* art (objective).[6] Subject and object are mediated by the art structure. Judgment, considered in terms of parallax, or from a particular perspectival view, does not simply judge a pre-given object in itself as beautiful, as does a Kantian, formal judgment, but rather produces the art through judgment in a constitutive sense. The form of judgment has its origins in G.W.F. Hegel's critique of Kantian aesthetic theory.[7] A parallax judgment is constitutive in the Hegelian sense, rather than merely reflective in the Kantian sense. This means that the judgment actually constitutes the object as an art object. This does not mean that the object of art is purely ideal. What it does mean is that the object and subject are mediated by the art structure and that a subjective judgment becomes, over time, the objective state of art. The withdrawal from realism does not convert the object into a mere product of the subject's boundless will but rather, it will be argued, the real becomes a gap between places in the structure, or empty places indicated by the objects put forward for consideration for a

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[5] This complex process is discussed at length below and throughout the chapters that follow. The argument is idealist to the degree that the objects occupy a differential structure, but materialist to the degree that the real inhabits the gap between the two perspectives on the object.
[6] This idea of Judgment as perspective or parallax view is explained below in greater detail and in the thesis in general through the context of each chapter.
[7] See p. For an interpretation of Hegel's critique of Kant that opposes the position I take here, see K. Ameriks, Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Volume 46, Number 1, September 1985.

place in the structure. Judgment assigns a structural place to the object, as an object of art, *because* the object is not totally consumed by the subject's understanding.

The intention of the thesis is to examine the ramifications of the break with representational realism and the perspectival system in the late 19th Century through the concept of parallax or the shift in the viewer's perspective that allows the one thing to be viewed differently as art or life. This thesis critically engages with an on-going debate that surrounds the division, or confluence, of art and life, or what the American art critic Hal Foster calls 'the antinomy between autonomy and imbrication'.[8] Felix M. Gatz describes the relationship between art and life by suggesting 'The task of aesthetics is to determine whether its object, the aesthetic, is relative, like, or homogeneous to that which is called reality and life, or if the aesthetic belongs to that sphere only in the manner of some isolated island…an isolated realm having its own structure.'[9] The relationship between art and life is critically discussed in relation to a number of art movements, artistic works, and theoretical and historical points where the relationship between the two categories is central to understanding those movements, art works and art-historical moments.

The binary art/life corresponds to two different approaches to art: on the one hand, art can be understood as 'autonomous' and isolated from everyday, causal reality; and on the other hand, art can be seen as embedded in the ordinary, everyday life of shopping, eating, working.[10] The debate that surrounds the relationship

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[8] H. Foster, The Archive Without Museums, *October*, Volume 77, Summer 1996, p.102.
[9] . A. M. Gatz, The Object of Aesthetics, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 1, No. 2/3, Autumn, 1941, pp. 3-6.*

[10] One of the seminal early treatments of the subject of art and life in found in Roger Fry's essay "Art and Life", written in 1917. See R. Fry, Art and Life, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980

between art and life has its corollary in late 18th and 19th century German Idealism.[11]

According to the Hegel scholar, Robert Pippin the relationship between philosophy and 'everyday' life 'is arguably the central theme of all modern European philosophy since Hegel.' [12] The 'origins' of this division have been located at a point in post-feudal society where the division between a developing sense of autonomy in aestheticism begins to isolate art from the praxis of everyday life.[13] With this division comes an increasing awareness of art's own domain; its autonomous place. As a reaction to this autonomy, the historical avant-garde emerges with the aim of breaking with autonomy and having art re-enter life, or work toward the construction of a new life beyond autonomy. Autonomy, or the distancing of the aesthetic realm from everyday, lived experience, is understood by the 'historical avant-garde' to have a negative effect on art; a problem to be overcome through an artistic assault on the autonomous art institution.[14] According to Pippin, (2003), all post-Hegelian philosophy involves an 'attempt to recover some everyday perspective that is said to have been…not only lost but missing'.[15]

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[11] Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1817) was translated into French in the early 1860's and had an impact on French thought long before Jean Hypolite's *Genese et Structure de la Phenomenolgie de Hegel* (1946), and Alexander Kojeve's *Introduction a la lecture de Hegel* (1947). On this see, B. Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism*, London, New York, Routledge, 2003.

[12] R. Pippin, The Unabailability of the Ordinary: Strauss on the Philosophical Fate of Modernity, *Political Theory*, Volume 3, June, 2003, p. 336. In 2003, the re-release of updated editions of two seminal books on the subject of art and life appeared. See, J. Kelly, *Allan Kaprow: The Blurring of Art and Life*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003, and D. Norvitz, *The Boundaries of Art: A philosophical Enquiry into the Place of Art in Everyday Life*, www.cybereditions.com, 2003. Also, in 2002, Miwon Kwon released a ground-breaking study of place and art. See, M. Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2002.

[13] This is the position of the German Marxist critic, Peter Bürger. Bürger argues 'it is only with aestheticism that the full unfolding of the phenomenon of art became a fact, and it is to aestheticism that the historical avant-garde movements respond.' See P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 17.

[14] Bürger, p. 53.. The terms 'historical avant-garde' and 'neo-avant-garde' are Bürger's terms.

[15] Pippin. This 'lost' or 'missing' object (seen through the frame of the French theorist, Jacques Lacan) will play a central conceptual role, along with the concepts of structure and parallax, in the theoretical argument put forward in the thesis. Pippin is not referring to Lacan here but his point is closely related.

The point Pippin (2003) makes here, while in the context of philosophy, is instructive for the context of visual art as it developed its own domain, because in becoming autonomous, art, like philosophy, became increasingly organised as a dialectic between the emerging place of autonomy and the Other[16] to that place, the traditions and expectations the viewer brings with them when experiencing art; principally, that it represent a scene external to the picture plane such as nature or everyday life. These traditional expectations, that art represent nature, or that it record everyday life, are not only 'missing' from the new art at the 'beginning' of modernism, but also, the 'historical' and 'neo-avant-gardes' are a response to this perceived absence, dialectically attached to nature or realism through the absence of nature.[17]

According the German Marxist critic, Peter Bürger (1984), the aim of the 'historical avant-garde' is to rejoin art with the praxis of everyday life.[18] He argues, 'the avant-gardistes proposed the sublation of art – sublation in the Hegelian sense of the word: art was not to be simply destroyed, but transferred to the praxis of life where it would be preserved, albeit in a changed form.'[19] This point is central to the argument of the thesis. But before it can be addressed it will be useful to introduce Bürger's critical frame. The avant-gardes have been divided by Bürger (1984) into two groups: the 'historical avant-garde' (1910s – 1930s) and the 'neo-avant-garde' (1950s – 1970s).[20] The aim of the historical avant-garde according to Bürger is to rejoin art with the praxis of life by destroying the bourgeois culture of autonomy that

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[16] The use of the uppercase O in Other is intended to signify a dialectical dependence one position or object has in relation to an Other.
[17] Bürger. This absence or missing nature will be understood in the thesis in an analogous way to a linguistic structure in so far as in both art and in language, below the symbolic is the real as an empty void.
[18] Bürger, p. 24.
[19] Bürger, p. 49.
[20] Bürger.

is the art institution.[21] This destruction was largely undertaken through shocking assaults made on the 'respectability' of the middle class cultural elite, the bourgeoisie. According to Bürger, movements such as Dada, Constructivism, Surrealism, undertook various means to either destroy the autonomy of art under bourgeois culture, or break free from the art institution including the various art academies and Salons.[22] Ultimately however, for Bürger this is not achieved by the historical avant-garde, and as a result of its failure the neo-avant-garde emerges. But, according to Bürger, it too fails because it merely repeats the posture of the historical avant-garde.

The thesis argues that the avant-gardes do indeed fail to enter life, not because the two domains are impossibly divided or that the avant-gardes failed because they chose the wrong method of attack, but because the two domains are, in one sense, united from the beginning. Life, like art, does not pre-exist in some stable, fixed world awaiting a sympathetic representation, presentation of the 'facts', or direct experience. Likewise, art's autonomy is not unrelated to the place of life. Art and life are dialectically mediated terms; and in another sense, necessarily divided by the perspective the viewer takes. In other words, the two places form a relationship of parallax. The concept of parallax, as a form of judgment, is central to the thesis as is the concept of art structure, or the place the object occupies as an object of art. The concept of parallax involves, not so much a duality of poles, or a dichotomy between autonomous art *or* life, as an 'inherent gap in the One', or the

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[21] This notion of institutional critique is taken up in the neo-avant-garde and even much post-minimal art of the 1970's and 1980's and after. I discuss these later instances of institutional critique in chapters 3 and 4.

[2222] Bürger, pp. 49 – 65. Bürger does not add Cubist collage but does argue that it 'most consciously destroyed the representational system that had prevailed since the Renaissance. Bürger, p. 73.

one thing viewed as art/life.[23] The avant-gardes critically engaged by Bürger were not the only contenders for the title of avant-garde. A very distinct group of artists, in fact in many ways the very antithesis of those discussed by Bürger, was the critical focus of the American art critic, Clement Greenberg. This 'alternative' avant-garde comprises, in particular, the formalist painters who emerged as a response to the aesthetic concerns of the French artist, Edward Manet. These concerns are traced by Clement Greenberg through the Impressionists, to Cezanne and onto Cubism and abstraction in artists such as Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian and others. American formalism, to which Greenberg gives his greatest degree of attention, included painters such as Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Morris Louis and Jules Olitski. For the early Greenberg of *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* (1939), and *Towards a Newer Laocoon* (1940), this *is* the avant-garde; the other avant-garde does not rate a mention until later in his critical career when he is historically and theoretically coerced to admit the negative presence of another avant-garde.[24]

Greenberg limited his avant-garde to what he understood as formalist painters because he wanted to argue that what he judged to be good art was that which emphasised the nature of the medium by rejecting[25] all that was apparently inessential to that medium, in order to isolate itself from the intrusion of outside influence and therefore circumscribe a domain unique to that medium. The historical avant-garde engaged by Bürger is one such outside influence that had to be rejected

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[23] S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006, p. 36. This concept is discussed further below in the theoretical discussion and in the context of each chapter.

[24] C. Greenberg, Avant-Garde and Kitsch, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, edited by J. O'Brian, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986; and C. Greenberg, *Toward a Newer Laocoon, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944, edited by J. O. Brian, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986.*

[25] Greenberg's notion of rejecting what is not considered essential is given a critical inversion in chapter 3 where I argue that it was in fact the rejection of the essential rather than the inessential, that lead to the reduction of painting to the monochrome.

or avoided in order that Greenberg's claims regarding medium specificity could be established. For painting more broadly, the rejection of representational depth, kitsch aesthetics, literature, and ultimately, everyday life underpinned Greenberg's claims to autonomy and formalist criticism. The repudiation of 'external' influence, according to Greenberg, had the unavoidable result of an increased emphasis on the flat picture plane as each media worked toward what was unique about that media.[26] The modernist narrative of flatness that Greenberg pursued led his criticism into a kind of aesthetic cul-de-sac whereupon the emergence of monochrome painting in the later 1950s left nothing to explore of the flat surface except the absolute flatness of the canvas itself. According to the Belgian philosopher and art critic Thierry de Duve, Minimal art was the immediate response to this crisis in modernist painting.[27]

Emerging in the United States in early 1960s, Minimal art is often understood to involve a phenomenological relationship between the subject's body and the presence of objects in a literal environment or space.[28] The emphasis on the visual qualities of surface and notions of aesthetic purity understood by Greenberg to be the litmus test of good art, are compromised by the inclusion of mundane time and the presence of the 'human' body. For Greenberg, the problem of the new art of Minimalism was that it was too close to ordinary objects of everyday life. He stated in 1967 that 'Minimal works are readable as art, as almost anything is today – including a door, a table, a blank sheet of paper.'[29] As de Duve astutely notes, the readymade of the Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp, that Greenberg had suppressed, along

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[26] As early as 1948 we find Greenberg addressing the condition of flatness in the art of Collage, but his definitive statement is to be found in Modernist Painting. C. Greenberg, Modernist Painting, in G. Battcock, *The New Art: A Critical Anthology*, New York, E.P. Dutton, 1966.
[27] T. De Duve, The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas, .*Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998.
[28] R. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1994.
[29] C. Greenberg, *Recentness of Sculpture*, in G. Battcock edited, Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 183.

with the other avant-gardes, returns here as a 'door, a table, a blank sheet of paper'.[30] The American critic, Michael Fried likewise perceived Minimalism as a threat to the aesthetic of formalist painting.[31] Minimalism, or what he referred to as the 'literalists' posed a threat to the 'presentness' or the elevation of the ordinary, literal materials articulated in modernist formal syntax.[32]

By contrast, the point the thesis makes with regard to the two avant-gardes, and art oppositions in general, is that they are mediated by the art structure or system of differential aesthetic places, not dissimilar to the network of differential units of meaning theorised by the French Structuralist, Ferdinand de Saussure.[33] The opposition between two opposed positions is not a positive difference but a structural network of dialectically related art objects. The 'identity' of any one object, art practice or movement, is structurally dependent on its 'Others'.[34] Within this network Bürger's avant-garde registers as art in structural or mediated opposition to the other avant-garde of Greenberg, which in turn registers only in opposition to the historical and neo-avant-gardes, and the outside, or place of everyday life that they appeal to. Aesthetic judgment in the form of a parallax view, assigns a place in the art structure over successive addresses to the objects occupying either side of the divide of art and life. The division or split between one thing; or the one seen as two, is also found in Minimal art, Site-related art, and the emergence of Wall Painting.

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[30] De Duve, pp.198 – 279..

[31] Here, and throughout this thesis I use the term formalism to refer to modernist painting in general as understood by Clement Greenberg. I do not use terms that were in vogue at the time such as abstract expressionism, action painting, or abstract painting, except where such a term is used by Greenberg himself.

[32] M. Fried, Art and Objecthood, in G. Battcock, edited, Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology, pp. 116-147.

[33] F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, London, Fontana, 1974.

[34] Here I paraphrase Slavoj Zizek where he comments in the context of philosophy, that 'the identity of [one's] own position is mediated by the Other.' See S. Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, London, Verso, 2000, p. 72.

According to Francis Colpitt, the concerns of the Minimalists should be identified as an attempt to shift the site of art making and viewing from the artist as creator of an internal formal arrangement on a delimited and bounded space of a canvas[35], to one which includes the conditions of exhibition, the presentation of the literal materials, and the presence of the spectator in a given space.[36] These concerns and issues come to the fore in the development of Installation and Site-Specific art in the late 1970s and 1980s.[37] Clare Bishop has noted that Installation art is often confused with the literal act of installing an object (sometimes a painting) in a gallery.[38] However, Installation art involves more than hanging a painting or installing artworks in a gallery; rather, it takes into account the fact that the object or objects are *installed*, that is, they have no natural right to be there, and that the relationship between the object/s, the spatial co-ordinates, and the presence of the spectator, are to be considered as part of the work's enabling conditions, if not actually part of the work.

Site-Specific art involves an extension of this notion of enabling conditions to include the recognition that the actual site has an intrinsic relation to any of the things installed and is inseparable from it. As Douglas Crimp, paraphrasing Richard Serra, argued, 'to remove the work is to destroy the work'.[39] Another important issue for Site-Specific art not shared by the more apolitical, general positions of Minimalism and Installation art is the increased specificity of the practice, a

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[35] Formalism, according to Greenberg's account requires that the 'site' of the painting be contained by the boundary of the framing edge. This attempt to contain painting within such bounds gradually comes undone as I demonstrate in chapter 3.

[36] See F. Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1993, pp. 67-99.

[37] Kwon.

[38] C. Bishop, *Installation art: A Critical History*, London, Tate Publishing, 2005, p. 6.

[39] D. Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993, p. 151

locational identity that includes issues of politics, economics, race, and gender.[40]

However, the thesis argues that this 'site', despite the diversity of practices and artistic intentions, is the general structure of art itself. The objects and artistic activities that occupy a place in this structure do so, not because they have any inherent art qualities that would identify them as art, or a direct association with a particular site, but rather through a form of parallax judgment, the objects take place as art in the structure.

This engagement with Site-Specific art and the preceding contexts will provide the theoretical and historical frame to undertake an investigation into the recent development of what the thesis refers to as Wall Painting: the 'direct' painting of the gallery wall or other wall 'outside' the gallery, instead of a conventional painting support such as a canvas.[41] It is, I argue, not simply a historically convenient fact that the emergence of this 'genre' came at the same historical moment as painting on a conventional canvas support became exhausted at the point of the monochrome in the late 1950's and early 1960's.[42] The site of the wall will be ultimately understood, not simply in a positivist sense of the literal support located in a specific space such as a gallery, but rather in terms of a dialectic between the literal wall as a material structure, and the wall as an autonomous place in what I refer to in the thesis as the site of art itself: the art structure. Again, it is parallax judgment that divides an ordinary wall and a wall of art, thus allowing for the one thing viewed as art/life to take place within the art structure. In order to arrive at a clear explanation

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[40] M. Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2002, p. 3.

[41] The use of inverted commas is to signal doubt about such 'direct' access to the wall itself, and the idea of simply escaping the art institution by going 'outside' its walls. The thesis does not simply deny these claims but rather complicates them through an application of dialectics.

[42] I elaborate on a point made by Thierry de Duve. See T. De Duve, The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas, .*Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998.

of the crucial concepts of art structure and parallax judgment, a short historical excursus will be given below, to which the theoretical frame, including the concept of art structure, and the central concept of parallax employed in the thesis, will follow.

At one level history will be considered as an art-historical context: a narrative generally agreed upon: a collection of proper names, art practices, theories and their objects and sites.[43] History as narrative is not understood as a linear narrative forged under the hidden forces of teleology; but rather as an agreed upon (and often disputed) series of proper names; places and times; a diachronic that is the direct product of the relationship between objects in the synchronic structure of art, and what is missing or excluded from that structure; its 'outside', rather than a necessary and irreversible path.[44] In other words, the history pursued in the thesis does not have an independent existence from the objects, debates and judgments involved in the construction and maintenance of that history; and as such are constantly under the pressure of critical engagement. This is a history that at any moment could be altered by a retrospective review of its canon of significant artists and works, either by an art object introduced into the structure, or a critical assessment of one or more objects occupying that structure.

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[43] Given that the thesis involves a Hegelian or dialectical account of art history from the late 19th Century it might be argued that history is the whole point of Hegel and therefore should take pride of place. This is not the context within which to defend against this objection. However, the thesis aims to develop another 'Hegel' within the context of the chapters that follow, through recourse to contemporary philosophers, in particular, Slavoj Zizek.

[44] The terms 'diachronic' and 'synchronic' are linguistic coinages of Saussure and are explained in context below in the discussion of theory. Basically, the diachronic is the historical and the synchronic is the structure as a whole at any one moment. This structure is also analogous to the Hegelian universal in so far as it involves a unity that *is* difference, not a unity or structure than dissolves or subsumes all difference. The art structure is not an absolute. It is as much disturbed and determined by the intrusion of the particular (new work) as it determines the particular as a unit in the structure. Ontological fixity or the identity of the object as art is only possible through the ceaseless movement of the structure itself as each particular vies for a position or place in the structure which in turn alters the form of the structure itself.

History is understood here as a kind of structural grouping of contributing differential units of meaning understood as art objects that leave a connecting and breaking path of associations that more or less coalesce into a kind of structure wherein the diachronic or historical connections are formed through a series of judgments made on behalf of those objects. These differential elements all contribute to what the thesis understands as an art structure. Primarily, the art structure is a differential, linguistic-like arrangement of associated objects, understood by their place within the structure, to be examples of art. However, other factors contribute to the art structure such as the artistic act of submitting for judgment an object or concept; a person who will be understood structurally as the object's author; a place within which the object will be considered, usually an art gallery; and the audience that judges the purposive presentations.

In the practical structuring of the argument however, the thesis will be limited by a generally accepted narrative that encompasses events and categories such as the historical avant-gardes, of the 1910s – 1930s which preceded the neo-avant-gardes of the 1950s to 1970s. The thesis presumes the historical fact that Manet's *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863), for instance, preceded Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907); but beyond the generally accepted landmarks of modern art, the thesis does not make specific historical claims. If anything, history is constructed retroactively.[45] The thesis does not construct an alternative history, but rather engage critically with a number of seminal artists, theorists and art objects comprising art history from the mid 19th Century to late 20th Century. Certain periods, such as

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[45] Hal Foster takes a similar position with regards the direction of history in his seminal statement on the avant-garde. See H. Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde and the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1996. The thesis does not dwell on the direction of art history so much as the place.

modernism, along with the art considered modernist, have enough general currency to adopt as a timeline for locating the debates themselves, and entering into those debates.

This history is not controversial. However, the interpretation of this history and the theoretical position taken by the thesis is original. The historical context begins with the division between the post-feudal aesthetics of realism and the emergence of autonomous 'bourgeois' aesthetics of the mid 19th Century France. This period, the thesis argues, was informed by the aesthetic theory of Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel in the late 18th to mid 19th century, and had an impact on later developments such as formalism, and the avant-garde reaction to formalism. The historical account the thesis cites includes the debate between autonomy and the avant-gardes of the 1910s to 1930s Europe as understood by Bürger; and the dialectical relationship between these avant-gardes and the American formalists of the 1940s, 50s and 60s.

Subsequent to the issues concerning the avant-garde, the thesis engages with the formalist criticism of the American art critic Clement Greenberg in the 1940s to the 1960s. Following – and critically developing – Thierry de Duve's thesis, I examine the historical amnesia that Greenberg appeared to have when it came to the Other avant-garde discussed in relation to Bürger's thesis; that is, the historical avant-gardes. The fact that Bürger's avant-garde had already critically engaged with the autonomy to which Greenberg remained faithful until the pressures of history in the form of the neo-avant-garde, forced him to deal with this other history, gives the impetus for the point the thesis makes in chapter 2: the two avant-gardes were not

simply opposed in some positive sense, but rather dialectically in conflict. This dialectical conflict, the thesis contends, lends each avant-garde its identity as art.

Greenberg's narrative, according to de Duve, historically feeds into the moment of Minimalism in the 1960s where the thesis demonstrates the implicit historical and conceptual dependence of the Minimalists on, not only the historical avant-garde with which Bürger engages, but more importantly, the modernist painting that was repudiated by the Minimalists.[46] While it is true that a number of Minimal artists openly acknowledged the historical avant-garde as historical (and conceptual) departure points, they were equally, if not more so, under the historical pressures of Greenbergian formalism in American, and formalist composition and other 'problems' specific to the organised surface of painting in Europe. The debate is then taken up through a discussion of the neo-avant-gardes of the mid 1950s to late 1970s in America and Europe.

The thesis also includes the emergence of the French collective B.M.P.T. (Buren, Mosset, Parmentia, Toroni); in particular, the art of Daniel Buren. In many respects these artists share similar concerns with the American Minimalists including an emphasis on process issues, the conditions of exhibition and the problems of site or the location of works in various contexts. As is often found in Minimalist art, or at least in some of the artist's statements, the hostility toward European formal syntax, and formal composition in general, is also found in B.M.P.T. While there would be a good deal to be said about the European painters of the 1940s and 50s, a detailed discussion of them is beyond the scope of this thesis.

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[46] De Duve, pp.198 – 279.

The thesis links the development of Minimalism to the historical cul-de-sac of modernist painting and the developments in Europe, linking these in turn to the development of Installation, Land Art, and Site-Specific art of the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Finally, the historical emergence of what the thesis refers to as Wall Painting, is critically analysed in the context of a recent intervention into the notion of site – the use of the gallery wall as a painting surface. It is argued in chapter six that the use of the wall is historically and structurally dependent on the exhaustion of the modernist canvas and the specific relationship of painting to the wall that developed from the mid 1940s to the early 1960s. While the thesis is concerned with the notion of site or what is referred to below as 'place' along this basic historical narrative, its primary focus is on the formal place the object occupies in the art structure and how it arrives at that place through critical reception and judgment.[47] The notion of site as a structural place rather than a literal, actual or directly 'lived' place suggests that while art might have a history where objects and representational works are placed along a timeline of before and after, it is the place the object, concept or artistic act occupies in the structure that counts; that makes that object, representation or act; an art act, or object of art, rather than an object of "ordinary" life.[48] The thesis argues that the difference between art and life is not substantial but rather structural. Life can only be understood as a place in the structure in contradistinction from art.

The thesis has recourse to the aforementioned historical 'passage' from the mid 19th Century to contemporary art but its focus is on a theoretical problem. The theoretical problem the thesis explores is the relationship between art and life and

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[47] The concept of 'art structure' is central to the thesis and is discussed below and throughout the thesis. The thesis understands by 'form' not an isolation of formal qualities occupying the painted surface of the canvas but a formal place within the art structure. This is discussed in some detail in the theoretical section of this introduction.

[48] Again, more is said on this concept below in the theoretical section.

how this apparent dichotomy is rather a dialectical relationship that can be explained by the concept of parallax, and through the exercise of aesthetic judgment understood as a parallax judgment.[49]   The concept of parallax explains the relationship between a judgment and the way the object takes place structurally as art; how judgment "sites" or structurally locates objects as art objects or objects of life. The concept of parallax traditionally understood involves the apparent displacement of an object relative to the position of the viewing subject.   In other words when I observe a tree in the distance as I move, the tree appears to move. And yet this is due to the fact that my position shifts, not the position of the tree, and therefore the perspective is merely subjective.

The Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Zizek has recently added a theoretical alteration to the concept of parallax by suggesting that 'parallax [is] yet another name for a fundamental antinomy' not unlike the antinomy theorised by Immanuel Kant.[50] This antinomy, which in Kant is merely subjective, is then linked by Zizek to Hegel's concept of a 'concrete universal' which involves an irreducible 'speculative identity of the highest and the lowest'.[51] The highest and lowest in the context of art are understood throughout the thesis as 'substantially the same'; or the One viewed parallactically as Two rather than two substantially different things.[52] Equally, the concept of parallax involves the dialectic between object and subject, and the mediation of both.   In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) for example, the relationship between subject and object follows from the 'in-itself' (object sphere), to the 'for-itself' (subject sphere), to 'Reason' as the 'in-and-for-itself' or the mediated

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[49] Parallax judgment is a coinage of the thesis. It represents an application of Slavoj Zizek's concept of parallax view applied to art.
[50] S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006, p. 4
[51] Zizek, p.5.
[52] Zizek.

unity of subject and object. Reason, for Hegel's *Phenomenology*, is not elevated above phenomenological reality, but rather dialectically related to it.[53]

Zizek's concept of parallax similarly understands the relationship between subject and object as mediated. The subject's perspective is inscribed in the object itself, and not merely a subjective appearance of the thing itself. In the case of judgment, I argue below that art is not judged as an external thing-in-itself by reflection as Kant understood, but rather is, in a sense, constituted by a form of what I will call a parallax judgment; a judgment that is neither a subjective, nor objective judgment, but rather a structural mediation of the two.

The territory that covers the site of art or art structure does not begin as one might expect with Installation art and Site-specific art in the wake of Minimalism in the 1960's, despite the emphasis on site involved in both these categories of art. These art developments are but manifest examples of a structural problem already present, or one that can be located retroactively in the analogous theoretical problems engaged by German Idealism in the later 18th century in the formalism of Immanuel Kant, and in the reaction to it by G.W.F. Hegel.[54] Kant's *Critique of Judgment* (1790), in particular, and his critical project in general, engage with place or site as a problem between a subject and an object to which the subject has access only through experience organised by a set of categories; a mediated experience, and not

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[53] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977. On the contrary, Hegel argues that 'it is in the life of the people or nation that the Notion of self-conscious reason's actualisation...has its complete reality.' Hegel, p. 212.

[54] The French philosopher, Jacques Ranciere, against postmodern orthodoxy, also locates what he refers to as an 'aesthetic revolution' in Romanticism and German Idealism. See J. Ranciere, The Aesthetic Revolution and Its Outcomes: Employments of Autonomy and Heteronomy, *New Left Review*, 14, March-April, 2002. Ranciere is quite right to argue that 'the aesthetic revolution is an extension to infinity of the realm of language', and that 'paintings are everywhere'; but quite wrong to conclude from this linguistic analogy, that '[t]his implies a great anonymisation of the beautiful'. In fact, as the thesis demonstrates, it implies the exact opposite. See J. Ranciere, Politics and Aesthetics, An Interview, *Angelaki, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Volume 8, Number 2, August 2003, p. 205.

an immediate cognition of the object in itself. What is most revolutionary about Kant's epistemology, at least in the light of subsequent theory, is his implied question which shifts the emphasis from, to paraphrase, 'What can we know' to, 'What must I not know' (the thing-in-itself or Real in Jacques Lacan's language) in order that the 'I' or the subject of apperception be constituted as such.

In other words, the autonomy of the subject – it's very Being – is dependent on the opposition to the object; as what the subject is not. Kant creates a limit to knowledge – that of experience – which does not simply deny access to the thing beyond the categories he constructs, but rather, the thesis insists, actually produces this beyond as an absence or negative substance which instantiates both an anxiety in the subject, and a desire for what might exceed those limits.[55] Kant is significant in terms of the withdrawal from representational realism as it developed in the later part of the 19th Century and beyond, by insisting 'in all beautiful art the essential thing is form, which is purposive as regards our observation and judgment', that is, it does not serve an actual purpose or end, or if it does serve such an end, the finite, Kantian subject, can never know this.[56] This mere purposive, formal art, freed aesthetics from a duty to represent nature; to function merely as a window onto the outside, and thus allowed the purpose or function of art – to reproduce a copy of nature – to be

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[55] While in many respects how I interpret Kant is to be found in Slavoj Zizek's reading of Jacques Lacan's Real and his notion of *objet petit a* or the Real as object of anxiety and the object small a as an object of desire brought about through the castrating affects of the signifier or the subject's entry into the symbolic field or subjection to the law; chapter 1 draws on this in relation to a certain 'fear' of, and drive toward, the outside of the art institution to which the avant-garde appealed. Other chapters understand the missing element as a way of drawing attention to the otherwise ordinary object. I also emphasise the intimate externality expressed by Lacan by referring to Kant's 'in-itself' in terms of what I call an 'in-self', or what is internal to the subject in being external. This interpretation is at play in much of what the thesis aims to achieve. See S. Zizek, especially *Tarrying With the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1993.
[56] E. Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, New York, Prometheus Books, 2000, p. 214.

replaced with a merely purposive suggestion. Autonomous art is the result.[57] In a 'product of beautiful art' Kant argued, 'we must become conscious that it is art and *not* nature'.[58] Making the a finer point Kant adds 'Nature is beautiful because it looks like Art; and Art can only be called beautiful *if we are conscious of it as Art* while yet it looks like Nature.'[59] A mere 'purposive' art ultimately allows for art's withdrawal from an assumed objective realism and the development of its own autonomous field.[60] As the philosopher, Paul Crowther put it, it is 'this very absence of external determinants which enables Kant to establish the aesthetic judgment's purity'.[61]

Echoing Crowther, Rodolphe Gasche argues that while 'aesthetic theories of the Eighteenth century up to Kant focused on the 'beautiful of nature', these reflections 'become[] irrelevant in aesthetic reflection after Kant'. [62] For Kant, the beautiful in nature was superior to that of art because art was compromised by the conceptual intentions of the artist, whereas Hegel praised the conceptual in art, elevating it above nature as 'an address to the responsive breast'.[63] Hegel makes the point that 'commonplace reality' or the 'matter of everyday life' assumed as 'objective' should be questioned by art.[64] He argues that 'the aim of art is precisely to strip off the matter of everyday life and its mode of appearance, and by spiritual

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[57] I am not suggesting that Kant is the sole explanation for the development of autonomy or abstract art. Certainly the so-called age of the machine had some effect on the changes that undertook art art this time.

[58] Kant, p. 187. My emphasis.

[59] Kant. I emphasise this passage because of the importance of the relationship between judgment and the purposive character of art, including art today.

[60] Kant, p. 14.

[61] P. Crowther, Kant and Greenberg's Varieties of Aesthetic Formalism, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Volume, 42, Number 4, Summer, 1984, p. 442.

[62] R. Gasche, The Theory of Natural Beauty and its Evil Star: Kant, Hegel, Adorno, *Research and Phenomenology*, Volume 32, 2002, p. 104.

[63] G.W.F. Hegel, *Lecture On Fine Art*, Volume 1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, p.71.

[64] ,Hegel, p. 289.

activity from within, bring out only what is absolutely rational'.[65]   Objective nature

as missing or absent from formalist autonomy is not excluded simply in a positive

sense but rather the exclusion is constitutive of the positive reception of the work *as

art* and *not* of nature.[66] The relationship between nature and art is dialectical. Hegel

argues, in 'relation to the ideal of nature' that the 'pictorial and external side' is no

more necessary than the 'inherently solid content' or substance of nature itself, and

that the 'interpenetration' of each side 'brings us to the relation between nature and

the ideal artistic representation.'[67]

The Quattrocento theorist, Leon Battista Alberti, set the scene for painting

through the Renaissance when he wrote 'on the surface on which I am going to paint,

I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window

through which the subject to be painted is seen'.[68]   The purpose that art represent the

world of nature, an outside location seen through the Albertian window, is re*placed*

in post-Kantian aesthetics by a purpose that insists what is painted take place as art,

and 'not the matter of sensation'.[69] The purpose of painting is no longer about

identifying the external scene with the representation; nor the 'remembered shapes'

of representational schemata as the influential German art theorist, Ernst Gombrich

assumed.[70] In the modern period, at around the time Gombrich identifies with the

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[65] Hegel. This understanding of Hegel requires supplementation. The rational might be the real, but the two are not external to one another but rather immanent; a relation of 'concrete universality'. He argues 'art has the task of presenting the Idea to immediate perception in a sensuous shape and *not* in the form of thinking and pure spirituality as such'. Hegel, p. 72.
[66] Interestingly, Kant, in his earlier philosophy hints at Hegelian position: 'For negative magnitudes are not negations of magnitudes…but something truly positive in itself, albeit something opposed to the positive magnitude.' See,E. Kant, 'Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy', *Immanuel Kant, Theoretical Philosophy, 1755 – 1770*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p.169.
[67] Hegel, p. 160.
[68] L. B. Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, London, Phaidon, 1972, p. 55.
[69] Kant, p. 214.
[70] E. H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*, London, Phaidon, 1972, p. 134.

end of the Neo-Platonism in art, around 1850, the problem of place or site comes to the fore and the representational model, however conceived, begins to come into conflict with the world presumed to lie outside, or beyond it. As even Gombrich admits, the 'constant willingness to correct and revise' the representation against a presumed truth, begins to be felt increasingly at the surface of the canvas.[71]

However, novelty, or a 'constant willingness to correct and revise' was turned toward art itself as a site, as a place internal to the structure of art, and the 'tendency of our minds to classify and register our experience in terms of the known' became a 'tendency of our minds' to experience the 'known' in terms of what was *not* known, and the artist begins to withdraw the 'known', or the natural world, from painting. Nicholas Flynn has suggested that the English Romantic painter, J. W. M. Turner's works from the 1840s on displayed a 'lack of finish' and that this lack is 'the sign of a search for the validity of the exercise of painting as such.'[72] In fact, Flynn makes the broader claim that with Turner's 'paintings from the 1840s the point cannot be the question as to their state of finish, which presumes a canon and its exclusions, but might be, instead, in seeing the consistency of the unfinished assume the status of a project that is whole' and that the paintings of this 'project' involve a 'lack [that] is its end, perfect in its imperfection.'[73]

This use of the unfinished painting at the origins of modernism is not confined to Turner, but is inherent to modernist painting in general, which does however 'presume a canon and its exclusions' as Flynn put it. Modern painting, the thesis contends, involves a dialectic between expectation and withdrawal of

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[71] Gombrich, p. 145.
[72] N. Flynn, The Last Modern Painting, *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1997, p.17.
[73] Flynn.

expectation. With the withdrawal of what was expected of art – that is, represent the outside world –modern painting draws the, often negative, attention of the viewing public whose taste is being tested or assaulted but such a withdrawal. The withdrawal of expectation in art attracts the interest from the viewer along with either trepidation, or the desire to interpret the work depending on the degree to which the art withdraws from expectation. As Gombrich suggested 'We notice only when we look *for* something, and we look when our attention is aroused by some disequilibrium, a difference between our expectation and the coming message.'[74] Expectation is, to varying degrees, withdrawn or denied in modernist art. The avant-garde represents a greater degree of withdrawal of expectation than modernist painting. Art from the 'beginning' of modernism involves the withdrawal of expectation through the omission of conventional elements thought necessary to tradition, and as a result of this withdrawal, and the subsequent development of autonomy, the avant-garde emerges.

Autonomy goes hand in hand with the withdrawal of functionality in so far as autonomous painting, and its dialectical other, the avant-garde, evoke this withdrawal of function or purpose through the presentation of novelty; degrees of abandonments and omission of expected 'content' match degrees of *avant-gardeness*. In the case of painting, the focus of the thesis, the comparison between the paint on canvas and the depicted scene, shifts to a comparison between different expectations of painting itself. Novelty or the new in art, only registers as new, and as art, because the assumed function of art, or at least an assumed part of that function that the established conventions had endorsed, has been withdrawn or omitted from art,

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[74] Gombrich, p. 148.

giving the presentation a degree of novelty. The interest drawn to a painting in the modern period is not due to any positive qualities displayed by the painting, but rather the comparison of those qualities with what was omitted from the painting, with what was expected by the public when viewing a modernist canvas. Thus the dialectic between expected 'content' and presented 'content' generates an aesthetic response, rather than a particular or positive content in isolation creating such a response. The first omission or withdrawal is from the world beyond the canvas plane. Painting becomes autonomous, and once the function of art – to represent the outside world – is abandoned, the following withdrawals must take place within the art structure itself, since its referent becomes internal to art itself, and the world, once presumed to be art's referent is left behind as an empty void. Under these conditions, the purpose of art, from the late 19th Century and the early 20th Century, through to the 21st Century, becomes nothing more than so many attempts to stand in for that void; to be art, to take place as art, and to register the new within a field of different objects, ideas and gestures as significant contributors to the art structure. To understand how the withdrawal produces the art structure and the void or empty place once presumed to be a stable, fixed world the artist should faithfully represent, the introduction will now turn to the theoretical frame of Kantian and Hegelian theory.

Kant's seminal contribution, his so called Copernican revolution, made the thing-in-itself beyond its mere appearance, an object of fear and/or desire; something to be accessed or avoided only through the limiting or mediating veil of the categories.[75] He divorced judgment from correspondence between a representation

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[75] Kant's Copernican turn is generally acknowledged as an emphasis on the subjective perspective at the expense of the objective. However, Kant's Copernican analogy in curious in so far as Copernicus

and objective nature by arguing that a 'judgment of taste is wholly independent of the concept of perfection' or the correspondence between purposive nature and the imposition of a determinate or objective purpose.[76] Hegel's seminal contribution was to recognise that the thing-in-itself beyond the categories was in fact the product of dialectic itself, not an object to be ontologically presupposed at the outset.[77] If Kant questioned the 'nature' of representations of nature itself, understanding them as our representations and not the real state of things, he still held to the view that the subject first must have immediate contact with intuitions that are only then processed via representations of the understanding. Hegel, on the contrary, never presumes that beyond the representations there is an immediate realm of intuition but rather representation and represented matter are dialectically mediated from the outset; always already part of the Notion's content.[78] Representations for Hegel are mediated by the dialectical process of thought itself, not the representation of an immediate exposure to intuitions. Art and representational truth undergo an analogous shift in perspective beginning in late Romanticism. Art, within the Kantian context exhibits a 'mere form of purposiveness' rather than present an objective purpose.[79] Beauty, in the present context, would relate to 'dependent'

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emphasised the insignificance of the subject or emphasis on geocentricism through his adoption of the heliocentric perspective. The interdependence of the two is one of perspective. Kant uses Copernicus to reverse his perspective, to see it in paralax.

[76] E. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing, 1987, p. 73.

[77] Hegel's position on the thing-in-itself is developed quite early in his systematic work. For example, as early as *Faith and Knowledge* he claims that the 'In-itself of the empirical consciousness is Reason itself'. See G.W.F Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1977, p. 73.

[78] Hegel also develops Kant's insight into 'productive imagination' through a productive understanding.

[79] Kant, p.66. In the context of this thesis, Kant's 'purpose' actually serves a purpose as a form of structure that both determines and is determined by the objects taking place as art through judgment. Here Kant's analogy is with the formal system of language. Art is a formal communication of a feeling that is, like language, understood to have a general audience. Below it is argued that the mere 'purposive' 'bridge' between the presentation of the object and its realisation as art, initiates the judgmental response that locates the object that displays a mere purposiveness, as an object of purpose or art; an object that 'means' art.

beauty, as much as 'free beauty' as Kant understood these terms.[80] Dependent

beauty is not completely free for Kant because it presupposes a 'concept of what the

[object] is meant to be.'[81] However, within the context of the art structure, a

'dependent beauty' would presuppose a structure that determined it to have meaning,

but not specify what the specific content of that meaning would be, (except that the

thing put forward for consideration, intends to be considered art). 'Free beauty' (not

determined by concepts), also attends the aesthetic response in so far as the specific

concept (to become art) is itself not determined at the outset because anything can

potentially become art. Moreover, the 'pleasure' that attends beauty does not

necessarily attend the 'dependent', purposive object, because displeasure or

displeasure is just as likely to determine the thing's being as art. Whereas Kant

denied a 'dialectic of taste', suggesting that only a 'dialectic of the critique of taste'

was possible – because we all have our own opinions about quality – the thesis

insists that a dialectic of 'taste', or at least a dialectic of contradictory judgments,

does in fact occur.[82] The resolution to any conflicts of judgment occurs structurally

because it is the judgment that is constitutive, not merely reflective, of the formal

qualities of the object. Equally, the 'feelings' that arise from the aesthetic, are not

merely subjective, but are, or will have been, the objective categorisation of the

object as an object of art, and not some other thing.

Art is understood by Kant to be autonomous, and subject to a mere reflective,

formal aesthetic judgment, a subjective response to the object, and so leaves open, a

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[80] Kant, pp. 76-78.

[81] Kant, p. 76. Since the 'totality' of the art structure is presupposed but not given, the judgment does not correspond to a determinate concept as such but only judges what *will have been* determinate; thus beauty is free despite the dependence on the art structure. For a complex analysis of dependent beauty see, R. Wicks, 'Dependent Beauty as the Appreciation of Teleological Style', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Volume 55, Number 4, Fall, 1997.

[82] Kant, p.209.

gap between the subject and object in the form of a purposive bridge. For Hegel on the contrary, we can only learn to swim whilst in the water; we are already within the bounds of reason when we seek to, or deny the possibility of, access to the object itself. The concept of art structure introduced in this thesis draws on the critique of Kant undertaken by Hegel's systematic theory. Hegel found a series of dualisms in the Kantian system that limited its systematic approach to knowledge: subject and object, sensibility and understanding, intuition and concept, appearance and thing-in-itself.

Kantian critical thought, while aspiring to autonomy, was not sufficiently autonomous as far as Hegel was concerned, and a truly systematic approach without presuppositions was required; an immanent system of internal, dialectical relations. Kant's third critique, *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) was the text that presented Hegel with the starting point to close the system and unite the dualisms he saw harboured in Kantian thought. The dualism of nature and freedom, for instance, required more than a mere purposive or regulative bridge. Kant's idea of a constitutive use of reason, an idea he ultimately rejected, provided Hegel with the theoretical tool to close the system. Kant's 'transcendental dialectic' in particular opens up the path to the Hegel's speculative reason. The Hegel scholar, Allen Hance has observed, what 'Hegel calls dialectic bears an important similarity to the Kantian conception of reflective judgment.'[83] Hance goes on to argue 'The structural similarity between reflective judgment and dialectical reason is that both attempt to

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[83] A. Hance, The Art of Nature: Hegel and the Critique of Judgment, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Volume 6, Number 1, 1998, p.40.

adduce the whole that enables one to contextualize and so make sense of an isolated part (or set of parts) whose significance in unclear.'[84]

Hegel introduces his concept or 'concrete universal' as a way of introducing a self-moving system of 'self-posited particulars' or 'inwardly articulated' differential parts.[85] Concrete universals are 'not merely mental entities but real structures in the world' according to Hance.[86] Hegel takes Kant's extrinsic purposiveness and immanently links it to purpose through the Concept which involves 'thought determinations' which absolutely inhere in material particulars.[87] Hegel's immanent relationship between thought and the material world allows for the necessary connection or constitutive relationship between thought and the objects of thought. As Hance argues, 'Hegel refuses to make a distinction between the structures of thinking and that which is thought about.'[88] The related position the thesis takes is that the art structure functions analogously to the Hegelian system of thought determinations as structurally organised concrete particulars informed by judgment: Kant's merely reflective judgment is replaced with an Hegelian-style constitutive judgment.[89] The judgment is merely subjective or regulative, but retroactively it turns out to be the actual state of things, or constitutive of the object as an art object and not some other object. This form of judgment is understood in the thesis as a parallax judgment.

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[84] Hance.
[85] Hance, p. 50.
[86] Hance.
[87] Hance. This view is opposed to the notion of Absolute Spirit as a rational telos swallowing particularity as it moves inexorably toward its end.
[88] Hance, p. 53.
[89] Hegel never formulated such a judgment as the thesis employs. It is a coinage of the thesis which results from an extrapolation of the "spirit" of Hegel rather than the "letter" of his thought.

Subject and object (including the art object) are dialectically mediated: we do not think about objects as independent things, or things-in-themselves, but rather objects are the objects of thought and judgment; offering both the possibility of thought, judgment and it's limits.[90] The Kantian form of judgment 'this is beautiful' does not, according to Hegel, sufficiently distinguish between judgments of nature and judgments of art, a division Hegel found unsatisfactory in that it did not fully understand that the object of judgment, if it is to be a judgment of *art*[91], is a judgment delivered by a subject regarding a 'product of human activity' and 'is no natural product'.[92]

Analogously, the thesis submits that the site of art shifts from an assumed correspondence between representation and natural referent, to the formal representation of nature as external, and to a degree, foreign to the human mind – since it represents a mere 'purposiveness' (Kantian) – to a problem internal to art, an immanent system or constitutive structure of related elements analogous to the system Hegel understood as the self-moving realm of Reason.[93] However, the thesis parts with most Hegelian positions in regard to art in that the relation between form and content: the degree of adequacy between the forms of Spirit and the content able

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[90] Contra Kant, Hegel states 'the Absolute method, on the contrary, does not behave like external reflection but takes the determinate element from its own subject matter'. See G.W.F Hegel, *Science of Logic*, New Jersey, Humanities Press International, 1996, p. 830.

[91] This thesis employs the use of italics at various locations and in a number of ways. At times it will be used simply to emphasise a certain word or group of words as being of particular importance. At other times, it will be to make a point as in the use of italics above. Here, the use is to indicate that art is to be understood, not as simply another category but as *the* category or place in which certain objects we call art are found and to which our judgments are directed. 'Nature' would not be simply represented *by* art but rather *as* art. I develop these uses throughout the text in line with recent critical and continental theory of subject –object relations, and theories of language.

[92] G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures in Aesthetics*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 1988, p.25.

[93] Lest the reader armed with the – not entirely incorrect – understanding of Hegel as a pan-logicist; a Hegel as either the arrogant theorist of Absolute Spirit marching forward in time swallowing every particular in its path, or the dangerous embrace of 'intellectual intuition', as the harbinger of terror etc. the name 'Hegel' referred to here is a Hegel largely re-interpreted by the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan; the American Hegel Scholar, Robert Pippin; and the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Zizek.

to represent that form at a given historical moment; is not the Hegel worth appealing to in understanding the development of modern art undertaken by the thesis.[94] Rather, the thesis will argue, it is the relationship between judgment and the constitutive coming into being as art (and in particular, painting), through successive, constitutive parallax judgments.

The thesis argues that objects, be they paintings or sculptural objects, put forward for consideration as art by someone referred to as an artist, have the unstated purpose that they take place as art, and not function as ordinary objects. However, to do so, even the most obvious example of autonomous painting works in dialectical relationship to its Other, within the place it occupies in the art structure against other art objects, but equally, objects considered not art, or considered as part of life.[95] Indeed, it will be argued that the dialectic between these two: function and non-function, art and non-art, autonomy and the avant-garde, is at the 'heart' of both avant-garde acts and autonomous art. This correspondence between art and ordinary objects does not arise because art is just part of life or finally conceptually clear about its purpose, (Arthur Danto's Hegelian interpretation), but rather because ordinary life and art are dialectically and structurally related, each signifying in relation to the Other. This is to understand how purpose (to be art) and

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[94] The most prominent exponent of this form of Hegelianism in art theory is that of the American philosopher, Arthur Danto who employs Hegel's teleology to end art, but overlooks the inconvenient fact that for Hegel, art's self understanding arrived in Classical Greece, long before Danto read the American Pop artist, Andy Warhol, as having ended art through a conceptual self-awareness of art's end, in Warhol's Brillo Boxes (1964). See A. Danto, The End of Art, in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986. The point the thesis would make in relation to Warhol's everyday objects as art, is that art is autonomous but shares content with ordinary objects including the bare materials of making such as supports and brushes, paints etcs. Not because art finally knows itself conceptually or that art is just part of life but rather, that anything can become art if it occupies a place in what I refer to as an art structure.

[95] The capitalisation of the word Other indicates the dialectical use of the other by the thesis. The thesis understands Other, not in a positive sense of a separate thing, but as an Other that impacts on the object with which it is associated in the structure.

purposiveness (to indicate the potential to be art) are dialectically related: an object is presented in such a way that its immediate purpose (an chair to sit on for instance) is split into two and the purpose is set in motion as a becoming object (purposiveness) which indicates, analogously to Hegel's 'being-for-self', a being-for-art; or structural purpose.[96]

Judgment understood as a parallax view, brings this becoming into the place of being within the art structure by dividing the One into art/not-art or art/life. The One can be viewed parallactically as two because the split between the two, is to be understood as a 'split between the One and the empty place of the signifier', thus allowing any number of substitutions to take place structurally as art.[97] The thesis understands by the term "art structure", a network of signifying elements or the 'totality of necessary differences in art' as Hegel might have put it.[98] This structure involves an elaboration of the basic insight of the French structural linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure. For Saussure, the symbolic realm of language does not refer to nature or the thing-in-itself, but to other units of meaning in the structure.[99] There is, Saussure contends, no natural correspondence between the sign and the referent in nature. Furthermore, he argues that the units of meaning themselves have no natural relationship to each other but are rather arbitrarily connected, and negatively associated: "dog" is *not cat*, rather than having a positive substantial quality of its own. Likewise, the thesis argues that from the point of withdrawal of art from nature and the representational system in the late 19th and early 20th century, in movements such as Romanticism, Impressionism and post-impressionism, and Cubism, to name

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[96] G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, New Jersey, Humanites Presss International, 1996.
[97] Zizek, p. 38.
[98] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, p. 73. Saussure would of course object to the assertion of necessity, favouring arbitrary associations.
[99] F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, London, Fontana Press, 1974.

the most salient examples, art's once presumed correspondence with nature and the world beyond the canvas, comes under review through art.

However, Saussure leaves no place for the Real or thing-in-itself, beyond the word. On the contrary, he understands the thing to be 'murdered' by the word which replaced the world as an in-itself with the network of linguistic relations.[100] The thesis adopts an analogous structure to Saussure's except that in place of words, are examples of art. More importantly, the Real that is occluded in Saussure's theory is understood to have a role in the structure of art as the gap between two places in the structure, and between two judgments. A parallax judgment understands the Real as an empty void that nevertheless has an impact of the use of judgment.[101] After the withdrawal of painting from representational realism and the use of one-point perspective, the Real or world beyond the representation, becomes a parallax perspective, or the gap between different objects and artistic acts that attempt to stand in for art itself, that attempt to find a place in the structure.

Any object, even the most avant-garde anti-art assault on tradition, can take place as art if viewed from a certain perspective. That place is not the outside, or life as it is lived, but rather the general structure of art.[102] And it is only through the productive or constitutive capacity of judgment, rather than a mere reflective form of judgment that such objects take place as art, that they enter the site or location of art; that they find a place in the art structure. When the "viewer" is confronted by a "non-art" object, the rejection often meeting the objects of avant-garde art for

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[100] P. Schwenger, Words and the Murder of the Thing, *Critical Enquiry*, Volume 28, Number 1, Autumn, 2001, pp. 99-113.

[101] I am indebted to Slavoj Zizek's understanding of parallax here also. However I adapt as much as adopt Zizek's theory of parallax.

[102] This structure of art accounts for the conflict between the two positions on art: autonomy and avant-garde. It does so in a way analogous to the way Hegel's system accounts for the dialectical conflict between philosophic opposition, such as Rationalism and Empiricism.

example – "that is not art" or "that is rubbish" – involves a division of the One object into Two: the ordinary non-art object and the place where "real art" is *thought* to reside as above or beyond the mundane.[103]

With the withdrawal of nature considered a thing-in-itself, the assumption of an actual 'real' art object as opposed to a fraudulent pretender, is what divides the one object and convinces the judge of that object that it either does or does not compare with what the judge or "viewer" expects to find when presented with an object claiming to occupy the place of art. This is the point of all art after the beginning of modern art, to see the ordinary, material thing as, at the same time, an art thing; to see the one thing as two; to deliver a parallax judgment. The viewer is no longer a pre-modernist viewer of one-point perspective, peering into the depths of the scene but rather a parallax viewer dividing the one thing into two. The way these objects are 'seen' or rather judged, determines how they take place in the structure. The thesis argues, through the concept of parallax, that the one object is 'seen' as art/life or split between the two places. More precisely, the One thing is 'seen' as Two: as art/life.

In chapter 1: The Avant-Garde and the Parallax of Art and Life, the thesis examines the art and life debate in the emergence of the avant-gardes on the 1910s to 1930s, and, to a lesser degree, the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s to 1970s. Peter Bürger's Hegelio-Marxist thesis argues that the aim of the historical avant-gardes was to destroy, transform, or create a new life praxis through art; or at least escape art-institutional autonomy and enter life. The neo-avant-garde fail to enter life, according to Bürger, because they achieve no more than a 'false sublation' of art and

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[103] Zupancic.

life represented in the works of Andy Warhol where 'life' is considered as commerce. The point the thesis makes is that art and life are the One; split into Two through a perspective taken on the one object or act; a parallax perspective or judgment. In this way the 'false sublation' that represents a problem for the avant-garde according to Bürger is always already present in art, and includes its own solution. Art is life seen in parallax.

The acts of the avant-garde are initially met with public hostility. The public do not so much reject the freedom offered to them by the cultural elite, but rather, don't understand what is presented to them. The new is unknown, foreign, and cannot *but* be rejected when compared with tradition, or what *is* known, or better, understood as art. The thesis argues that the objects of the avant-garde at first seem out of place or *unheimlich*, lacking a home, as Freud might have put it. They find their place as art; a place in the art structure because the relationship between rejection and acceptance is dialectical or structural. A judgment (understood as a parallax judgment) in the form of a rejection – as much as in the form of an acceptance or praise – can locate an otherwise homeless or foreign object within the art structure. Rejection and acceptance as judgments, plays a constitutive (Hegelian) role in the thing becoming art.

Chapter 2: A Tale of Two Avant-Gardes, examines another, alternative avant-garde, that is considered as structurally opposite that of Peter Bürger's avant-garde artists. Clement Greenberg's avant-garde includes formalist abstraction, works that are autonomous or removed from social and political function. I argue that Greenberg's avant-garde could be elevated only at the expense of this other (originally unacknowledged) avant-garde. The chapter demonstrates that Greenberg was at

pains to keep life at a distance by emphasising what was specific to each medium. For painting, this was the flatness of the canvas. However this specificity came at a cost because there was only so much aesthetic territory to explore before what Thierry de Duve calls the 'blank canvas' surfaced as the only remaining territory.[104] As de Duve also notes the monochromatic surface that stood between formalist painting and the readymades of Duchamp was all that stood between painting and an ordinary canvas. Here art and life nearly meet in the blank canvas. They never met of course because even a blank canvas presented as art is a blank canvas *as* art. Only structurally do they meet, as the one thing viewed in parallax.

The point the thesis makes in the context of chapter 2 is twofold: the passage from early modernist painting to the monochrome was not the result of rejecting the inessential, as Greenberg supposed, but like the other avant-garde, the *essential* , or what was considered as basic to the medium of painting, was rejected: representational content, one-point perspective, the use of craft skills, expressive content, even paint itself. The other point the thesis makes is that these rejections, or abandonment, like the rejections of Peter Bürger's avant-garde, generated interest in the paintings. Interest leads to judgment which leads to a place in the art structure. The difference between the two was, however, significant. Peter Bürger's avant-garde embraced –if largely unconsciously – the becoming general of art as a place into which anything could *potentially* be placed. The modernist painting of Greenberg, while holding onto specificity, relied on incremental or incidental abandonments from within the medium itself, in order to gain the public's interest and therefore their judgment.

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[104] T. de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998.

In chapter 3: Minimal Difference: Painting, Object, Place, this thesis engages with an account of Minimalism that understands Minimal art to present an immediate, or unmediated immersion in some life situation; or the independence of the literal, material object outside the modernist painting episode. The chapter agues instead that Minimal art cannot be understood in isolation from the modernist account given by Greenberg. The thesis argues, it is evident in much of the writing and theorising undertaken by the Minimalists themselves – when reading between the lines or looking from another perspective – that Minimal art had more than a passing interest in the past itself. Even in the European context, the seminal artists such as the B.M.P.T. group (Daniel Buren; Olivier Mosset, Michel Parmentier and Niele Toroni); demonstrate a negative attitude toward the formal and compositional ambitions of modern, especially European painting.[105]

This negativity found in both the Minimalists of American art, and the B.M.P.T. group of France, places art in a dialectical relation to what is rejected. Such a negative dialectic compromises the often stated aims of artists of this time that they were engaged in destroying European composition or autonomy more generally. The thesis also examines the fact that much of the rejections or repudiations of these two groups are couched in terms not dissimilar to the abandonments of the modernists, thus further linking them dialectically to their adversary.[106]

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[105] The position taken here, that analogous structural conditions appeared in Europe, despite the literal absence of Clement Greenberg, is supported by the recent exhibition curated by one of the B.M.P.T group, Olivier Mosset, entitled: Before the End (The Last Painting Show) which includes many monochromatic works from the same period as the monochromatic paintings of the Americans (the mid to late 1960's). This show includes artists from France, Holland, America, and Australia, making the problem of the 'end' of painting a truly international one.

[106] The dialectical relationship between the modernists and the post-war artists is discussed in chapter 3.

However, in the context of the thesis in general, what is to be understood is the relationship between site and art in general following both the early developments in modern art after realism, and the developments out of Minimalism. Ultimately, the thesis argues that the two terms constitute one act: the aim of Installation or Site-Specific art that develop out of the concerns with site demonstrated in Minimal art, is to install an object or group of objects in a specific site – be it the gallery, or a space 'outside' the gallery such as a rural field, an Urban centre, or a suburban space. It is however, crucial to understand this literal act of installation aims at the more general site of the art structure; that the reception of the installation and the act of installing an object to be sited as art is mediated by the history of art and not to be understood as an immediate embeddedness, or an immediate experience of a sited object or 'theatrical' situation.[107]

Chapter 4: The Dialectics of Place: Installation, Site-Specific, and Outside Art, undertakes a critique of the notion of directly embedding an object or range of objects in a specific site, or space. What is offered instead is a further elaboration of the analogy with the linguistic structure.[108] The idea of Site-Specific art is, in the first instance, to draw attention to the actual physical qualities of site in which the object is embedded, and in addition, to draw attention to elements overlooked or suppressed by minimal art's seeming neutrality.[109] Some of these elements include politics, gender, and issues of colonisation; issues that were not part of the phenomenological emphasis of early Site-Specific art. More recent examples of Site-Specific art go to these issues making them part of, or even the point of, the

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[107] The term 'theatrical' refers to the criticism of Michael Fried which is discussed in chapter 3.

[108] The concept of art structure Is discussed below and throughout the thesis.

[109] Anna C. Chave gave an early account of the question of neutrality of Minimalism where she aligned Minimalism with the industrial-military (even Nazi) complex. See A.C. Chave, Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power, *Arts Magazine*, January, 1990.

art.[110] Artists such as Rene Green, Mark Dion and Andria Frazer are exemplars of this later site work.

However, the point the thesis makes is that over and above specific sites and particular meanings or contents of works the art structure is operational and that the actual site is the art site itself. Site-Specific art is neither possible without both the ground broke by Minimalism, the early avant-garde assaults on modernist autonomy, and the other itself, that is, autonomous art that stakes out its own specific site in contradistinction from these other sites or places within the general site of art or art structure. It is argued that the notion of site, or what the thesis determines as place; that is the place in the art structure, has been the 'hidden' issue of the entire episode of formalism and autonomy verses anti-institutional, or avant-gardist art from the mid 19th century to today. This is not incidental and something to be swept aside with a more rigorous form of praxis or a more accurate empirical account of the 'facts', but rather something inherent to the becoming reflexive of modern art; to its withdrawal from nature and the representation of nature.

Chapter 5: The Wall of Language: Wall/Painting in Parallax, explores the recent development of what is here understood as the practice of painting "directly" onto the actual gallery wall or other, "non-conventional" surface. This practice, while having its beginnings in the late 1960s, in the post Minimalist milieu, has gained increasing attention in recent years, so much so that a marginal "genre" is now an international practice. The thesis explores those practices where the wall is integral to the work and not a mere surface to be covered and ignored by the artist.

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[110] Miwon Kwon divides Site-Specific art into early and later examples where many of these broader issues where they pertain to site are addressed in some detail. See M. Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2002.

The thesis argues that this practice should be referred to as 'Wall Painting' and not Installation or Site-Specific art, much less so, a mural, in that the history of modernist painting, in particular, it's demise or abandonment, are at the centre of this practice, permitting its registration as art. With the removal of painting from the wall and art in general, to occupy three-dimensional space, the thesis argues, something like Wall Painting becomes a possibility since the wall that merely held the painting, the wall as a physical structure, became structurally available as an art arena or site. The thesis explores the difference between an ordinary wall painted as "life" and one painted as art. The difference between the two, it is argued below, depends on our ability to judge the difference when optically they may be indistinguishable. This is possible because the 'life wall' occupies a different place in the structure than does an 'art wall', and that a parallax judgment allows the viewer to 'see' or understand the one wall as two, art/life.

The intention of the thesis is to put forward an original account of the development of modern art away from representational realism and toward an art structure by engaging the art and life debate. In doing so it introduces an original account of a structural theory of art, and new interpretation of the role of aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic judgment is understood to play the role of constituting a place in the structure of art for the objects that make up the disparate and diverse field that is modern art. This original account is not an *ex nihilo* invention, but rather, an extrapolation and critical development of the work of others such as artists, critics and theorists of art, seeing each in parallax. The thesis, introduces into the context of art, the concept of parallax judgment, or new perspectival view. This perspectival view involves a way of seeing the one thing as two: art/life. Parallax judgment is

deployed in the thesis to solve a number of outstanding problems in 20th Century art and criticism. Its primary aim is to explain how the two categories of art and life form a antinomic or parallax relation, and that judgment, far from being redundant or a mere subjective point of view having no connection with the objective state of things, is what determines that an ordinary article of life and an autonomous or ideal representative of art, are one and the same thing seen in parallax.

Literature Review

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999

Kant constructed a system of thought aimed to deal with the legacy of Descartes' doubt; to answer the question as to the validity or otherwise of Reason's capacity to know the world. But he also wrote his seminal text; his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1999), in response to the scepticism of the British empiricists: Hume, Locke, and Berkeley – to ultimately answer Hume's claim that our use of reason is built on nothing but experience and the habits of thinking. Descartes' doubt (rationalism) becomes Hume's scepticism (empiricism), which in turn provides Kant with a critical problem, a dialectical conflict to systematically resolve, since both positions – rationalism and empiricism, having diametrically opposed conclusions regarding the parameters of, and approach to, knowledge, cannot be correct. As a consequence of this situation, a critique of reason itself is called for.

Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1999) cuts a theoretical path between the extremes of rationalism and empiricism; bringing into his philosophical system, elements of both. His aim is to dispel doubt and to defend philosophy against scepticism. Kant realises, in a way his philosophical forbears didn't, that our reasoning is inseparable from the history of thought itself: we must submit the

history of Reason to critique.[111]   Kant is also responsible for the "discovery" of *synthetic* knowledge and the claim that we can have *synthetic a priori* knowledge, or knowledge that is not restricted to subject-predicate identity, but rather adds to what is already known.   This led Kant to ask the further question: what degree of metaphysical knowledge do such a priori claims contribute: do they shed light on questions involving the soul and God for instance?

His other great contribution relating to the above comments is his so-called 'Copernican turn' which focuses on the subjective aspect of thought rather than the assumption that thought gains direct access to the objective facts, that it 'reaches beyond the boundaries of experience' to produce metaphysical knowledge of how the world actually is; knowledge of 'things-in-themselves'.[112]   This is the limitation Kant's first critique placed on reason: thought must resign itself to the empirical realm of experience and abandon the metaphysical search for knowledge of things in themselves.   Thus nature in itself is accessed only via a set of categories and not directly through the exercise of Reason.   This subjective emphasis leaves Kant vulnerable to the scepticism opened up by Hume; scepticism his third critique, the *Critique of Judgment* (1987), will, to a certain degree, address.

Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1987

 If the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1999) denies access to the thing-in-itself outside the critical, subjective frame then Kant's so-called third *Critique*, the *Critique of*

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[111] However, it must be added that Kant does not elevate the historical in the way Hegel does. History, as a 'shape of reason', does not drive toward some ultimate reconciliation of subjective and objective points of view as it does in Hegel.

[112] E. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1987, p. 386.

Judgment (1987); his work on aesthetics, aims to create a formal bridge between the subjective and objective through an analysis of judgments of taste and teleological judgments. There is 'a middle term between Understanding and Reason' Kant states, and '[t]his is the judgment'.[113] Judgments of taste are merely subjective, or reflective: a harmonising of the faculties of imagination and understanding. And yet, according to Kant, they tend to allude to or indicate a universal assent, or an objective agreement with others.

As the Kantian scholar, Paul Guyer argues, it is the 'communicability of a mental state rather than the harmony of knowledge with its object which causes aesthetic pleasure' and therefore 'the conditions of both aesthetic response [as outlined in the *Critique of Pure Reason*] and aesthetic judgment [as outlined in the *Critique of Judgment*] are the same'.[114] However, this leaves the question of the apparent universal, objective validity of judgments unresolved since judgments issue from nothing more than a subjective feeling of pleasure, thus have no a priori proofs.

Judgments are not analytic but rather synthetic (the predicate is not contained in the subject) resulting from a mere formal synthesis of 'imagination' and 'understanding'; or the 'purposive attunement of the imagination with the power of concepts [understanding]. In this fashion the understanding is called upon to supply the imagination's synthesis of intuitive material with concepts.[115] Beauty cannot therefore be determined objectively by concepts. However, art is a form of dependent beauty insofar as it includes a purposive display of the artist's

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[113] Kant, p. 16.
[114] P. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Taste*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 31.
[115] Kant, p. 217.

intentions...we know that despite having a natural appearance, the presentation is in fact art.

The Kantian bridge between the subjective and the objective is only formal bridge, and as such, is not the product of a constitutive use of reason, and so leaves a level of doubt as to the certainty or truth of our cognitive and aesthetic judgments. In the *Critique of Judgment* Kant formulates a kind of guarantee to the 'antinomies of taste' or dialectical standoff in relation to contradictory or contrasting judgments by introducing a theory of a 'supersensible substratum' or noumenal ground that underpins our merely subjective, reflective judgments. The concept of the supersensible is Kant's way of guaranteeing a 'universal validity' to contradictory judgments.[116]

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977

According to Hegel, this subjectivism left the Kantian system exposed to the scepticism he aimed to avoid, and was therefore inadequate. Kant's critical system, his ideal for a self-sustaining, autonomous realm, was not systematic enough for Hegel. But rather than reject Kant, he adopted and extended his critical system, especially his dialectic, understanding that repudiation is not an option for a critical philosopher. One must 'tarry' with the history of thought, not choose sides in a conflict as if truth were independent and external.

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[116] Kant, p. 212.

Kant's initial focus on the subjective is critically addressed by Hegel's dialectical method (derived in part from Kant's own concept of dialectic) wherein the strengths of contrary positions held by the various philosophers in history (Hegel's so-called 'thesis/antithesis/synthesis' triad) or the 'universal negativity of differences' are developed into the new thesis via an *internal* synthesis or 'sublation' of opposites.[117] Kant's antinomies (the recognition of two seemingly contradictory positions, the validity of each upheld) gives Hegel the opening for his dialectical view of history.

Ultimately for Hegel objectivity is produced by the dialectical process through the internal historical development of reason; the '*dialectical unrest*' of consciousness.[118] Consciousness is not mere reflection of Things *out there*, independent of consciousness. Hegel argues that 'consciousness found the Thing to be like itself, and itself to be like a Thing; i.e. it is aware that it is *in itself* the objectively real world.'[119] Equally, the history of thought, as Hegel understands it, is not understood as something that occurs in isolation from thought or Reason but rather as a linguistic product generated internally by the dialectical action of thought itself. In his infamous phrase from the preface to the *Phenomenology* (1977) Hegel states 'the absolute' cannot be 'shot from a pistol'.[120] Contra Kant, Reason is always already in process; a historical 'shape [of] World-Spirit itself', or 'patterns of consciousness'; the immanent relation of thought to its own history as a relationship

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[117] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 39.
[118] Hegel, p. 124.
[119] Hegel, p. 211.
[120] Hegel, p. 16.

of subject and object, rather than external relationship of thought to a presupposed objectivity.[121]

Historically, Reason gets caught up in antinomies or the appearance of contradiction represented by different philosophical approaches such as Rationalism and Empiricism. For example, the universe is explained as both finite and infinite. We cannot know the 'thing-in-itself' as an objective fact; that is, the object in isolation from our actual attempts to know it, but rather those attempts to know the thing in itself or supersensible, are already reason's knowing itself as presented in a particular historical, rational shape. Positive knowledge, according to the *Phenomenology*, is not opposed to negative knowledge, but rather its dialectical counterpart. The thing-in-itself *is* known for Hegel, because it is nothing more than 'Spirit's' knowing itself at different historical moments; a knowing that culminates in 'Absolute knowing'.[122]

Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, London, Fontana, 1966

De Saussure's text, as a precursor to later developments in structuralism, anticipates structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss; the semiology of Roland Barthes; the Deconstruction of Jacques Derrida, and the post-structuralist feminism of Judith Butler, to name some of the seminal examples. However, Saussure, in the context of this thesis, arguably develops concepts nascent in Hegel's system whereby art is understood as a 'totality of necessary differences'.[123] Saussure's text outlines a formal signifying system of 'differential units of meaning' rather than a

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[121] Hegel, p.17.
[122] Hegel, p. 479.
[123] G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*: *Volume 1*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, p.73.

correspondence theory between sign and phenomena. Saussure insists on the 'arbitrary nature of the sign'; the fact that any particular sign for a particular object of nature, for instance, could be potentially replace by any other.[124] The sign system is divided by Saussure into three parts: signifier (sound), signified (meaning), and referent (thing referred to). He also divides linguistics into what he calls *La Langue*, or the entire system of language, and *Parole*, or the specific speech utterance that depends on that system.

Saussure's structural account of language emphasises the negative association between signifiers rather than the understanding of a positive, inherent connection between meaning and real-life referent. He states that 'in language there are only differences *without positive terms*.'[125] The connection between signifier – the word cat for instance, and the four-legged animal that sign indicates – is arbitrary rather than necessary or motivated. Saussure's structural theory is important in so far as he opens up linguistic theory to the possibility of a concept of art (itself a symbolic system) as an arbitrary set of differential relations between symbolic elements (works of art) lending each 'meaning' *as art* in an art structure. As an arbitrary system of differential units, any object can stand in for art. This is how Marcel Duchamp's readymade can become art; by occupying a place in such a differential art structure. Its semiotic meaning (the meaning of particular works) is not the issue but rather how the object or act, means art; how it attains a place in the art structure or *La Langue*. The last pair of concepts of Saussure that is of interest is his terms *synchronic*, or the system at a given historical time, and *diachronic*, or the historical development of language; the way it changes over time. Art, understood within

[124] F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, London, Fontana, 1966, p. 76.
[125] De Saussure, p. 120.

Saussure's theory is a structure that is both conditioned and determined by the synchronic state of art, but also the introduction of objects and acts into the system have a diachronic affect that adjusts or alters the synchronic state of the structure. Art therefore is determined by the structure, but equally, art determines the structure or context. Art determines its context as much as context determines the art.

Slavoj Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006

The Parallax View is Slavoj Zizek's magnum opus, his most complete statement of his theoretical position. In this text Zizek brings together a number of themes latent or undeveloped in earlier work, such as the apparent binaries of subject and object, high and low, mind and body, idealist and materialist etc. Zizek critically engages with a number of Kantian and Hegelian concepts in relation to these apparent binaries, in particular, Kant's antinomies and Hegel's dialectics. The focus of the text is on the concept of parallax. Zizek asks 'is not parallax another name for a fundamental *antinomy*?'[126]

Traditionally conceived, parallax is a merely subjective phenomenon: the apparent shift in the position of an object against the background of the subject's view; a shift that is caused by the subject's movement and not, despite appearances, a movement of the object itself. A typical example of the phenomena of parallax is the observation of an object or objects such as a group of trees or houses in the distance, that appear to move as our body moves in space relative to the stationary objects.

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[126] S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2006, p. 4.

However, this movement is only apparent, a merely subjective illusion. The theoretical adjustment Zizek makes to the common understanding of parallax is to include, in a Hegelian sense, an objective element. Subject and object are mediated structurally so that an 'epistemological shift in the subject's point of view' reflects an 'ontological shift in the object itself'.[127] Objects are neither isolated, independent things in themselves, nor are they the mere 'workings of the understanding', or subjective as Kant supposed. Zizekian parallax involves the 'non-coincidence' of the 'high and the low', the inside and the outside, the 'ontic and the transcendental ontological' etc.[128] A parallax view, like his earlier concept of 'looking awry' from the eponymous text, is a way of 'seeing' the one thing different from itself, not a distinction between two positively understood things. This way of 'seeing' a problem or theoretical construct ultimately derives from Hegel's dialectic wherein a familiar viewpoint is overturned by viewing it immanently from a certain theoretical angle, a novel perspective. Glossing Hegel, Zizek argues that the dialectical process and the products of that process are measured not against some external standard of truth but in an absolutely immanent way as a 'minimal difference' or 'non-coincidence of the One with itself'.[129] In the context of art, the One thing, an ordinary object of life, can, if viewed in parallax through a parallax judgment, become a work of art, by differentiating the object of life (as a finite object), not from other (finite) objects, but from itself as another (infinite) object.

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[127] Zizek, p. 17.
[128] Zizek, p. 7.
[129] Zizek, p. 36.

Allan Hance, The Art of Nature: Hegel and the Critique of Judgment,
International Journal of Philosophical Studies, **Vol. 6, no. 1, 1998**

Allan Hance's reading of Hegel locates the difference of approach between Kant's understanding of system and Hegel's. According to Hance, Kant constructs a 'back-end' system in that he formulates a system that 'are directed towards the pre-systematically obtained results of the transcendental inquiry' rather than from a 'front-end' approach of Hegel which does not involve the use of reason 'antecedently of or independently of systematic explanation.'[130] Hance also demonstrates the connection in Hegel between thought and the determination of objects arguing that 'Hegel refuses to make a distinction between the structure of thinking and that which is thought about', and that 'concepts are real' and they 'are in the world' and not in the isolated mind.[131] Thus the concept for Hegel is a concrete universal. In the context of art, Hance argues that rather than adopt Kant's conception of art as a mere symbol of the ideas of reason, Hegel claims that 'the thing of beauty does not merely symbolize the idea but instantiates it immediately.'[132]

Hance emphasises Hegel's implicit connection between the withdrawal of thought from a mere external, purposive activity to one of immanent and productive purpose acting on the object itself through the concrete concept; not as an isolated in-itself, but rather as an 'in-and-for-itself'; an historical movement of thought. He argues, the 'categories of organic being are thus of decisive significance for Hegel because they provide the transition from nature to freedom by enabling a gradualist

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[130] A. Hance, *The Art of Nature: Hegel and the Critique of Judgment*, International Journal of Philosophical Studies, Vol. 6, no. 1, 1998.
[131] Hance, p. 48.
[132] Hance, p. 47.

account of the emergence of self-consciousness and freedom out of the realm of nature.'[133]

Hance, drawing on Hegel's *Science of Logic*, also links this to the notion of a concrete or objective judgment in such a way that his insight implicitly suggests an application to the development of art toward a system of differential relations linked by judgments of both positive and negative kinds; which directly link the judgment to the object judged. Judgments, in Hanse's Hegelian reading, are not merely subjective or reflective formal assessments of independent, external nature (and art by implication since Kant himself included art and Hegel divorced art from external nature), but productive of our knowledge of nature (and art); or rather ontologically productive of art.

Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996

Bürger's theory of the avant-garde is significant in that it offers an argument in support of the aim of the avant-gardes as intending to do more than produce 'cathartic and therapeutic' solutions to the 'practical end' of communication, as does the theory of Renato Poggioli for example.[134] Bürger argues that art history must be understood 'dialectically' rather than 'one-sided' appraisal of historically independent objects.[135] Bürger (1996) places the avant-garde within a Hegelian/Marxist frame, with the aim of understanding the emergence of autonomous art, and the intension of the avant-garde as apparently ending modern

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[133] Hance, p.51.
[134] P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. Xi.
[135] Bürger, p. 21.

art's autonomy through entry into the social. Bürger's dialectic includes the Kantian notion of 'self-criticism' seen through a Marxist frame and directed at the 'art institution' from within its own historical categories. He argues, 'with the historical avant-garde movements, the social subsystem that is art enters the stage of self-criticism.'[136] The object of this 'self-criticism' is the bourgeois culture of autonomy as an art 'institution'. According to Bürger, the problem with autonomous art institution for the avant-garde is that it involves a 'detachment of art from real life.'[137] However, the avant-garde's intention is not realised. The 'attack of the historical avant-garde movements on art as an institution has failed, and art has not been integrated into the praxis of life.'[138] Bürger suggests that this attempt fails as the market recuperated all attempts at reconciliation or 'sublation'.[139] The 'neo-avant-garde' of the post 1950's involves for Bürger, another attempt of art to break with institutional autonomy and enter life. However, rather than succeed where the historical avant-garde failed enter life, the 'gesture of protest of the neo-avant-garde becomes inauthentic [because] having been shown to be irredeemable; the claim to protest can no longer be maintained.'[140]

Bürger's position however, requires supplementing with further analysis of avant-garde movements and particular works. The limitations of Bürger's account of what he refers to as the 'historical avant-garde' and 'neo-avant-garde' is in the short number of artistic examples ranging from Dada, Surrealism and Futurism. He omits many artists and movements such as German Expressionism. Bürger requires supplementation with a more extensive critique of the various movements and proper

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[136] Bürger, p. 22.
[137] Bürger, p. 23.
[138] Bürger, p. 57.
[139] Bürger, p. 53.
[140] Bürger.

names associated with the avant-garde rather than outright rejection because he supplies theory with a largely coherent and defensible narrative to understand the dialectic between inside and outside, high and low, autonomy and political function. He also gives an account of avant-garde movements which can be counterpoised, with those of another art commentator, the U.S. art critic, Clement Greenberg.

Clement Greenberg, Avant-Garde and Kitsch, in J O'Brian (ed.), *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939 – 1944,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986

Throughout the modern art history, and in particular, the postmodern period, the relationship between social life and 'high art', has been a common point of reference for artists. Modernist art had sought to isolate itself from ordinary social life and the world of politics, while the historical and neo-avant-gardes have aimed to re-united art with the social. The US formalist critic, Clement Greenberg, an advocate for autonomous aesthetics, began his critical career in the 1930's with such texts as *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* (1939), and *Towards a Newer Laocoon* (1940). In these two papers he begins to define the autonomous sphere of art in contradistinction from "ordinary" or "everyday" experience. His intension is to isolate "fine art" from popular culture, or what he refers to as 'kitsch'.   In *Avant-Garde and Kitsch*, Greenberg argues that the modern artist, 'turning his attention away from subject matter of common experience…turns it in upon the medium of his own craft.'[141] He further states in this inaugural critical essay, that '[o]ne and the same civilization

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[141] C. Greenberg, Avant Garde and Kitsch, in J. O'Brian (ed.), *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939 – 1944*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 7.

produces simultaneously two such different things as a poem by T.S. Eliot and a Tin Pan Alley song, or a painting by Braque and the Saturday Evening Post Cover'.[142] The high and the low would appear to equally reflect the one culture.

Greenberg, however, has his preference. His critical writing is not without bias toward the high end of the aesthetic spectrum. He sides in this paper, and in all his critical writing, with high art; calling the other an 'ersatz culture'; a parasite feeding on the 'genuine culture' of the avant-garde.[143] This is the origin of Greenberg's mature position of 'medium-specificity' and his embrace of autonomous painting, and repudiation of later developments such as Pop art and Minimalism. Greenberg's attempts to isolate art from everyday life will also sow the seeds of his declining influence.

By the late 1960's, Greenberg's isolationist narrative led to the Minimalist aesthetic where a canvas with a monochromatic skin of paint stood in for the formal syntax of modernist painting with its emphasis on balancing the various parts of the painting. Greenberg's decline as an influential critic can also be marked by the emergence of ironic abstraction and anti-painting of postmodernism, and the inclusion of politics, and ordinary experience.

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[142] Greenberg, pp. 5 – 6.
[143] Greenberg, p. 12.

Clement Greenberg, 'Toward a Newer Laocoon', in J. O'Brien (ed.), *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939 – 1944*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986

The following year, 1940, Greenberg writes another seminal critical account of contemporary culture which further develops his aesthetic isolationist strategy. Taking up the 18th Century German critic, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's work *Laocoon* (1766), Lessing's *Loacoon* sets out to challenge the *ut pictura poesis* or 'as is poetry, so too is painting'; the tradition of understanding poetry as related aesthetically to painting. The 'sister arts' theory of *ut pictura poesis*, of relating one art to another was abhorrent to Greenberg, in particular the marriage of painting and sculpture, as is further evidenced by his later writing, in particular the seminal work of his *magna opera* on modern art, *Modernist Painting* (1960).

Already, in *Toward a Newer Laocoon* Greenberg began to articulated the division between the arts that originated in Lessing's assault on the sister arts tradition through his articulation of the separation of the arts of time (poetry) and the arts of space (painting). Greenberg insisted that modern art was a movement toward the development of the specific qualities of each media, and not about what they share in common. 'The avant-garde' he argues, was 'both the child and negation of Romanticism' and as such 'becomes the embodiment of art's instinct of self-preservation.'[144]

In this paper Greenberg continues his campaign against the "corruption" of art, but this time it is not the high and low, but rather the different categories of high

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[144] C. Greenberg, p. Toward a Newer Laocoon, in J. O'Brian (ed), *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939 – 1949*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 28.

art. A 'new flatness begins to appear in Courbet's painting, and an equally new attention to every square inch of the canvas.'[145] This emphasis on the flat canvas will be an increasing focus for Greenberg, leading to his seminal text, *Modernist Painting* (1960). He understands, in a way analogous to Lessing, that the individual arts each have a property that is unique to that art and to it alone, something it shares with no other art. All the arts have one thing in common, the desire to express their particular qualities. To this end, Greenberg argues, '[t]here is a common effort in each of the arts to expand the express resources of the medium.'[146] Furthermore, in this text he argues that the logic of the history of modern art involves a struggle between the arts to purify each of what is not essential. The medium of each art was understood as the inspiration for the historical continuance of that art.

Clement Greenberg, Modernist Painting, in G. Battcock (ed.), *The New Art*, New York, Dutton, 1973

Modernist Painting (1960) is the culmination of a critical drive toward circumscribing the boundaries of painting that Greenberg began in the late 1930's. Greenberg draws an analogy between the critical milieu of the Enlightenment and modern art except that 'Enlightenment criticised from the outside' whereas modernism 'criticises from the inside'.[147] Adapting Kantian aesthetics to contemporary abstraction, he writes 'I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher

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[145] C. Greenberg, Modernist Painting, in G. Battcock (ed.), *The New Art*, New York, Dutton, 1973, p.29.
[146] Greenberg, p. 30.
[147] Greenberg, p. 101.

Kant.'[148] This 'self-critical tendency' involved the 'purifying' of modern art from all that is apparently extraneous. While pre-modern or realistic art used 'art to conceal art', 'Modernism used art to call attention to art.'[149] It was through the attention to the properties of the medium that this was achieved according to Greenberg. He argued 'The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself – not in order to subvert it but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.'[150] This 'area of competence' or 'limitations that constitute the medium' of painting, included the flat surface, the shape of the support, and the properties of pigment.[151] But ultimately it was 'flatness alone that was unique and exclusive' to the medium of painting.[152] On the other hand, '[t]here-dimensionality is the province of sculpture.'[153] The sequestering of modernist painting and sculpture into specific media had the unintentional effect of opening up a area of post-modern critique through a plural, even scatological approach to the use of art media in post-modern art. Everything from shoe polish to artist's shit entered the artist's lexicon and further broadened the expanding field of art. Politics in general, gender issues, race, and other cultural issues entered the once specific domain of art.

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[148] C. Greenberg.

[149] Greenberg, p.102.
[150] Greenberg.
[151] Greenberg.
[152] Greenberg, p. 103.
[153] Greenberg, p. 104.

Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1994

In this text, Rosalind Krauss undertakes a phenomenological and structural re-evaluation of the project of understanding sculpture as an art of space in contradistinction from arts of time such as poetry. Sculpture, once considered static; an ideal representation isolated from ordinary life, gradually becomes – through the 'passage' of time, and such movements as Dada, Surrealism, Constructivism and finally, Minimalism – an art of both time and space; an art that occupies the spatio-temporal world of everyday life. She understands Minimalism as a foil against idealism and autonomy in art history; indeed, as the teleological end of a 'passage' of art through a series of attempts to present the phenomenological appearance of the object and deny the ideal forms of modern sculpture. Minimalism represents an example for Krauss of everyday experience, of objects sharing our common space, rather than autonomous objects removed from life through contrivances such as the plinth.

Rather than understand art as Clement Greenberg would, as an 'immediate sensation', Kraus argues that in the case of the objects of Minimal art '[t]hey simply exist within the user's own time; their being consists in the temporal open-endedness of their use; they share in the extended flow of duration.'[154] Given the prominent place Krauss' theory holds within the debate about art's relation to everyday experience, her account of Minimalism must be included in the art and life debate. Furthermore, Minimalism, one of the seminal moments of the neo-avant-garde, can be linked through the debates Krauss engages in, to other points of research: the

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[154] R. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1994, p. 198.

historical avant-garde; Greenberg's avant-garde; and more recent art such as Installation art, Land art, and the practice of Wall Painting. In the case of Wall Painting, the exhibition space, in particular the wall was of critical interest to the minimal artists, and for numerous approaches to art after them, especially installation art.

However, there is a limitation to Krauss' position. Her application of Merleau-Ponty's (1970) phenomenological theory to Minimal art, as developed in *Passages of Modern Sculpture* (1994), by arguing that everyday experience involves a phenomenological dimension, and that art too, inhabits the everyday world, this does not licence a conflation of the two, only an analogy. For instance, neither her use of phenomenology, nor her idiosyncratic use of structuralism, explain the structural difference between art and everyday objects; a difference that is essential to the recognition and judgment of art in general. And art *is* art in general, a general structure of differential, particular units of art meaning.

Rosalind Krauss, Sculpture in the Expanded Field, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1986

This is where Krauss is also a seminal reference point for the structural position she takes in order to organise the different categories of post war sculpture without relying on Greenberg's essentialist positivism. For Krauss, sculpture after modernism, expanded in a number of directions to include a range of objects and experiences that could not be termed sculpture under modernist categories or descriptions. She states that 'surprising things have come to be called sculpture:

narrow corridors with TV monitors at the ends; large photographs documenting country hikes; mirrors placed at strange angles in ordinary rooms; temporary lines cut into the floor of the desert.'[155]   As she writes in *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, 'Nothing, it would seem could possibly give to such a motley of effort [the different candidates for the designation sculpture] the right to lay claim to whatever one might mean by the category of sculpture.'[156]   Rather than attempt yet another description of sculpture, something Krauss suspects will fail to account for the diversity, she confines the term sculpture to the modernist formal work resting on, and in, the idealist space of the pedestal. The 'postmodernist' art on the contrary, involves the 'logically determined rupture' that results in what Krauss refers to as the 'expanded field': a 'structural transformation of the cultural field'.[157] By the 1960's post-modern milieu, 'sculpture had entered the full condition of its inverse logic and had become pure negativity; the combination of exclusions.'[158] Krauss undertakes a structural analysis of the postmodern expanded field of objects located in a structure of negative art relations: *sculpture* becomes as *not architecture*, and *not landscape* rather than have any positive place of its own.

While Krauss makes some advances in postulating the expanded field, in so far as the objects and sites of postmodern art should be located structurally, she does not extend this analysis to the entire history of modern art, nor does she understand the structural dependence of the postmodern eclecticism on the 'purity' of the modernist medium. The *postmodern* as *not modern* should be structurally theorised. Neither does her structural account include judgments necessary to locate those

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[155] R. Krauss, Sculpture in the Expanded Field, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, MIT Press, Massachusetts, 1986.
[156] Krauss.
[157] Krauss, p. 288.
[158] Krauss, p. 282.

objects as art objects within such a structure, or how the structure is affected by the judgmental process which introduces art into the structure; the way it domesticates any event. Krauss admits that 'the problem of explanation' which involves 'the root cause' or 'conditions of possibility' that 'brought about the shift into postmodernism.'[159] Instead of understanding the dialectical relationship between the modern and the postmodern, she understands the later as a 'definite rupture".[160] The 'expanded field', of the post-modern on the contrary, includes the modern within its immanent location of negative points of difference, as what the later structurally turns against.

Thierry de Duve, The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1998

De Duve's paper unpacks Greenberg's modernism and his formalism to show that in reacting to the increasing presence of the Minimal artists and literalism and conceptualism in general, Greenberg increasingly contrives a defence against the new art which drives his criticism into a theoretical and historical cul-de-sac wherein the 'painting (the specific) has ultimately surrendered to art (the generic)'.[161] Due to this 'surrender' of the specific medium of painting to the broad field of the generic, Greenberg, according to de Duve, is forced to abandon his modernist narrative of medium specificity in order to retain his formalist criticism by admitting that Duchamp has revealed that anything can potentially become art without it being necessarily good art.

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[159] Krauss, p. 290.
[160] Krauss.
[161] T. de Duve, The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1998

De Duve's paper is seminal in that he does the seemingly unthinkable given the "conventional readings" of Duchamp as an anti-aesthetic artist. He argues for the readymade's importance as exemplifying Kant's concept of aesthetic judgment; that the readymade licences a general aesthetic judgment of the kind 'this is art', rather than a traditional Kantian judgment of 'this is beautiful'.[162] In his seminal essay, *The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas* (1998), de Duve argues that due to historical pressure placed on painting under the reductive criticism of the American art critic, Clement Greenberg, art developed into the monochrome or single-colour painting (De Duve 1998). However, rather than interpret the subsequent art history as a development of art away from autonomy and into everyday life, or a postmodern plurality, de Duve suggests that the theoretical object regulating the historical passage of art into what he called 'art in general' was the 'blank canvas'. This blank canvas (readymade canvas support), was not presented as such but always negatively present as a sublimated other; as what modernist painting was 'inexorably attracted' to in its path to a 'pristine flatness'.[163]

Robert Morris, Notes on Sculpture (Parts 1 – 4), *The Writings of Robert Morris*, **Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993**

Robert Morris' oeuvre expands several decades and exemplifies both the early, unitary forms of Minimal art, through process work, performance, and anti-form works and conceptual issues. His seminal work is his four-part series of statements on art entitled *Notes on Sculpture Parts 1 – 4* (1993). His primary goal in these

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[162] De Duve, p. 238.
[163] De Duve, p. 255.

statements is to demarcate the domain of the new sculpture from modernist sculpture and painting. He states that 'the concerns of sculpture have been for some time not only distinct but hostile to those of painting.[164]

Here Morris appears to agree with Clement Greenberg's assessment of the medium. Moreover, Morris refers to the 'literal qualities of the support' as what is revealed as the 'structural element' rather than the 'essence' as Greenberg would call it.[165] His concern is not to distance his art from life as Greenberg did, but rather to distance his art, and Minimal art in general, from modernist art. But this forces him to define the specifics of the new art. Arguing in favour of an 'autonomous' and yet 'literal' sculpture, and equally against a conception of sculpture as relief, Morris argues that the 'autonomous and literal nature of sculpture demand that it have its own, equally literal space – not a space shared with painting.'[166]

Morris, as a way of distancing himself from modern, formalist space of painting and sculpture, where different elements are balanced within the picture plane or the parts of the sculpture, goes on to articulate a Gestalt reading of Minimal objects stating 'one need not move around the object for the sense of the whole, the gestalt, to occur. One sees and immediately "believes" that the pattern within one's mind corresponds to the existential fact of the object.'[167]

Morris also attends to the question of scale and the relation of the object to the space and the body of the spectator. Questioning the US Minimalist, Tony Smith, he asks 'Why didn't you make it larger' to which Smith replies 'I was not

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[164] R. Morris, Notes on Sculpture, Part 1, *The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993, p. 3.
[165] Morris.
[166] Morris, p. 4.
[167] Morris, p. 6.

making a monument. Then why didn't you make it smaller' he adds, to which Smith replies, 'I was not making an object.'[168] Scale is determined structurally in relation to other coordinates given in the relation of parts. Morris states, 'In the perception of relative size, the human body enters into the total continuum of sizes and establishes itself as a constant'.[169]

Finally, space becomes part of the total structure for Morris. 'Space between the subject and the object' he claims, 'is implied in such a comparison' between different sized objects in a space.'[170] Objects are not just plonked in a space for Morris, despite their 'autonomous' or gestalt placement. On the contrary, they must be considered in relation to the whole structure or 'expanded situation' of 'object, light, space, and body.'[171]

Richard Serra, *Writings/Interviews*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994

Richard Serra's process works are material investigations of space, gravitational forces on materials, material properties and processes. His work implicitly repudiates an idealist position for a materialist one in which material objects are located in specific, social sites. In this way he was highly influential to later Installation artists. Influenced by Brancusi's *Endless Column*, a work that is all sculpture or all base depending on one's perspective, Serra began making literal, material works that emphasise, rather than hide, 'how a piece comes into being' or the process of production or assemblage is manifest in the resultant material

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[168] Morris, p. 11.
[169] Morris.
[170] Morris, p. 13
[171] Morris, p. 17.

object.[172] Speaking of Brancusi, Serra wrote '[w]hen Brancusi carved, the content seemed to reside in the material rather than exist as façade decoration.'[173]   He argued that in Brancusi (and by implication, his own work) the 'selection of material determines the aesthetic possibilities and limitations'.[174] Like Morris, Serra was also interested in the place or site of the work and how that becomes one of the materials rather than a neutral container. When speaking of *Delineator*, Serra said 'the only way to understand this work is to experience the place physically'.[175] Second-hand experience of a Serra through another medium and another place such as a written account, as far as he is concerned, is nothing more than a 'linguistic debasement'.[176] However, to simply understand Serra as hostile to the tradition of modernism, or abstract painting is to ignore some of his supportive comments about modernist painting. Despite a preponderance for ephemeral, site-oriented work, Serra is not interested in his work playing a political or social role. For example, in *Writings/Interviews* (1994) he states in connection with 'abstract art' that 'I've never felt, and don't now, that art needs any justification outside itself'.[177]

Donald Judd, Specific Objects, *Complete Writings 1959 – 1975*, New York University Press, New York, 2005

Specific Objects, first published in 1965, is Judd's seminal statement on the art of his time. He begins this work with the oft-quoted claim that '[h]alf or more of the best

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[172] R. Serra, *Writings/Interviews*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 30.
[173] Serra, p. 31.
[174] Serra.
[175] Serra, p. 36.
[176] Serra.
[177] Serra, p. 41.

new work in the last few years has been neither painting nor sculpture.'[178] He argue

this 'new three-dimensional work' does not 'constitute a movement, school, or style',

because the works that are now understood as Minimal art, are too diverse in

appearance, intent and content to be understood as a movement or style.[179] He notes,

as Morris does, that the 'use of three-dimensions' is a liberating force against

modernist art.[180] He argues the three-dimensional deliverance is used as 'negative

points against painting and sculpture'.[181] The 'main thing wrong with painting' he

argues, 'is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against a wall.' And as such is

limited as a field to explore by the 1960's.[182]

However, as Judd explains 'The new work obviously resembles sculpture

more than it does painting, but it is nearer to painting.'[183] Nevertheless, the three-

dimensional work is not painting. 'The several limits of painting are no longer

present…[a]ctual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a

flat surface.' And yet this 'specific' object of three dimensions is somehow less than

specific in that it can 'have any relation to the wall, floor, ceiling, room, rooms or

exterior…A work needs only to be interesting'. Judd's struggle to identify the new

three-dimensional work leads him to fall back on the modernist notion of the

'specific' object, as neither one thing or the other, but its own kind of thing.

However, what is most interesting in this seminal writing is the need to compare the

new with the old through negative associations. If aesthetic judgment through the

comparison of the new with the history of the medium is not exactly present in his

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[178] D. Judd, Specific Objects, *Complete Writings 1959 – 1975*, New York, New York University Press, 2005, p. 181.
[179] Judd.
[180] Judd.
[181] Judd.
[182] Judd.
[183] Judd, p. 182.

argument, judgment [remembering that Judd started his career as an art critic] is still vital to Judd's modus operandi.

Eva Hesse, 'Untitled Statement', in K. Stiles and P. Selz (ed.), Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art, University of California Press, Berkley, 1996

Eva Hesse is often categories as a post Minimalist; an artist who repudiated the macho materials and geometric forms of artists such as Robert Morris, Donald Judd and Richard Serra.   Reading her artist's statement from 1968, she appears more interested in the pleasure of discovery and invention, and the properties and behaviour of materials; how a particular material submits to the forces of gravity for example.

She is also at pains to distance herself from modernist formalism championed by Clement Greenberg and other formalist critics. She states '[t]he formal principles are understandable and understood. It is the unknown quantity from which and where I want to go.'[184] This repudiation of formalism on the one hand, and the embrace of modernist experimentalism and belief in a future for art through a search for the unknown, is a tension in her work not yet discussed in the literature. Contradictions and antinomic tensions are located in a number of places in her writing.

For instance Hesse writes in her *Untitled Statement* (1969) that the 'thing [as] an object ...is something, it is nothing'; and that her work is 'not painting [and] not

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[184] E Hesse, Untitled Statement, in K. Stiles and Pl Selz (ed.), Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art, University of California Press, Berkley, 1996, p. 147.

sculpture'.[185]   In this last quote Hesse appears to conceptually align with Rosalind Kraus's notion of the 'expanded field'.   Further to this negative position of Hesse, she states in her *Untitled Statement* (1968), 'I would like my work to be non-work.'[186]   We can construe from these statements that a dialectical tension informs her practice. Included in this tension is the difference between hard and soft, wall and floor, art material and non-art material.   These dialectical tensions are not incidental to the work of Hesse but rather *are the work*.

Marcel Duchamp, Apropos of Readymades, in M. Sanouillet and E. Peterson (eds.), *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, **New York, Oxford University Press, 1973**

Duchamp's introduction of an everyday object or 'readymade' into a fine art context has engendered much theoretical debate to account for its emergence in the avant-garde and re-emergence in the neo-avant-garde.   However, what is hitherto unacknowledged by Duchamp scholars but discussed by Duchamp (1973) himself, is that the readymade is best understood as exemplifying an antinomic relation between art and non art or art and what it is (structurally) not, that is, life. Duchamp states, 'I wanted to create an antinomy between art and the readymade' and suggests as an example 'turn a Rembrandt into an ironing board'.[187]

An antinomy or division within the readymade itself creates a division or gap that allows the one thing to be 'seen' antinomically as both itself, and something else. It allows the same thing to occupy two places, one in life and one in art, or life/art.   For example, where Krauss understands Duchamp's readymade as

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[185] Hesse.
[186] Hesse, p. 148
[187] M. Duchamp, Appropos of the Readymades, in M. Sanouillet and E. Peterson (eds.), *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 142.

supporting a phenomenological account of the 1960's movement of minimalism by drawing a parallel between the common, everyday materials used by the minimalists and Duchamp's work, on the contrary, Duchamp's infamous urinal exhibited as art could only do so through an antinomic division or gap between art and the everyday; a parallax gap articulated by judgment. By antinomic division I refer to is a logical division between the object (a common urinal) and *Fountain*, the name Duchamp gave to the urinal in 1917. This division is between the phenomenological, bodily, object, a thing of use occupying our everyday life, and *Fountain*, a useless object of art, an object inhabiting the symbolic structure of art. The Real is not life outside the symbolic, where the urinal functions but the gap between the two places. The division is one of parallax: a parallax judgment that divides the one object between two perspectives. Duchamp had an early insight into this division. The Russian Suprematist, Kasimir Malevich was another artist who understood the emerging requirement that modern art be divided between itself.

Kasimir Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, **New York, Dover, 2003**

Malevich was an a Russian Suprematist artist who came to prominence in the same period as Duchamp. He came closer than any other artist (save Duchamp) to actualise the blank canvas. However, Malevich stopped short of displaying a blank canvas or ordinary object, choosing instead, to draw attention to the minimal difference between a primed canvas as ground, and a formal figure painted against it. He called this new art, 'non-objective', emphasising the withdrawal of art from representational realism and the depiction of external nature that began in earnest

with Cubism but is already evidenced in Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.[188] In a Kantian sense, this withdrawal emphasises the subjective. And Malevich states to this end that from Cubism, art 'passes from the objective to the subjective representation'.[189]

Malevich's Suprematist manifesto aims to do two things: to give an account of art's passage from representational realism to avant-garde or non-objective painting through the theorising of what he calls the 'additional element'; a kind of Kantian *synthetic* addition to art rather than an identity between depiction and depicted or subject and referent. The additional element is a 'truly creative element in art – the aesthetic artistic – is...a distinctly subjective nature; it creates new artistic realities not found in "objective nature"'.[190] The 'works of the creative artist' are no longer directed toward a passive nature but rather 'contain new solutions of the eternal conflict between the subject and the object'.[191] Art, under the influence of the additional element, shifts from analytic to synthetic Cubism, and explains, according to Malevich, all changes in modern art.. This process is undertaken by the 'advanced artist' and as such, is 'expressed in a new, familiar technique, in a certain unusual attitude toward nature – a novel point of view.'[192] In a Kantian style of argument, Malevich states that 'things can actually be seen in quite different ways, depending upon the viewpoint of the directing artistic norm. Malevich is an indispensible reference point for understanding the shift from the representation of nature to the understanding of art as involving 'a certain unusual attitude' and a 'novel point of view'; or what could be called, after Slavoj Zizek, a 'parallax view'.

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[188] K. Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, New York, Dover, 2003.
[189] Malevich, p. 60.
[190] Malevich, p. 39.
[191] Malevich, p. 34.
[192] Malevich, p. 12.

Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996

Robert Smithson is the seminal writer on, and practitioner of, what is referred to as Land, Earth, or Environmental Art; art that stakes its identity or rather, its place in the art structure, on a repudiation of the gallery/dealer nexus that underpins modernist art exhibition, and takes the object outside the gallery to 'site' it in the environment. Smithson was influenced by Marcel Duchamp in so far as he wanted to expand the medium beyond painting, but he was less conceptual, more interested in the materials of site; in nature as an area for material manipulation. Discussing the work of Robert Morris, Smithson explains the move to the outside by saying 'instead of using a paint brush' the artist uses 'the actual land as medium.'[193] The risk of this kind of art is that it can appear nostalgic for a prelapsarian time when art and nature seemed connected.

Smithson is seminal in that he is the first and only artist or critic to recognise the dialectical dependence of the outside on the inside and vice-versa. Rather than adopt the naive concept of art escaping the confines of the art institution as the earlier generation of avant-gardists, and many Outside artists did, or retreat into the hermetically confined world of modernist art, Smithson explored the 'dialectic of the site/non-site' relationship; the way the one lends significance to its Other and how it *sites* objects and events as art.[194]

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[193] Smithson, p. 105.
[194] Smithson, p. 65

Smithson's dialectical understanding of the categories of inside (modern) and outside (postmodern) art is demonstrated through his coined concepts such as 'non-site' and 'site'.[195] The outside for Smithson was the 'site' while the inside of the gallery was the 'non-site'; an exhibition of associated materials: photographs, maps and notations of the site itself. However, where Smithson goes wrong is in understanding the 'non-site' (inside) to derive from the 'site' or outside when if his claim about 'painting' with the landscape is to be adopted it is the inside (painting) that structurally allows the outside to become art.

Fabiola Lopez-Duran, *Felice Varini: Points of View*, Baden, Switzerland, Lars Muller, Switzerland, 2004

Fabiola Lopez-Duran gives a critical account of the work of the Swiss-French artist, Felice Varini that links him to the renaissance tradition of perspective, and representational realism, but also to a literal placing of art in the real spaces of architecture and the social sphere. Varini is known for his development of abstraction away from the canvas plane and onto the real spaces both inside and outside the gallery. Varini, using techniques of perspective and anamophotic distortion, creates spaces that bridge the gap between the real and the ideal depending on the particular location of the viewing subject/participating spectator. According to Lopez-Duran, 'Vaini brings into coexistence two opposite desires: one that rejects the frame and propels the painting outside its own limits [and] another

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[195] R. Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 95.

that proposes the redemption of the frame and reduces the field of vision to a specific area delimited by it.'[196]

Lopez-Duran makes the further observation that 'Varini, like modernist painters, defines his painting through its flatness, but instead of using painting to call attention to painting like the modernists, he uses painting to call attention to architecture and the city.'[197] However, it is not the city, nor the architecture Varini wants to call attention to but rather he wants to call attention to art itself, through both modernist painting *and* all that is not painting; all that is outside painting. And it is this dual character, or antinomy between the real and the ideal, the beautiful and the sublime, painting and architecture, the inside and the outside, that, by inhabiting one and the same work, shifts perspective from a representational tool to a figure of parallax in the Zizekian sense discussed above. This is born out by Varini's use of anamophosis or perspective distortion. From one perspective, his 'painting' is a heterogeneous array of formless marks of real paint, and from a shift in perspective that coalesce into form. However, this requires supplementation: it is form first that comes into view (the history of modernist painting); followed by the formless dispersal beyond the frame.

Uwe Schneede, On the Unity of Wall and Painting, in J. Schellmann (ed.), *Wall Works***, New York, Edition Schellmann, 1999**

There have been numerous academic papers and books on individual artists represented in this research area, including *Using Walls Indoors*, (1970) mentioned

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[196] F. Lopez-Duran, *Felice Varini: Points of View*, Baden, Switzerland, Lars Muller, 2004, pp. 47-48.
[197] Lopez-Duran, p. 53.

above, but no other book deals with the breadth of Wall Painting to the same extent, nor has a scholarly attempt to theorise and historicise the genre or category of Wall Painting, or 'wall works' as it is referred to in the catalogue. The issue I have with the catalogue, if not the exhibition itself, is that while the thesis, developed by the contributors to the catalogue, have pretensions toward a theoretical explanation, and historical lineage for the genre of wall painting, they are neither theoretically rigorous enough, nor historically accurate in their account. The contributors refer to a complex problem – in particular the problem of the relationship between art and life – as if this issue needs no actual theoretical unpacking, as if our experience of what is referred to as 'the everyday' is immediate and direct, having a presence outside art history and discourse.

Uwe M. Schneede states for example, that 'rather than being set within the elevated context of the museum, these wall works are installed in the midst of ordinary, everyday life'.[198] And yet it is only through the 'elevated context' or the history of art, in particular, painting, that the painted wall becomes structurally available as Wall Painting. Equally, it is through author's discourse on Wall Painting, that the issues they apparently *discover* are actually initiated; only by bringing the phenomenal experience of the subject matter under discussion (the painted wall) into a fine art discourse are they able to deal with the problem of art and life as a problem *for art*.

Moreover, the authors attempt to account for the historical emergence of wall painting by attaching it to the ancient ritual of cave painting; and later – via the Middle Ages – to the Renaissance practice of decorating the interiors of the homes of

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[198] U.M. Schneede, On the Unity of Wall and Painting, in J. Schellmann (ed.), *Wall Works*, New York, Edition Schellmann, 1999, p. 15.

wealthy nobility and the architectural spaces of the Church. On the contrary, to attach the contemporary practice of wall painting to this broken historical narrative is to create an internal theoretical contradiction. The authors argue that contemporary wall painting both relates historically to ancient ritualistic practices while employing concepts derived from avant-garde theory; concepts such as the 'everyday' and 'art into life' concepts that would be historically retrospective.

Chapter 2

The Avant-Garde and the Parallax of Art and Life.

'[I wanted] to expose the basic antinomy between art and readymades'.[199]

In the first three decades of the 20th Century art history witnessed the intrusion into the European academies of art what is now understood as avant-garde attempts to shake the foundations of academic taste by rejecting tradition and embracing an attitude of novelty.[200] The concept of the avant-garde represents a disparate variety of practices, individual artists and collectives, and their critical reception. In its first manifestation in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, the avant-garde's influence spaned the European continent unsettling established artistic conventions, and provoking the hostility of the art establishment. In its second appearance, predominantly in North America of the 1950s and 1960s, its affront to the expectations of the museum public was almost as pronounced. The list of seminal contributions to the European, or 'historical avant-garde', as the German critic, Peter Bürger referred to them, would include French Cubism and Surrealism, Russian Constructivism and Suprematism, Italian Futurism, Dutch De Stijl, and the various branches of Dada such as French, New York, and Hanover.[201] The second group or 'neo-avant-garde' of North America includes Pop art, Minimalism, Conceptual art,

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[199] M. Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 142.

[200] T. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996. See also M. Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1987.

[201] P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, pp. 59 – 61. However, Bürger's avant-garde is more narrowly focussed, primarily around Dada, Constructivism and Surrealism. I discuss a broader range of artists and groups that embrace an avant-gardist attitude.

Site-Specific art, Land art, and Installation to name the central movements of the post-war period.[202]

The aim of this chapter is to give a critical account of the place of the avant-garde in 20th Century art, in particular, the 'historical avant-garde' of the early 20th Century.[203] The 'neo-avant-garde' of the post-war period in America will be discussed in this chapter, however, while it shares conceptual problems with the earlier avant-garde, especially its focus on the rejection of what it understood as the hegemony of autonomous art, its theoretical concerns are largely covered by the historical avant-garde, and is, to some degree, a repetition of the earlier avant-garde's aims.[204] Moreover, the neo-avant-garde is further addressed in the context of Minimal art and the site-oriented works of Installation and Site-Specific art, in chapters 3 and 4.

The avant-garde will here be understood primarily through an engagement with the seminal theorist of the avant-garde, the German critic, Peter Bürger.[205] This chapter will also examine Bürger's thesis against both the work of avant-garde artists and secondary source material. As a result, Bürger's thesis will be complicated through the theoretical contribution of this chapter rather than simply adopted or rejected altogether. This account of the avant-garde, seen through the critical filter of Bürger in particular, will lay the foundations for the thesis as a whole with regards to

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[202] The term 'neo-avant-garde' also originates with Bürger. See P. Bürger, pp. 59 – 61.

[203] The terms 'historical and neo-avant-garde are those of the German Marxist critic, Peter Bürger.

[204] The argument for understanding the neo-avant-garde as a 'repetition' of the historical avant-garde of the early 20the Century in the context of Bürger's thesis is critically discussed in detail by Benjamin Buchloh . See B. H. D. Buchloh, The Primary Colours for a Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde, *October*, Volume 37, Summer, 1986, pp. 41 – 52.

[205] Hal Foster argues, despite some reservations, for the centrality of Bürger's thesis, stating that 'it is still important [in the late 1990's] to work through his thesis'. See H. Foster, *The Return of the Real: Art at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1996, p. 8. Benjamin Buchloh also agrues for the importance of Bürger's thesis. See note 114 above on Buchloh.

the central debate the thesis investigates, the relationship between art and life understood as different places in the art structure, places derived from an aesthetic judgment. In this regard the central role of aesthetic judgment will be discussed in relation to the objects put forward for consideration – objects often not considered art such as anti-aesthetic, avant-garde objects – and how they acquire art status through a form of aesthetic judgment.

Bürger's thesis: that the avant-gardes attempted, and failed, to escape from art-institutional confinement represented by autonomy, and that the neo-avant-garde represents nothing more than a repetition of the failure of the historical avant-garde, will be tested against both examples of avant-garde art and statements made by artists. Bürger's related point – that the gap between art and life either remains open despite the intention of the avant-garde to close this gap, or that art and life are sublated or reconciled in the commercial art of Pop artist Andy Warhol – will also be unpacked and critically evaluated in this chapter.

From this groundwork the chapter will then respond to the complex theoretical and historical field that circumscribes the activity of the avant-garde through the central theoretical concept employed in the thesis, the concept of parallax. In the context of this chapter the concept of parallax will be deployed to argue, that, paradoxically, the gap between art and life is both closed – art and life are united – and open, that a gap between art and life must be sustained because judgment plays a crucial role in the production of the art object by responding critically in the gap between the two.[206] The real will not be understood as either a place beyond representation, a thing-in-itself, nor will it be understood as the

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[206] This is a central point the thesis makes: that the subject as judge does in fact play a constitutive role in the production of the art object through the act of judgment.

immediate experience of life, but rather as a gap, or as nothing but a shift in position represented by a certain form of aesthetic judgment; a parallax judgment.[207] The chapter will conclude, having recourse to this central concept of parallax, that the relationship between art and life has been misunderstood by Bürger and other contributors to the debate, primarily because they framed the debate in binary terms: either art is (or should be) autonomous or art is (or should be) part of everyday life.[208]

The conclusion drawn by this chapter will be that Bürger is correct, the avant-garde does fail to break free of autonomy and enter life, but not for the reasons that Bürger cites, but paradoxically, because art and life are always already joined; that the difference is non-substantial; that the difference between the one and the other is the result of a parallax view; of the one thing seen as art or as life. This seeing the one thing in two ways is not, it will be argued, a simple postmodern form of relativism – I see whatever I wish to see – or a modern form of judgment – judgment is subjective, a 'mere reflection' on the form of the object – but rather, objective, not because the judgment can be submitted to proofs, but because a parallax judgment, regardless of whether it is positive or negative, plays a constitutive role in the object becoming an object of art, and not some other object.

The context within which the concept of parallax will be understood is the shift from reflective (Kantian) judgment, to constitutive (Hegelian) judgment. This

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[207] This concept is explained in detail in the Introduction, and more generally through the context of the chapters that follow. I take Slavoj Zizek's interpretation of the concept of parallax and place it within a Hegelian context of constitutive judgment.

[208] I am referring to Bürger himself, despite his insistence on dialectic, but also, to a degree, Hal Foster and Benjamin Buchloh also fall into a kind of binary trap, by assuming one side of the art and life divide has greater value than the other. All three, to varying degrees and in various ways endorse or elevate the life side at the expense of autonomy. The form of dialectic expressed in the concept of parallax understands the necessity of the two as the one thing seen in parallax.

form of judgment involves the understanding that both subject (judge) and object (art) are structurally mediated.   The critical reception of the object through judgment, actually produces, from within the object's 'purposiveness' an actual 'purpose', in retrospect, to be art.[209] The judgment is productive or constitutive in a Hegelian sense, of the object, as an object of art. This judgment is not Hegelian in the teleological sense of art finding its purpose or end through art becoming self-conscious about such a purpose, but in the sense of an internal or immanent relationship between object and subject where the aim of art is always to be art and not some other thing. However, it is only through a dialectic *with* this Other that the object finds a place in the art structure.[210]

Before the above claims can be substantiated, the question of the conceptual framing of the avant-garde's disparate activities must be addressed. There are a number of ways in which the avant-garde might be understood and its reception theoretically organised. The conception of the avant-garde is often one of an advancing cultural soldier waging war on convention, attacking tradition, and breaking free of the 'prison-house' of art-institutional confinement.[211] According to this model, the avant-garde is seen as a liberating force removing the shackles of a stultifying and outdated culture – the official culture of the museum, the academy, and the Salon. Such an impression is often given by the avant-garde itself. The Futurist painter, F. T. Marinetti for instance, expressed this view when he stated 'we

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[209]I borrow these terms of Kant but press them through Hegel's constitutive theory of subjectivity. See E. Kant, *The Critique of Judgment*, New York, Prometheus Books, 2000, p. 214.

[210] Art's becoming self-conscious *is* Hegel's central thesis, however, this chapter draws out an alternative Hegel; something implicit in Hegel's theory of dialectic. Sublation or the synthesis of art and life is primary and does not end in the end of art as Arthur Danto assumes. See A. Danto, The End of Art, in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986.

[211]This term 'prison-house of language' derives from Ludwig Wittgenstein, but the term came into prominence within the context of Frederic Jameson's *The Prison-House of Language*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1972.

establish *Futurism,* because we want to free this land from its smelly gangrene of professors, archaeologists, ciceroni and antiquarians…we mean to free her from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards'.[212]

A discussion of the theoretical field understood by Bürger as the historical avant-garde will be given below, followed by an extended examination of the detailed differences and converging interests of the avant-garde as a way of comparing the broader field against Bürger's limited theoretical compass. This comparison will draw out the strengths and weakness of Bürger's argument and prepare the theoretical ground for the conclusions drawn by the thesis. There are a number of obvious objections to address with regard to Bürger's thesis. For instance, it should not be forgotten, as Bürger does, that the avant-gardes were not a unified group speaking the one language before his interpretation collected them within its theoretical frame. As Richard Murphy pointed out, many of the representatives of the European and the American avant-garde are dropped from the debate in Bürger's account.[213] For example, Murphy argues 'it is clear that his [Bürger's] theoretical description and analyses are oriented specifically towards dada and surrealism'.[214]

The U.S. based, German critic and historian, Benjamin Buchloh, has criticised Bürger for his relying on 'transcendental categories' of cause and effect, and questionable notions of 'original' and 'copy'; arguing that Bürger misunderstands the neo-avant-garde as a mere 'repetition' of the historical avant-garde, and so unwisely condemns the efforts of the historical avant-garde along with

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[212] F. T. Marinetti, Manifesto of Futurism, in Umbro Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1973, p. 22.

[213] Murphy has argued 'it is clear that for the most part his [Bürger's] theoretical description and analyses are oriented specifically towards dada and surrealism' See R. Murphy, *Modernism, Expressionism & Theories of the Avant-Garde,* New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

[214] Murphy, p. 1.

the neo-avant-garde.[215] Hal Foster has also weighed into the debate by arguing that Bürger's analysis is overly simplistic, and as a response, he complicates that analysis in numerous ways, arguing, through Freudian trauma theory, that 'the avant-garde work is never historically effective or fully significant in its initial moments' and that 'it cannot be because it is traumatic – a hole in the symbolic order of its time.'[216] The neo-avant-garde, according to Foster is not a simple repetition but a traumatic repetition that fills in the hole torn in the symbolic order by the historical avant-garde. In this way, he criticises Bürger's reliance on a model of art that includes notions of original and copy – questionable notions for a dialectician such as Bürger.

Foster's, Murphy's and Buchloh's complaints notwithstanding, another objection that might be levelled at Bürger is that the avant-gardes themselves are fractured along numerous lines; branch into various "schools", and splinter into a cacophony of claims and counter-claims. All this activity places a good deal of strain on Buger's theoretical frame. To unite all these competing issues under one theory is Bürger's challenge; a challenge that at all times threatens to fail because Bürger appears too selective in his choice of who is in and who is out of his theoretical frame. Bürger's intention is to control the material through his theory, and this sometimes leads him to oversimplification. This is because the heterogeneous array of activities Bürger groups together under the designation avant-garde both converge and diverge at numerous points. However, Bürger's thesis is important for the way it frames the debate between art and the common objects of everyday life, a relationship that is not only important, but necessary it will be argued.

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[215] B.H.D. Buchloh, See B. H. D. Buchloh, The Primary Colours for a Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde, *October*, Volume 37, Summer, 1986, p. 43.
[216] H. Foster, *The Return of the Real: Art at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1996, p. 29.

In understanding the importance of this relationship between art and its Other or everyday life within the context of the avant-garde, Bürger is in fact close to understanding how both art and life relate to each other, and indeed how art always relates to an Other such as life, or what is not art, as much as it relates to other art objects that occupy the structure of art.[217] Even if he ultimately fails to understand the way dialectic functions in the art and life debate, Bürger does, as a Marxist and reader of Hegel, understand the relationship between the development of an object and its understanding or critical reception. However, he does not fully appreciate the constitutive (Hegelian) function of that reception; the way judgment produces the object of art as an art object; not simply receive the object as already art. He does however; understand correctly, that institutional autonomy and the avant-garde assault on such autonomy are dialectically related, and as such, need to be considered together, not as separate categories. Bürger is also correct in understanding art as an institution. He correctly argues, for example, 'It became apparent that the social effect of a work of art cannot simply be gauged by considering the work itself but that its effect is decisively determined by the institution within which the work "functions"'.[218] However, he fails to understand the relationship between the rejection of the avant-garde – its failure to enter life – and the subsequent place that 'failure' finds in the art structure through judgment. Equally, he fails to see the way sublation is primary, or prior to reception, and that the object is an ordinary thing, but also, that same ordinary thing 'seen' as a work of art when viewed in parallax.[219] He

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[217] The use of uppercase in the word Other is to distinguish it from the general use of 'other' in so far as the Other with a capital O is not other to something in a positive sense but Other in a dialectical sense, or other as part of the thing discussed, not substantially different from it.

[218] Bürger, p. 90.

[219] It is not surprising that Bürger does not use parallax in the way the thesis does given that Bürger was writing in the 1970's and the interpretation of parallax employed in the thesis was only

does not see that judgment does not judge art in contradistinction from life, but rather tears asunder what is originally joined. Art and life are but the same thing seen in parallax.

Given these preliminary conclusions, a discussion of Bürger's key concepts and arguments will serve to elaborate on the problems raised above and offer a solution through the key concepts of place, art structure, and parallax judgment. A discussion of Bürger's key concepts will be outlined below, followed by an elaboration of the complex field of the avant-garde in such a way that some of the omissions in Bürger's text can be identified, and the solution to the problem of the relationship between art and life in the context of this chapter can be presented.

The historical avant-garde, as Bürger theorised it, had its beginnings in the early twentieth century, and still impact on the creation, exhibition and discourse on art today.[220] Bürger provides a frame for understanding the avant-garde through the legacy of both Kantian and Hegelian aesthetics. He articulates the break modern art makes with the art of the immediate past; a break wherein art enters a stage of 'self-criticism' and begins to 'address itself to art as an institution'.[221] For Bürger, as a dialectician, art of the avant-garde is intimately connected to both the history in which it unfolds and the critical judgments of the 'cognizing individual' which are not understood as external to the objects of judgment but are, on the contrary, structurally connected with them.[222] Any opposition between avant-garde and autonomy for example, is not understood as a simple binary opposition, but rather as

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formulated by Slavoj Zizek in 2006. See S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006.
[220] See Introduction.
[221] Bürger, p. 22.
[222] Bürger, p. 22. However, Bürger does not realise the extent of the connection between judgment and structural place.

two sides of the one problem. In *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984) Bürger outlines the conflict between what he refers to as 'autonomous art' and the development of the 'historical avant-garde' which reacts to the 'hermeticism' of autonomous art; to its removal from the practical sphere of everyday life. [223]

Taking his point of departure from a theoretical field that combines an Hegelio-Marxist historicism allied to Immanuel Kant's aesthetic theory, Bürger argues that through the development of the 'historical avant-garde movements, the social subsystem that is art enters the stage of self-criticism.' [224] The target of that self-criticism is autonomous aesthetics according to Bürger. 'In bourgeois society' he argues, 'art occupies a special status that is most succinctly referred to as autonomy.' [225] This special status of autonomous art, for Bürger, involves its divorce 'from the praxis of life.' [226] The aim of the historical avant-garde, he contends, is to negate the bourgeois art institution and 'reintegrate art into the praxis of life'. [227]

For Bürger, it is only through the avant-garde that the art institution as autonomous, comes into view, and begins to present as a problem to be overcome. The difficulty of breaking with autonomy and entering life is that any such break is only registered as such within the structural system that accords it a place against autonomy as its dialectical or negative other: 'Only after art, in the nineteenth-

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[223] Bürger, p. 24. It should be said however, that this view of the avant-garde as antithetical to autonomy or 'art for art's sake' is not how the American critic Clement Greenberg understood the term avant-garde. In his early publication *Avant-garde and Kitsch*, (1939) Greenberg understands the 'art for art's sake movement' *as* avant-garde. The formalists coming out of Cubism are exemplars of Greenberg's idea of the avant-garde. See C. Greenberg, Avant-Garde and Kitsch, in J. O'Brien, *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Chicago, University of Chicao Press, 1986, pp. 5-22.

[224] Bürger, p. 22. The German Idealist philosopher, Immanuel Kant was the first to systematically position the aesthetic as autonomous from the fields of cognition and ethics. See E. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing, 1987. Arguably the avant-gardes do not so much form movements as share motives and targets, both political and aesthetic (or anti-aesthetic).

[225] Bürger, p. 24.

[226] Bürger.

[227] Bürger, p. 22.

century Aestheticism, has altogether detached itself from the praxis of life can the aesthetic develop "purely". But the other side of autonomy, art's lack of social impact, also becomes recognizable.'[228]   In other words, the two sites of art – autonomy and life praxis – form a dialectical pair wherein the freedom *from* autonomy makes sense only in dialectical relation *to* autonomy. Any escape from autonomy will be in autonomy's name; only register meaning in relation to it. The integration of art and life, Bürger argues, 'has not occurred, and presumably cannot occur, in bourgeois society unless it be as a false sublation of autonomous art'.[229]

This historical situation presents a number of questions regarding the function and value of art. But in the context of this thesis three related questions surface with the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century. The first of these questions: is it possible to escape from the confines of the art institution as the aims of avant-garde under Bürger's analysis might suggest?[230] Secondly, does anything lie beyond the walls of art-institutional confinement or is this outside a product of the attempt to escape the institution itself?   Finally, if this outside is the place of everyday life, and if the inside, that is, the autonomous space of painting, is a special place removed from everyday life, do they have any common ground?

I will argue below that this is indeed the case. The outside, and along with it, the objects of everyday life, not traditionally considered art, are to be understood structurally as the product of attempts at escape by art itself, and that such products

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[228] Bürger.

[229] Bürger, p. 54. One such 'false sublation' would be the commodity aesthetic of pop art by Andy Warhol et al, which 'enters life' but the commercial life of consumer society. This is discussed further below.

[230] Aleka Zupancic links freedom of the subject to the law by stating 'one has to discover the point where the subject itself plays an (active) part in lawful, causal necessity'. See A. Zupancic, *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan*, London, Verso, 2000, p. 33. The thesis understands the 'active part' of the subject through judgment, in the causal formation of the art structure.

are only to be understood as art from the perspective of the art institution, or more

precisely, from the perspective of what I refer to as the art structure from which

freedom is sought. However, this does amount to the suggestion that the art structure

is deterministic in any straightforward sense. It does not mean the context

determines the fate of art, but rather the 'outside' as much as the inside, is

structurally related. The art structure is not a hegemonic monolith that swallows all

particularity as Bürger's thesis sometimes suggests. The structure both precedes the

art located within it, but paradoxically, is only retroactively presupposed. Equally,

the necessary imposition of aesthetic judgment on the structure actually determines

the "shape" of the structure as much as the structure determines the place of art

within it.[231]

This conclusion will be supported by an insight from Hegel's critique of

Kantian epistemology, that 'behind the so-called curtain [Kant's veil of categories]

which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless we

go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as there may be something

behind there which can be seen.'[232] In the context of this chapter, the outside is

understood as a product of the attempts to escape the art institution or structure

through objects introduced into the structure. However, this does not lead to a

context type of argument: that art is no more than a consequence of being found in an

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[231] To say that judgment is 'necessary' is a controversial claim. However, the thesis develops a sustained argument within the context of each chapter to prove that judgment is in fact necessary even when judgment does not come in the form of 'this is beautiful' or even 'that is rubbish' or even the refusal to judge in a formal sense. The mere discussion of a candidate for art is a form of judgment, as is the holding of an exhibition, the vandalising of a painting, the forced removal of works from a museum etc. The very moment we treat or recognise an object as referring to the art structure, we have already judged it. It will have been art all along.

[232] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 103.

art context.[233] On the contrary, the context in which art finds itself does not simply determine what art is since the context – the art institution, or art structure – are not only presupposed but equally, in a Hegelian sense, posited in the process of judgment.[234] Freedom, it will be demonstrated, is evidenced by the attempt to find freedom as the product of that attempt constitutes the very art institution, or art structure. Freedom and art-institutional confinement are but two perspectives on the one thing.[235]

Before addressing the problem of the sublation of art and life and its relation to aesthetic judgment as productive of art, the objections raised by Murphy, Buchloh and Foster will be better understood if first the complex, and often contradictory field that could be understood to comprise the avant-garde, is outlined first. The debate over the complexity of the avant-garde – who is in and who is out – along with the question of the repetition or otherwise of the neo-avant-garde, are themselves part of the field referred to as avant-garde, not separate from it. It is not a case of the authentic avant-garde verses the inauthentic repetition of the neo-avant-garde since the very question involves a judgment, and, as will become clear, is formational or productive of the art itself understood as avant-garde. Therefore an explication of the oftentimes very contradictory field understood as the avant-garde will assist in the understanding Bürger's theory in relation to the broader field of avant-garde

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[233] This type of context argument is the basic premise of George Dickie. It is also close to the position of Arthur Danto. The thesis offers an alternative understanding of the relationship between art and context through the introduction of the art structure.

[234] I invoke here Hegel's infamous response to Kantian reflective judgment dealt with in the introduction and touched on at various points in the thesis in general: that the 'Absolute' posits its own presuppositions and is nothing more than the various attempts at realising it's 'notion'.

[235] Below, and throughout the thesis, I will draw on the recent theory of the Slavenian theorist, Slavoj Zizek, especially his interpretation of the notion of parallax, or the perspectival shift that allows us to see the one thing differently. S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006.

activity with the view to understanding relationship between inside and outside with regard to the 'false sublation' of art and life Bürger theorises.

To take the historical avant-garde in isolation, we find a very heterogeneous field which can accommodate in two different movements – Berlin Dada and Russian Constructivism – a shared involvement in left politics and a shared vision for a future divorced from Bourgeois culture. Both are largely materialist in theory. Both are highly politicised. John Heartfield for example, was a member of the Berlin branch of Dada; an artist with Marxist sympathies working in exile after the rise of Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists. Russian Constructivism is also a politicised, materialist art movement, one supported by two of the seminal Dadaists from the Berlin branch, John Heartfield and George Grosz.[236] But where the constructivists intended a marriage of machine and man – later emphasised in the productivist phase of constructivism – the Berlin Dadaists developed an antipathy toward the machine, understanding it as the extension of the Weimar state that lead the Germans into the First World War. It is hard to imagine the Weimar Republic, let alone the National Socialists under Adolf Hitler, embracing the work of the Berlin Dadaists in the same way the work of the productivists were, at least for a time, embraced as a propaganda tool for the Communist Politburo before being jettisoned for the state-sanctioned art of Soviet realism under Stalin.

To further complicate matters, Dada is also divided between the various Dada(s): Zurich, Berlin, New York, Hanover, Paris, Cologne etc. These branches did not operate like a franchise where the products of each shared a common form or content. Zurich Dada, for instance, shared Berlin Dada's hostility to Bourgeois

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[236] See for instance T. O. Benson, Mysticism, Materialism, and the Machine in Berlin Dada, *Art Journal,* Vol 46, No. 1, Spring, 1987, pp. 46-55.

culture and the rationality that sent so many to the trenches, but not its political legibility. Hugo Ball's pronouncements in the *Dada Manifesto* for instance, outlined the recipe for 'eternal bliss' which consisted of nothing more than the chanting of the name Dada 'till one goes crazy, till one loses consciousness.'[237] The politics of Berlin Dada, with its hostility to the fascist military machine and the presumed means-ends rationality driving it, would be anathema to the Italian Futurists who harbour a 'violent desire' in their rhetoric of destruction. John Heartfield's photomontage work is exemplary here. His seminal piece of Marxist propaganda is *Der Sinn des Hitlergrusses* (1932) (Figure 1) (The Meaning of the Hitler Salute). It depicts the National Socialist leader, Adolf Hitler, taking money (bribes) from German big business interests such as the Ruhr industrialist Fritz Thyssen.

Figure 1

Another theoretical alliance can be formed between Zurich Dada and Surrealism. Dada, which developed out of the provocative antics of Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, anticipates the movement of Surrealism by attempting to breach the bounds of reason with an appeal to chance and the unconscious. An obvious countervail to the Futurist

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[237] H. Ball, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dada_Manifesto, p. 1.

fetish of violence; its technophilia, and its vision of a mechanistic utopia, is Dada's critique of technology and its assault on the rationalist discourse that it associated with the devastation of the first world war.[238] The Cologne branch of Dada is also a direct result of the war, or more correctly, its political aftermath. Cologne Dada developed in the autumn of 1919 when the terms of the Treaty of Versailles placed Cologne under British military control. The political collage of its founder, Max Ernst aligns it with Berlin Dada, while the fact that Ernst went on to become a seminal figure in the Surrealist movement historically connects Dada with Surrealism as it does with the French branch. It should not be forgotten however, that while it is true that many of the French Dadaists contributed to the development of Surrealism, the new movement was founded not simply as the 'logical consequence, but rather a reaction from Dadaism', of the failed idealism of the Dadaists, and in this sense separates it from Dada as much as it connects it to Dada.[239]

But even so, the two movements share common ground, not just with each other but also with Cubism and the readymades of Marcel Duchamp. On the one hand Surrealism is linked to the pranks and chance encounters of Dada, and on the other, the mundane world of the readymade, where the ordinary is given over to the extraordinary. Surrealism is mired in the murky depths of the unconscious through its evocation of the uncanny, the marvellous, the extraordinary and the outmoded, while being equally attached to the ordinary, often readymade, objects such as the smoking pipe, clothes iron, and the mannequin. Surrealism can also be linked with

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[238] Marinetti F. T. Marinetti, The Manifesto of Fururism 1909, in U. Apollonio, *Futurist Manifestos*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1973, P. 23.
[239] W. Verkauf, Dada-Cause and Effect, in W. Verkauf, *Dada: Monograph of a Movement* New York, 1975, p.15.

Cubism through an obsessive attachment to the 'primitive' objects such as masks, totems and ritualistic figures. Surrealism, developing out of Dada, shared the earlier art's interest in chance and non-rational thought processes, but in many instances eschewed the pranks of the Zurich branch on the one hand, and the politics of the Berlin arm of the movement. Surrealism is one of Bürger's chosen movements but he doesn't appreciate that to choose Surrealism, one must choose between Bataille and Breton, or between the real and the ideal, because Surrealism has, at least by Bataille, been divided along these lines.[240]

Figure 2   Figure 3
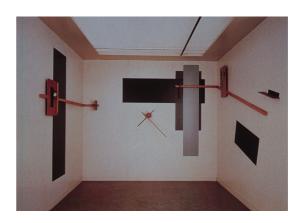
The case of the Hanover Dadaist, Kurt Schwitters, is equally complicated. Schwitters approached the Dadaist, Richard Huelsenbeck asking for admission to the Dada club only to be rejected. Schwitters, being informed by the politically-inclined Richard Huelsenbeck, that his face was 'too Bourgeois' to join Dada, nevertheless embarked on his own Dadaist-inspired 'Mertz' project. Mertz included a Cubist-inspired collage that eventually spread beyond the canvas and into a number of his own dwellings. The resultant work was his seminal *Merzbau* (1923 – 37) or Merz

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[240] More recently, Bürger acknowledges this division in Surrealism. See, P. Bürger, *Thinking of the Master*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 2002, p. 27.

Building (Figure 2); a work in progress beginning in 1923, with versions in Hanover, Norway and England. Schwitters, a Dadaist, with Cubist roots, ends up making what in retrospect resembles installation art of the neo-avant-garde of the 1960's and after.[241] Schwitters *Merzbau* (1923 – 37) also points in the direction of the *Proun* (1923) 'installations', of the Russian Constructivist, El Lissitzky. El Lissitzky's *Poun Room* (1923) (Figure 3), was constructed in the same year as Schwitters' work, and in both cases the artist aimed to exit the idealist space of the framed canvas. And yet the two works are radically different. The Lissitzky work appears more deliberate, employing geometric forms which respond to the space in which it is installed, in a more contrived manner, while Schwitters' *Merzbau* is more 'organic'; it appears to spread like some virus throughout the building. Scwitters' materials include any junk the artist could lay his hands on, while the Lissitzky room employs materials closer in appearance to art materials.

Figure 4

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[241] See Chapter 4 for an extended discussion of Installation art in the context of Schwitters' art as proto-installation art.

The Russian Constructivists generally *do* intend art to enter life as Bürger suggests; but what is the form of this life? Alexandra Rodchenko for instance, does proclaim: 'It is time that art entered into life', but only, he insists, 'in an organized fashion.'[242] This 'organized fashion' involves 'life organized along Constructivist lines' rather than life under a capitalist economy.[243] In many ways this 'life' was no less utopian, nor the objects constructed in its honour, any more functional than Bruegel's *Tower of Babel* (1563). For example, Tatlin's ideal Tower or *Monumemt to the Third International* (1920) (Figure 4), was never built, but nevertheless was meant to be a model for art as engaged with life itself. According to Bürger, however, this is the aim of all the avant-garde, to not so much enter bourgeois life as it was, but to change it. While the avant-garde and autonomous art both shared the desire to negate the 'means-ends rationality of the bourgeois everyday', autonomous art was content to simply negate the bourgeois everyday while the avant-garde aimed to 'organize a new life praxis from a basis *in* art.'[244]

Duchamp, who shared nothing politically with the Futurists, and shunned the Constructivists Bolshevik leanings of productivism, adopted the formal devices of the former, wedding them to Cubist form. This is most evident in such works as *The Passage From Virgin to Bride* (1912) and *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912) (Figure 5).

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[242] A. Rodchenko, Slogans and Organizational Programme of the Workshop for the Study of Painting in State Art Colleges, in *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Edited by C. Harrison and P. Wood, Oxford, Cambridge, Blackwell, 1995, p. 315.
[243] Rodchenko.
[244] Bürger, p. 49. The emphasis is mine.

Figure 5

Here we see the influence of the cinematic frame and sequential photography of Eadweard Muybridge, through the capturing and freezing of movement, the segmented image, and traces of time which arguably links both the Futurists and Duchamp to some of the concerns of the impressionists of the late 19th century.[245] It was the impressionists that 'captured' impressions of the movement of outdoor scenes which brought a temporal element into painting that was only nascent in romanticism.[246] And yet the renunciation of the hand; the denigration of the visual, and the critique of originality implied by the Duchampian readymade, such as *Bottle Dryer* (1914) (Figure 6), would sit uncomfortably with the Futurist embrace of the painting medium, its emphasis on optical effects, and its conflation of Cubist and Impressionist techniques. Nor would such readymades in any way signal the future age of the machine, being an old industrial technology.

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[245] Duchamp denies any influence of the Futurists but this does not prohibit a formal connection.

[246] It is, I would argue, no small coincidence that Lumiere and others who brought the camera into a developed state out of the invention of the camera obscura, through the invention of the photographic camera, was a Frenchman; that France was the 'birthplace' of impressionism. It is also interesting to note that the word 'photograph' comes from the Greek words 'photo' (light) and 'graphein' (draw): to draw with light. To 'draw [or paint] with light' would be a fair description of impressionism.

Figure 6

While it is true the readymade is an ordinary article of life, it is more than this: it is a found object which implies that art is already made, that the artist chooses rather than creates. It is problematic under Bürger's criteria, to include Duchamp. Duchamp's readymade, despite being an ordinary object, an *objet trouve,* was never intended by Duchamp to be encountered as an object occupying our everyday environment, nor was it to function as a piece of productivist propaganda. He has, in fact, been understood as largely hostile to many of the ambitions of both the French and the German avant-gardes.[247] Duchamp's abandonment of painting – his 'Marcel, no more painting, go get a job' – indicated a clear division between art and the practical sphere of everyday life, the link the Russian constructivists made via, in particular, the later phase of productivism.[248]

The readymade was made, or rather, *readymade*, for exhibition; it is inconceivable without the art institutional frame, not because the context determines

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[247] See for instance, T. de Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage From the Virgin to the Bride*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, p. 106.
[248] Duchamp, p 133.

the art, but because the placing of the readymade object within an art context tests the institutions capacity to absorb its shock and locate its difference. By doing so, the intrusive object draws attention to the structure of art and the relationship between the objects within that structure, and what is not included. In fact, in an interview with James Johnson Sweeney in 1956 Duchamp argued that 'there are two kinds of artists: the artist that deals with society, is integrated into society; and the other artist, the completely freelance artist.'[249] For Duchamp, the 'freelance' artist is not someone who escapes autonomy, but someone who tests the conditions under which something becomes art, how a 'Rembrandt [can become] an ironing board' for instance.[250]
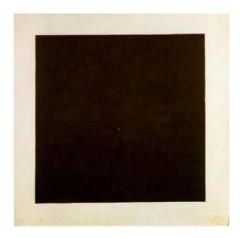
It might also be pointed out, as Murphy does, that because Bürger has nothing to say about Expressionism, Suprematism, or even De Stijl, such omissions damage Bürger's claim to theorise the avant-garde as a whole.[251] One might argue that Bürger's category 'historical avant-garde' creates the art placed under it by excluding those works that do not fit his contrived theoretical frame. However, reading Bürger in his own terms, these practices, especially Suprematism and De Stijl, while sharing some elements of the avant-garde including novelty and formal experimentation, as defined by Bürger, also have elements of formal autonomy and/or a residual realism that aligns them more with Bürger's 'system-immanent' form of criticism than with the 'self-critical' tendency of the historical avant-garde that understood its duty as

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[249] M. Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 133.
[250] Ducmamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 142.
[251] Richard Murphy has recently taken Bürger to task for his omission of expressionism. See R. Murphy, *Modernism, Expressionism & Theories of the Avant-Garde,* New York, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

the destruction of art as an institution, or at the very least, the use of art to transform society according to a utopian model.

Figure 7

The exclusion of Kazimir Malevich might appear understandable since Malevich's non-objective painting maintained a position of autonomy as *Black Square on White Ground* (1915) (Figure 7) attests. It represents, or presents, nothing but a black square on a white void, as removed from life as is possible. Furthermore, Malevich was in no way interested in art as a revolutionary tool in the way much of the Russian avant-garde embraced – including his former pupil, El Lissitzky – that is, in the project of art not just entering life as it is in its Bourgeois formation but in bringing about the utopian world of the communist state. However, if the avant-garde involves a 'shock of the new', and the introduction of a revolutionary aesthetic, then Malevich is a prime candidate for the title of avant-garde artist. In any case his exclusion draws attention to the narrow compass of Bürger's theory.

Moreover, the avant-garde could be further divided by country: French and German; or even further divide it into Paris and Munich, by indicating the differences of approach between the two branches. It could be argued, as others

have, that the historical pressures exerting an influence on artists in Paris are not those effecting artists in Munich at the turn of the twentieth century: The effects of Realism; Impressionism; Cezannean Impressionism and Cubism, were only marginally felt by the Munich avant-garde which was more expressionist in its attitude.[252]

Despite these reservations, it would be wrong to reject Bürger out of hand because he drew attention to something that unites any artist adopting the posture of the avant-garde: that is, the desire to test the boundary between what is considered art and what is not art or part of life. Regardless of the individual contents of works, the semiotic meaning within the frame of the particular painting; regardless of the stated intention of the various group manifestoes or individual pronouncements of artists, when the object provokes because it appears either out of place or withholds what an audience expects from art, questions are provoked by the object intruding on our taste or conception of what art is.[253] However, while the issue of art's identity is raised by the provocative object of avant-garde art, arts identity – 'what is art?' – is not the issue. It is not a case of 'what is art', but rather, as Bürger's thesis implies, if not overtly states; 'where is art'; what divides the inside from the outside, where is art and where is life? What is in and what is out of Bürger's thesis is not the central issue; it is, as Bürger correctly argues, the relationship between the two structural places of art and life. Is art isolated from everyday life, trapped in an autonomous space, or is it part of the very fabric of life; something found in paintings of soup cans, for example?

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[252] T. de Duve.
[253] I argue below that the rejections, refusals and omissions, as much as the positive judgments of art, actually bring the object into being as art.

Another question raised by Bürger's thesis in the context of inside and outside the art institution, or what the thesis is calling the art structure, is the question of the 'false sublation' of art and life. Bürger's point about 'false sublation' is the crux of the problem and provides the solution that eluded Bürger and others. The problem of 'false sublation' and its significance for the location of art is also found in Bürger's example of Pop art. In pop art the sublation of art and life involves the joining of autonomous art with the commercial world of popular culture.

The American Pop artist, Andy Warhol is for Bürger, the face, or perhaps surface, of Pop. Warhol belongs to Bürger's neo-avant-garde. According to Bürger, the neo-avant-garde fails to enter life, except in the form of a false sublation of art and commercial life. He argues that such a false sublation amounts to nothing more than an empty gesture. He states that 'the Neo-avant-garde, which stages for a second time the avant-gardiste break with tradition, becomes a manifestation that is void of sense'.[254] With Andy Warhol's Pop art in mind, and responding to a point made by Theodor Adorno about the value of the new, Bürger suggests that 'if art adapts to this most superficial element in the commodity society, it is difficult to see how it is through such adaptation that it can resist [that commodity society]'.[255]

[254] Bürger, p. 61.
[255] Bürger.

This discussion leads to the notion of a 'false sublation', that is commodity culture.[256] In this context, Andy Warhol's Pop 'paintings' serves as Bürger's example of false sublation. Warhol's *200 Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962) (Figure 8), is a seminal work of Pop art which places the low in the location or place of the high, giving it equal dignity.
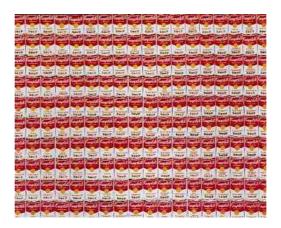
Figure 8

In this work, Warhol challenges the lofty ambitions of abstract painting in general, and Abstract Expressionist painting in particular, by subjecting the high-minded seriousness of artists such as the Americans Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning to an ironic, anti-aesthetic assault. A common, commercial object is represented in place of the dark, depths of the soul; soup cans, coke bottles, boxes of soap pads, replace the angst filled canvas of Abstract Expressionism.

The artist uses the medium of oil paint on canvas rather than the widely available medium of acrylic to 'paint' a commercial product lacking all seriousness expected from a painting medium; thus emphasising the juxtaposition of two incommensurate places: the high and low; the elevated place of autonomy and the

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[256] Bürger, p. 54.

humble, ordinary place of everyday life. Art such as *200 Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962), asks the spectator to consider the two places – high and low – as having equal rights to occupy the elevated place of art in general; as if any common object deserved the right to occupy the lofty place of painting.

The American neo-Dadaist, Jasper Johns produced a sculptural version of Pop in a manner not unlike Warhol. His *Painted Bronze* (1960) (Figure 9), like the Warhol, employs a high art medium (bronze) to treat a commonplace subject. The subject of the work – a pair of common Ballantine ale cans – are made from bronze, a fine art material used in the production of modern sculpture.

Figure 9

However, this juxtaposition of the high and the low, or art and non-art does not so much collapse the distinction but rather demonstrate the dialectical dependence of the one on the Other; how the One is divide into Two. Only within a formal structure of oppositions or differences could such an object 'make sense', or register as art.[257] However, as with Saussure's structural theory of language, explained in the introduction, this opposition is not natural, and it is the break with nature that

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[257] It is significant that Johns splits the can in two, one open, the other closed because this division is not between two cans but the one can seen in two ways, open and closed.

registers the symbolic field that is the art structure. It is not simply a break *from* nature, but rather a break *with* nature; nature as what the art is not; nature as void; that allows the symbolic or structural location of what appears to be two substantially opposed artefacts to find their place as art, in a way analogous to the way 'dog' finds its place in negative relation to 'cat' as not-cat, rather than dog in a positive sense.[258]

This 'false sublation' is the registration of the high and the low in the way the one thing is seen as two or seen in parallax, as a 'secret harmony' as Hegel might have put it.[259] The division between art and life, or art and the readymade, commercial object, is non-substantial or 'non-objective', rather than simply subjective or objective.[260] Or, as Marcel Duchamp put it, '[I wanted to] expose the basic antinomy between art and the readymades'.[261] The antinomy between art and the readymade is an antinomy between art and an ordinary object of life. The antinomy, a coinage of Immanuel Kant, involves the co-presence of two seemingly contradictory positions of which both are nevertheless true.

In this context, the antinomy between art and life would be understood as the co-presence of two contradictory conclusions: art is removed from life/art is part of life. The 'false sublation' of the high and the low, or art as autonomous and art as part of everyday life, would be structured like an antinomy in the Kantian sense. We see a number of ways in which art has been historically sublated with life and yet also registers as art. The 'false sublation', or the high and the low, is registered in

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[258] While Kant valued nature above art because art was a 'dependent beauty', or presenting a purposive, artistic intent, Hegel argued that art's conceptual 'nature' made is all the more important as a presentation of 'spirit'.
[259] G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 73.
[260] The term 'non-objective' was coined by the Suprematist, Kasimir Malevich. I discuss Malevich's concept of non-objective painting below.
[261] M. Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973, p. 142.

Cubist collage's use of ordinary materials, and those materials understood as art. It is registered in Constructivism's development of the basic insights of Cubist collage. It is found in Surrealism's juxtaposition of the marvellous and the ordinary. In fact in all the works discussed above, the dialectic or antinomies of high and low, figure and ground, material and ideal, inside and outside, subject and object, art and life, are held in tension rather than occupying substantially different locations.

Bürger's point of 'sublation', that is, the reconciliation of the dialectic between art and life, if actually accomplished, would spell the end of art since art would be indistinguishable from the ubiquity of the commercial world.[262] While Bürger does not sufficiently elaborate on this point, he can be understood in the context of this thesis, as saying that if, in the absence of any visual forms of distinguishing art from non art, we need some other mechanism for discriminating or distinguishing between life and art otherwise either everything is art or nothing is art anymore. Both conclusions amount to the same thing: there is no art if art and life, high and low etc, are sublated. There is another conclusion however; the conclusion drawn throughout this thesis and the clue to the solution is found in Duchamp's reference to antinomy mentioned above. The importance of the antinomy cannot be overstated. In fact, it's very absence from the literature on the avant-garde debate, and Duchamp literature in particular, should cause some concern given Duchamp made explicit reference to antinomy in his collected writings: his antinomy between art and the readymades or common objects of life.

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[262] This is Arthur Danto's thesis. He claims that in fact such an end can be located in Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* (1964). A. Danto, The End of Art, in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1986.

However, if we take a different perspective on the Hegelian question of sublation or the synthesis of the dialectical conflict between two antinomic positions – thesis and antithesis – the teleological inevitability of art history (that it comes to an end) can be addressed and overturned. Sublation is nothing more than thesis and antithesis combined prior to the work of the understanding (or productive imagination) taking them apart.[263] In other words, sublation is the two as one, prior to judgment. This one is divided by the perspective of the viewer who divides one and the same object from itself. A urinal is divided into a urinal and *Fountain* (1917) (Figure 10). The antinomy is between an ordinary bottle rack (Figure 6) and the same bottle rack seen as art, or viewed in parallax. The split that is found represented by Johns as between two ale cans (Figure 9) is actually divided between art (bronze) and life – the everyday activity of drinking beer, and that everyday activity seen as art. Art does not end by entering life but rather art and life are a priori sublated and only divided by aesthetic judgment; a parallax judgment that sees the one thing as two.

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[263] I paraphrase a comment made by Slavoj Zizek in the context of German Idealism. He argues, apropos of Hegel's 'pre-ontological universe' or Real of monstrous apparitions , that the 'understanding' rather than 'reason' is the infinite power of 'dismembering' or understanding as separate, what convention holds together. See S. Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, London, Verso, 1999, p. 31.

Figure 10

The concept of antinomy and it's elaboration through the concept of parallax or the gap between two incompatible positions (art/life), is central to both the art and life debate.

Immanuel Kant introduced the antinomy in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), and explores the problem further in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790). The antinomies of pure reason for Kant represented two seemingly opposed, mutually exclusive positions which nevertheless do not present as a contradiction since both can be thought as equally possible. One such example given by Kant is the equally valid propositions that the universe is finite and infinite.[264] In the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant links antinomy to judgment via the sense of 'purposiveness' displayed by both nature and art to which judgment responds.[265]

In the section titled, 'Dialectic of the Aesthetical Judgment', Kant tries to find a solution to the antinomy of taste which reads as follows. '*Thesis:* The judgment of

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[264] E. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 470-471.
[265] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, New York, Prometheus Books, 2000p. 247.

taste is not based upon concepts; for otherwise it would admit of controversy. *Antithesis:* The judgment of taste is based on concepts; for otherwise despite the diversity, we could not quarrel about it'.[266]   In other words, I might be convinced of the universal validity of my particular judgment but have no proof of its correctness or extension beyond my own subjective claim. For Kant, the ultimate 'solution' to the 'antinomy of taste' is to suggest that 'perhaps' a 'determining ground' or 'supersensible substrate of humanity' underpins, and collapses the apparent contradictory positions.[267] Ultimately, what guarantees the validity of our judgments of art is nothing more than a metaphysical concept of a 'supersensible' ground.

Rather than fall back on metaphysics as Kant does through reference to a supersensible ground, Hegel's solution to the antinomies is found in his elaboration of Kantian dialectic and through his extension of the role of judgment formulated by Kant.[268] Hegel was critical of the way Kant divides up the elements of his system such as the division between subject and object, sensibility and understanding; or nature and freedom, and ultimately, between appearances and things-in-themselves. Hegel is critical of Kant's timidity, his unwillingness to press forward with the initial insights into dialectic and systematic structure. Dialectic for Hegel involves the immanent division between internal oppositions, that is, oppositions that have no outside solution; oppositions only through a 'correspondence and unity of both sides' within a 'free reconciled totality'.[269]

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[266] Kant, p. 231.
[267] E. Kant, p. 233.
[268] I am indebted to the Hegel scholar Allan Hance for my interpretation of Hegel in what follows, but the conclusion for the thesis in relation to the avant-garde and the art and life debate is my own. See especially A. Hance, The Art of Nature and the Critique of Judgment, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Volume 6, number 1, March 1998, pp. 37 – 65.
[269] Hegel, p. 70-72.

The resolution or sublation of dialectical difference is generational of further division and as such is not to be resolved outside the process of dialectic itself. Hegel's solution to Kant's antinomy, through the extension of the dialectic, provides a critical tool to understand the art and life debate and the role of the avant-garde in relation to it. In particular, the role of aesthetic judgment after Hegel is the solution to the apparent binary division art/life. According to the Hegel scholar, Allan Hance, 'the structural similarity between reflective judgment [Kant] and dialectical reason is that both attempt to adduce the whole that enables one to contextualise and to make sense of an isolated part…whose significance is unclear.'[270] Reflective judgment, is just that, reflective; it involves 'merely a regulative rather than a constitutive cognitive function'.[271]

However, as Hance notes, Kant's use of merely 'regulative' judgments, rather than 'constitutive' judgments, 'restricts the activity of reflective judgments'.[272] Hegel, unlike Kant, insists on an objective, constitute form of judgment which dialectically reconciles disputes. According to Hance, Hegel develops Kant's notion of the 'productive imagination' and its role in producing aesthetic ideas through the joining of sensibility and understanding.[273] Contra Kant, Hegel denies the primacy of the aesthetic, and the distinction between intuition and concepts. Instead, through a critique of Kant's 'productive imagination', Hegel unites the aesthetic and the conceptual, the mere purposive with objective purpose, through the broader concept of the Notion. Analogously, the thesis argues for a constitutive, objective form of aesthetic judgment. The art institution, what the thesis refers to as the art structure,

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[270] Hance, p. 40
[271] Hance.
[272] Hance.
[273] Hance, p. 42.

involves, through the exercise of judgment, a constitutive role in the object becoming art.[274]

Hal Foster, in the context of discussing Bürger's theory of the avant-garde, argues against such a constitutive function for the art institution. He divides the avant-gardes between historical and the neo-avant-garde and makes the point that 'the historical avant-garde focuses on the conventional; the neo-avant-gardes concentrates on the institutional.[275] He goes on to critique Bürger's conclusion regarding the 'original' (historical) and 'copy' (neo) by arguing 'On the one hand, the institution of art does not totally govern aesthetic conventions (this is too determinist); on the other hand, these conventions [of modern art] do not totally comprise the institution (this is too formalist).'[276] 'In other words' he concludes, 'the institution of art may *enframe* aesthetic conventions, but it does not constitute them.'[277]

What Foster is trying to understand is the relationship between formal conventions and the role played by the art institution in the reception of art. Is art free or held prisoner to the language games of the art institution? The answer is both. The art institution, in the way it is understood within the context of this thesis, that is, as an art structure, is not simply a determining structure that baptises certain objects art and others not. Nor does it hermetically seal art in a separate sphere. The art structure is made up of art objects forged through successive judgments. The question that still requires an answer in the context of the avant-garde is: How could

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[274] This 'constitutive judgment' will be developed in greater detail throughout the thesis.
[275] H. Foster, *The Return of the Real: Art at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1996, p. 17.
[276] Foster.
[277] Foster.

objects rejected by the art institution and the cultural elite, gain accommodation in the same institution as exemplars of 'great' art? Moreover, what is the relationship between the rejection of the avant-garde and its later acceptance? The form of judgment is crucial to understanding this process. Kant's formal, reflective judgment, will not account for this phenomenon since such a judgment is merely subjective, when what has to be understood is how judgments that appear only subjective actually accord with the state of things, or become, objective. The concept of an art structure and the form of judgment understood in the thesis as a parallax judgment explains the way in which a subjective judgment becomes an objective account, or, as Hegel would put it, 'the object corresponds to its Notion.'[278]

Judgments do are not necessarily need to be positive; negative judgments serve the same purpose to locate an object as art, as even a superficial appraisal of the names of artists and works of art once rejected by the art institution, that have now found acceptance, will attest. The various Salons of the 19th Century are an example of a process of negative judgments, or rejections of art that has subsequently found acceptance as examples of significant avant-garde art. The Belgian art critic, Thierry de Duve has argued that the 'quarrels with the Salon of 1851' can be located as the site of the emergence of the avant-garde.[279]

However, as early as the 1830's, alternative salons showed works rejected by the Paris Salon and the French academy. Other Salon's such as the Salon des Refuses of 1874, 1875 and 1886 accepted thousands of hopeful painters rejected by the official Salon. These alternative salons actually gained in prestige as the fortunes of the official Salon declined. However, the most significant of these challenges to

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[278] G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 53
[279] T. de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998, p. 275.

the bourgeois art institution put forward by the emerging avant-garde was, as de Duve, and the American art critic, Michael Fried both agree, the Salon des Refuses of 1863.[280] Annexed to the official salon, this exhibition of rejected art included a work by one of the most confronting artists of the time, the French painter, Edward Manet. Manet's seminal painting, *Luncheon on the Grass* (1863) (Figure 11) is a work thought to be so shocking that Louis-Napoleon himself undertook to censure it lest it weaken his aging heart.[281] The Manet is shocking because it depicts a naked, rather than nude woman; a body that provocatively returns our gaze, not just through her eyes, but more disturbingly, through the real of her body.

Figure 11

The body as real flesh is juxtaposed with culture represented by the clothed, respectable bourgeois gentlemen. The provocation arises from the way the painting depicts in one and the same place, the high and the low, the real and the ideal. Names such as Paul Cezanne, Camille Pissarro, Henri Fantin-Latour, James Whistler and Manet himself, are just a small sample of the artists who participated in the

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[280] See note 73 above for de Duve position. See also M. Fried, Manet in His Generation: the Face of Painting in the 1860's, *Critical Enquiry*, Volume 19, Number 1, Autumn, 1992, pp. 22 – 69.
[281] G.H. Hamilton, *Manet and His Critics*, New York, Norton, 1969.

Salon des Refuses of 1863. The French Impressionists of the following decade, also finding themselves out of official favour, exhibited in similar salons. All these artists were rejected by the official Salon, and yet all are accepted today as exemplars of great modern painting.

The non-compromising abstraction found in Malevich's seminal work *Black Square on a White Ground* (1915) (Figure 7) would seem to come out of nowhere, to have no precursors, and yet, as was argued above, the avant-garde's understanding of the value of shock and negative judgments as having a formative effect, was already well understood by the time Malevich entered his 'non-objective' period.[282] Malevich noted that 'The Barbizon School in its day, called forth from the public a storm of indignation because of its renunciation of natural representation'.[283] This 'indignation' only intensified with the later avant-garde as 'Cezanne and later Cubism and the Futurists aroused in the public still greater indignation.'[284] In fact, almost all artists once considered by the broader art institution to be obscene, shocking, or just in poor taste, are now accepted as offering significant contributions to art history; a cursory glance at the last 150 years of art history would support this claim.[285]

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[282] Malevich returned to figuration after his non-objective hiatus.

[283] K. Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, New York, Dover Publications, 2003, p. 48.

[284] Malevich. The Hegelian scholar, Robert Pippin, has recently made a similar point about the degree of confrontation in avant-garde art. See R. Pippin, What Was Abstract Art (From the Point of View of Hegel), in *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 279.

[285] Yves-Alain Bois has just published a similar comment, but toward a different end. He notes that 'one of the essential condition of modern art, at least since Courbet and Manet (since the crisis in representation that presided over the work)…is the awareness that the risk of fraudulence…being called an emperor with no clothes, has become a necessary risk [something the artist must] even solicit…if [their art] is to be authentic'. See Y.A. Bois, Klein's Relevance Today, *October, 119, Winter, 2007,* p. 83. But as long ago as 1910, the Bloomsbury writer and artist, Roger Fry had already tentatively made the connection between rejection and acceptance, which has undergone a good deal of intentional or unintentional suppression by anti-aesthetic art and criticism which relied on the

Another example, the exhibition of 'Degenerate Art' by the National Socialists held in Munich in 1937, is a much publicised case of censorship which, in retrospect, had a productive effect on the status of the objects exhibited and rejected. The 'Degenerate Art' exhibition involved the removal of some 650 works from public and private collections believed to affront the 'purity' of the German (Aryan) culture. In the 'Degenerate Art' exhibition (Figure 12) the Nazi's showed a selection of the 'worst offenders' of official taste, works that most closely approached the obscene, sublime point beyond respectability; the other side of Malevich's 'border'.[286] Artists considered 'degenerate' included many artists that are today familiar representatives of the historical avant-garde; including names such as the Russians, El Lissitsky and Marc Chagall; the Dutch artist, Piet Mondrian; the German expressionists, Max Beckmann and Otto Dix, and the Hanover Dadaist, Kurt Schwitters, to name but a small number.

Figure 12

mutual exclusion of the two positions. Fry wrote, 'every new work of creative design is ugly until it is beautiful.' R. Fry, The Grafton Gallery: An Apologia, in *A Roger Fry Reader*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 113.

[286] Malevich made the point about his leap into the void of the Black Square, that 'even I was gripped by a kind of timidity bordering on fear'. See K. Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, New York, Dover Publications, 2003, p. 37.

Interestingly, well over two million Germans visited the show that promised to show the obscene itself, to reveal the monstrous underside of respectable culture.[287]   The negative judgments implied by such rejections or refusals by the academy, the Salons, or the state itself, are not divorced from the eventual acceptance of many such works as 'masterpieces', they are in fact constitutive of them as masterpieces. The avant-garde acts that appeared as alien intrusions from a kind of Kantian sublime outside, register, in retrospect, as always already possible, *as if* a place in the art structure, awaited them.[288]   The mere 'purposive' form of the Kantian judgment is given, in retrospect, a purpose to be art, to take place in the art structure. The form of judgment is strictly Hegelian. It involves a dialectic between what is considered art ('good taste') and what is considered not art (life, ordinary functional objects etc).

Hegel's dialectic engages with judgment as a constitutive function, as having a productive role.   Form and content are not only connected for Hegel, but interdependent. Other dialectical relations include purposiveness and purpose, beauty and the sublime, problem and solution, division and resolution, antinomy and sublation, and, in the context of this thesis, the high and the low, art and life. The thesis draws on Hegel's insight here by arguing that to pronounce a judgment on a work or art is not to judge the thing in isolation at a merely reflective (Kantian) level by simply assuming the thing-in-itself or the real object is lying somewhere beyond

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[287] O.K. Werckmeister, Degenerate Art: The Fate of the Avant-Garde in Nazi Germany – Book Review, *The Art Bulletin*, June, 1997.

[288] A point this thesis makes is that the object of our enquiry is not divorced from the enquiry itself but rather generated through the enquiry; an enquiry that includes the 'original' point of the enquiry, the object itself. This is a peculiar feature of the modern split between the representational object assumed to occupy a place 'out there' and the object represented through the act of representation itself. This way of dealing with representation is undertaken by art, philosophy, art theory, and linguistic theory, from the late 18th Century, in Kant, and especially in the wake of Hegel, through the late 19th and early 20th Century. Because the object of enquiry is responsible for the construction of the object enquired about, a negative judgment can equally lead to an object taking place as art, find a place in the structure.

our formal judgment. This is the taste argument found in various forms in Roger Fry, Clive Bell, Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried.[289] The judgment, in a Hegelian sense, is objective or productive of the work of art, but only in retrospect, as the verdict of positive or negative judgments coalesce over time, around the empty place in the art structure opened up by the offensive object, filling it with art meaning. Art is not outside or prior to judgment but a result of judgmental activity working *with* the intrusive object.   The form of this judgment, the thesis argues, is a parallax judgment.

Recently the Slovenian Philosopher, Slavoj Zizek has introduced a new conception of the notion of parallax. In *The Parallax View* (2006) he takes up the traditional notion of parallax which describes a familiar experience whereby 'the apparent displacement of an object (the shift of its position against a background), caused by a change in observational position that provides a new line of sight'.[290] 'The philosophical twist to be added', he suggests, 'is that the observed difference is not simply "subjective", due to the fact that the same object which exists "out there" is seen from two different stances, or points of view.'[291] Rather the point Zizek wants to make is more complex, it is neither simply subjective nor objective. Drawing on Hegel's ontological critique of Kantian epistemology, Zizek goes on to say, 'it is rather that…subject and object are inherently "mediated", so that an "epistemological" shift in the subject's point of view always reflects an "ontological" shift in the object itself."[292] In other words 'the subject's gaze is already inscribed

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[289] I will have more to say about Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried in chapter's 2 and 3.
[290] Zizek, p. 17.
[291] Zizek.
[292] Zizek.   I take up this point within the thesis and put forward the hypothesis that this epistemological/ontological mediation is none other than Kant's "thing-in-itself" as a "thing-in-self"

into the perceived object itself, in the guise of its "blind spot"…the point from which the object returns the gaze'.[293]

The gaze returns as an empty place in the art structure to which judgment responds through fear or desire, negative or positive reactions. It does not matter how the empty place appears, or the form the judgment takes as the above examples show, the object that gains the attention of the public and solicits attention, will find a place in the art structure. The art structure, which is analogous to a linguistic structure, has, like a linguistic structure, nothing to support its symbolic network of differential relations, or relations between the various places occupied by art. The representational world, presumed to lie beneath the representation, once withdrawn as the referent, leaves nothing but a void to support the differential network of art objects. In the same way the linguistic structure ultimately refers to the other elements or places in the structure, the places in the art structure must indicate the other places and not the world presumed outside the structure, which is nothing but a void. It is this void, of which Malevich's *Black Square On White Ground* (1915) (Figure 7) is the best example. The shock that met the public exposed to *Black Square* (1915) was best articulated by Malevich when he stated, invoking an imaginary interlocutor, 'Everything we loved is lost. We are in a desert…before us is nothing but a black square on a white background', a background he called the 'void'.[294]

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or Lacan's *object petit a* as that which links subject and object. This allows me to argue for the productive role judgment provides, the way a judgment brings the thing into being as art.
[293] Zizek. See below in the present chapter for a more extended discussion of the gaze in relation to avant-garde art.
[294] Malevich, p. 68.

What appears lost is the reality representational realism assumed as its referent. The desert Malevich speaks of would have been seen as a barren, forbidding place, deplete of familiar representational landmarks – 'nothing but a black square on a white background'. However, Malevich's suggestion of a complete break from objective reality and the leap into a deserted void, should not be understood as a positive severance with objectivity, nor, despite what he often claims, a purely subjective endeavour. He does suggest for instance that '[a]n objective representation, having objectivity as its aim …has nothing to do with art, and yet the use of objective forms in an art work does not preclude the possibility of its being of high artistic value.'[295]

Malevich never labelled his Suprematism 'subjective' in a positive sense but rather 'non-objective'; the objective, or the referent of representational realism, is not abandoned in a positive sense but rather negatively carried over into the new art as what it is not; as an image voided of objective reality; and a work divided between the subjective and the objective or the two perspectives in one and the same thing; the 'non-objective'. Malevich himself coined the term 'additional element' to describe 'the peculiar character of any new visual environment, exercising its effect upon us'.[296] The 'additional element' he suggests, is 'expressed in a new, unfamiliar technique, in a certain unusual attitude toward nature – a novel point of view.'[297] This 'novel point of view' replaces the perspectival view of one-point perspective in representational realism. The novel point of view disturbs the 'normal' point of view

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[295] Malevich, p. 67. For reasons that are beyond the remit of this thesis, Malevich's 'non-objectivity' can be understood in relation to Jacques Lacan's *objet petit a*, and Kant's 'thing-in-itself' or rather what I interpret in the introduction as a 'thing-in-self', linking it to Kant's concept. This understanding is implied in the thesis throughout but not explicitly dealt with.
[296] Malevich, p. 12.
[297] Malevich, p. 12.

that comes about with the 'unusual attitude towards nature'. The view that arises

with the withdrawal from representational realism is, the thesis contends, a parallax

perspective that sees the one thing as two.[298]

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[298] In arriving at this conclusion I develop and extend a point made by Alenka Zupancic. See A. Zupancic, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2003.

A Tale of Two Avant-gardes

'[P]ainting relates to both art and life…I try to act in the gap between the two'[299] Robert Rauschenberg.

Chapter 1 gave a critical account of the historical avant-garde and neo-avant-garde as understood by the German critic, Peter Bürger. Bürger understood the avant-garde to be composed of a very different group of artists and objects of art, than the avant-garde endorsed by the influential American art critic, Clement Greenberg. Greenberg meant something quite different by the term 'avant-garde'. The avant-garde as Greenberg understood it did not include the Russian Constructivists, nor the French Dadaists or Surrealists, but was rather comprised of a number of modernist painters including the following: The French artists Edward Manet, Claude Monet, and Henri Matisse; the Spanish artist Pablo Picasso; the American painters, Jackson Pollock, Barnet Newman, Jules Olitski and others. What is interesting to note is the fact that not a single name was shared by both critics, yet both groups were considered exemplars of avant-garde art.

Both critics referred to the artists in their canon as avant-garde artists yet the two groups represent quite different, seemingly opposed, approaches to tradition and the art institutional structure. This chapter will undertake an explication of the relation between these seemingly opposed groups claiming avant-garde pedigree

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[299] R. Rauschenberg, *Untitled Statement*, 1959, p. 2

with the view to understanding another apparently opposed pair: the artist's canvas as a literal support or commercial material, something found in everyday life, and the same thing seen aesthetically as art. It will argued in this chapter that the reductive path undertaken by Greenberg's formalist avant-garde lead, by the late 1950's, to the same place as the historical avant-garde as understood by Bürger. That is, to a place that could accommodate two seemingly opposed phenomena: an object of art and an ordinary object that is employed in numerous ways unrelated to art.[300] This meeting occurred with the introduction of monochrome painting in the mid-to-late 1950's but was already there at the origin of the avant-garde. The place where these opposite positions on the avant-garde can take place is within the art structure: a place where the one thing can be 'seen' as two through a parallax view. The difference between the two will be understood to involve a parallax gap; a kind of non-place or real between the two places in the art structure.[301] Both the separation and conflation of the two avant-gardes, and more generally, the literal and the ideal, requires a form of judgment that understands the one as two; a parallax judgment.

The two avant-gardes – modernist autonomy and institutional-critical – both occupy a formal place in the art structure, and gain their identity and value from the Other, rather than from some resemblance to reality, or substantial quality they possess, or the use of a specific medium employed in their construction or

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[300] To state my case here I depend on, and further develop, the critical engagement with Greenberg undertaken by the Belgian art critic, Thierry de Duve. See The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas, in *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press 1998.

[301] The gap I refer to is none other than the gap Robert Rauschenberg, Marcel Duchamp and Robert Smithson, each in their own way, speak of. I quote Rauschenberg below in relation to the gap, while Duchamp's 'gap' is discussed in chapter 1 and Smithson's 'gap' is covered in chapter 3 on installation and site specific art. Greenberg tries to maintain a gap between the historical avant-garde and his formalist avant-garde. Parallax is discussed in both the introduction and in chapter 1.

creation.[302] In the case of Bürger's account of the avant-garde, however, the hostility toward formalist autonomy is overtly "expressed" through the intension to integrate their art with the praxis of life, and this registers the provocative acts that comprise the historical and neo-avant-garde, giving them a place in the art structure. For Greenberg's formalists, the negative is life itself, that is, the location sort by Bürger's avant-garde, and this was to be avoided if autonomy was to be retained. According to Hal Foster, 'the aim of [Greenberg's] avant-garde is not to sublate art *into* life but rather to purify art *of* life.[303]   However, this does not set the two avant-gardes in opposition in terms of different objectives. They share the one objective: to register their works as art. Greenberg's formalists required a separation from ordinary life to register their efforts as special, aesthetic objects; that is, objects that occupy a place distant from life within the art structure. These places however, are only formal places that, within an art structure, register the objects *as* art objects. What is here understood as life is equally understood structurally, as not art, rather than having some positive meaning in itself, or having a location separate and independent from autonomy. It will also be argued in the context of this chapter that aesthetic judgment does more than judge art after the fact but rather brings art into being in the first place; a point Greenberg almost reached through theoretical statements he smuggled into apparently neutral aesthetic judgments.

As was argued in the first chapter, the avant-garde located by Bürger positioned itself in hostile relation to the art institution seen as autonomous. The provocative acts of the avant-garde aimed at the destruction of the autonomous art

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[302] As noted in Chapter 1, Hal Foster linked the historical avant-garde to the neo-avant-garde through a retroactive effect of the later on the former, to argue that the historical avant-garde is also the product of later reception.

[303] H. Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1996, p. 56.

and the bourgeois institutional frame that supported it. The motivation that, according to Bürger, occupied the avant-gardes was to escape the art institution and work directly in life, or have art and life sublated. The avant-gardes, while overtly hostile to the conventions of modernist painting, were structurally and historically dependent on them as a negative foil; a structural Other against which to register such assaults on tradition *as* art. It was argued that the out-of-place confrontation of the avant-garde found its place in the neo-avant-garde, as art not because it was simply recuperated by the art institution but because the avant-garde never amounted to anything more than part of the art structure, creating the very outside it aimed to occupy. The anti-aesthetic of the avant-garde registered structurally against the aesthetic of autonomy.

On the other hand, the formalists included in Greenberg's canon of avant-garde artists, while often testing the settled taste of their intended audience, never intended to destroy the art institution, but rather to introduce novelty into the place of tradition. The two groups would appear to have no common ground. Certainly Greenberg, at best, only reluctantly acknowledged this other avant-garde, at least in the early to middle stages of his career.[304] However, Greenberg eventually confronts this other avant-garde in his late writing when his own understanding of modernist painting begins to visually, if not conceptually, meet the other avant-garde. This confrontation and recognition of another avant-garde represents Greenberg's belated

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[304] This point is made by Thierry de Duve. See T. de Duve, The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998.

attempt to grapple with another understanding of the new, or what he called 'the factor of surprise'.[305]

The purpose of this chapter is to delineate this shared, if unconscious, goal of the two avant-garde groups, that is, to register as art, but more specifically, to articulate the hidden, negative pressures at work in the development of modernist painting and the historical avant-garde. These negative pressures stood in for an impossible meeting of the ordinary, non-alienated object of the avant-garde – an object occupying everyday life – and 'high art' represented by the category of autonomy. These negative forces came as close to colliding as possible in the neo-avant-garde of the 1950's to 1970's, where the two categories of art and life are understood as involving – to use Greenberg's words – a 'dialectical tension'.[306]

Bürger argues that the 'provocation [of avant-gardist art] depends on what it turns against', and, once this negative assault is accepted, once it finds its 'place in the museum, the provocation no longer provokes; it turns into its opposite.'[307] For Bürger then, the provocative act is, in a Hegelian sense, sublated – the opposition between avant-garde and autonomy is reconciled by institutional acceptance.[308] The provocative object becomes institutionalised, its excess contained, and its drive for freedom from institutional containment straight-jacketed by art discourse. In short,

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[305] C. Greenberg, The Factor of Surprise, *Homemade Esthetic: Observations on Art and Taste*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 30.

[306] C. Greenberg, Modernist Painting, in G. Battcock edited, *The New Art: A Critical Anthology*, New York, Dutton, 1966, p. 103.

[307] P. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984, p. 52. As I argue below, 'it' turns into its opposite because the two poles occupy different structural places which allow them to cooperate and eventually be conflated: the anti-art stance of the historical and neo-avant-garde becomes art because the structural place was already opened up for it by its own negative gestures.

[308] Sublation (see chapter 1) is a term used by G.W.F. Hegel and refers to the reconciliation and elevation of opposite poles – both opposite things and opposed concepts. Earlier stages of thought are sublated, their apparent contradictions reconciled by the teleological forward movement of thought. Following from Slavoj Zizek's re-reading of this Hegelian term, the point I make in this chapter does not involve a teleological understanding of art history.

the provocation of the historical avant-garde is sublimated or domesticated by art history.[309] Bürger is, from a certain perspective, correct here: it is hardly imaginable that Duchamp's urinal could shock the art public today, let alone a movement such as Cubism wherein the shock of its novelty is domesticated through the formalist painting in the decades following its introduction. The sense that the urinal was in the wrong place, that it had no place being in an art context, would be difficult to recapture today.

However, from a different perspective, a perspective introduced in chapter 1, the sublation Bürger finds between the high and the low in the neo-avant-garde, could be understood as an impossible meeting, a coming together that can only occur in the conceptual space of the art structure, or structure of aesthetic relations; where the place of any object is given art status, or makes meaning *as* art, only through its relation to other objects in the structure. This impossible meeting is, paradoxically, only impossible because it has already occurred in what a quantum physicist might call a 'parallel aesthetic universe'; a 'universe' in which everything is exactly the same but entirely different; a universe where the elevated is nothing but the ordinary seen from a different perspective or parallax view.

In attempting to isolate modernist painting from literature, kitsch, and everything that occupies everyday life such as work, shopping, domestic activity and so on, Greenberg created an elaborate theoretical and critical edifice which acted to separate modernist painting from everything outside its formal frame. The stated aim of Greenberg was to merely make judgments on art, to critically reflect upon the formal painterly qualities of a painting or sculpture. These judgments were meant as

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[309] This account is somewhat more complex than this summary as I argue in Chapter 2. The drive for freedom actually brings about the 'free' space or the outside to the art institution.

subjective claims that were not submissible to proof. In other words, they were Kantian, subjective judgments. And yet as he argues in his article *Can Taste Be Objective* (1999), a consensus forms around these subjective judgments that proves, at least to his satisfaction, that taste is ultimately objective.[310] As Greenberg put it 'the objectivity of taste is probatively demonstrated in and through the consensus over time' and that 'consensus makes itself evident in judgment of aesthetic value that stand up under the ever-renewed testing of experience.'[311] He goes on to suggest that 'there is no way of explaining this durability – the durability that creates a consensus – except by the fact that taste is ultimately objective.'[312]

This chapter will argue that there is indeed another way of explaining the consensus. There is a way of explaining how disagreements over judgments; how the same object can be at one and the same time considered a poor example of art and a good example of art, can be reconciled. There is a way, in which an object considered a poor representative of the medium or the genre, or even a category not normally associated with art; a functional object for example, can be subjected to a mere reflective, subjective judgment, and yet acquire an objective consensus. Not, it will be demonstrated, because taste is objective, but rather because judgment is neither subjective, nor objective, but rather 'non-objective', to borrow a term used by Kasimir Malevich.[313] Taste, is, due to the function of a hyphen, both objective, and, non, or subjective. The subjective judgment becomes the objective state of the

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[310] C. Greenberg, Can Taste Be Objective, in *Homemade Esthetics: Observations On Art and Taste*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999.

[311] Greenberg, p. 26.

[312] Greenberg. Kant himself baulked at any association of judgment with objectivity. He argued that a 'judgment of taste determines its object [only] in respect of our liking...*as if* it were an objective judgment.' E. Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1987, p. 145. I have argued here that in fact a mere subjective judgment *becomes* the objective state of art once the art structure takes notice of a series of such judgments. Kant must be read *with* Hegel.

[313] K. Malevich, *The Non-Objective World: The Manifesto of Suprematism*, New York, Dover Publications, 2003.

structure only through the art structure or network of differential relations invoked

through the judgment process. The subjective, once it occupies a place in the art

structure, is objective, that is, it has proven its place in art history as an index of

conflict.

Greenberg was close to understanding this form of judgment when he stated

in *Can Taste Be Objective* (1999), '[art] history…includes mistakes, distortions,

lapses, omissions, but it also includes the correcting and repairing mechanism of

these'.[314]   However, he did not understand how the 'correcting and repairing

mechanism' was internal or immanent to the judgment itself. This is because,

despite he professed allegiance to a mere subjective or Kantian judgment, he in fact

smuggled into his criticism, a number of Hegelian concepts. Here Greenberg, a critic

who admits his sympathy for a Kantian approach to the problem of aesthetic

judgment, alludes to a Hegelian solution. The problem (mistakes, distortions and

lapses) is part of the solution (the correcting and repairing mechanism); the two are

dialectically related in such a way that what is outside or alien to autonomy is

dialectically necessary to it as much as the appeal to escape the confines of autonomy

depends on the structural place of autonomy against which it stages its provocation.

Slavoj Zizek suggests, in the context of philosophy, that a 'dialectical paradox' is

involved in the question of the structural relationship between problem and

solution.[315] He argues that there is no 'unproblematic' state prior to the solution, and

that 'the proposed solution can be part of the problem, reproducing its true cause,

[retroactively] but also the reverse' where something viewed from our 'limited

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[314] Greenberg, p. 27.
[315] S. Zizek, *Tarrying With the Negative: Kant, Hegel and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993, p. 93.

perspective appears a problem [whereas it is] actually a solution.'[316] Clement

Greenberg's 'problem' of aesthetic judgment: is taste objective can be answered in a

preliminary form here: taste is non-objective. This does not mean to say that taste is

subjective or not objective, but rather the subjective and the objective are

dialectically mediated and dependent on the judgment itself. What Greenberg

understands as 'mistakes, distortions, lapses, omissions' in art history are

dialectically related to what he refers to as the 'repairing mechanism of these.'[317]

The art structure 'repairs' the gaps opened up by the intrusion of new art.

The 'mistakes, distortions, lapses, omissions' in judgment that are

'repair[ed]' by judgment overtime hints at the conclusion drawn by this chapter: that

what is understood as a 'mistake[n]' judgment is not to be understood as a wasted

judgment, since the negative and the positive forms of judgment act in the same way,

to register the thing as art. The reparation involves a rapprochement of the

dialectical conflict. In Chapter 1 it was demonstrated how the historical avant-garde,

despite (or actually because of) the negative judgments directed toward it, entered

into the history of art. It was argued that the identity of art required it's Other as a

dialectical antithesis to generate its place in the art structure, through the exercise of

aesthetic judgment. It was shown that the one object must be seen as two, through a

parallax judgment. Opposites not only attract, but they meet in a structural sense

within the art structure.

This meeting occurred at the beginning of modern art in the division between

the two avant-gardes in the split Bürger's avant-garde made from within and against

the autonomous avant-garde. The meeting is there in Van Gogh *Church at Auvers*

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[316] Zizek.

[317] Greenberg.

(1890) (Figure 13) with the tension between the literal 'reality' or indexical marks of the brush; and the representational reality those marks must stand in for, and cover – between real paint, and painting as a realistic image.
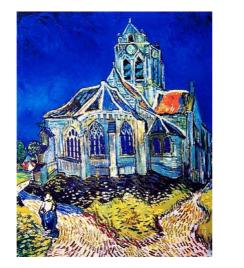
Figure 13   Figure 14

We see in the middle ground of Van Gogh's painting the church depicted in a kind of naive realist style and in the foreground the blended brush marks that depict the church are broken into individual strokes. The painting is divided between the literal material and the sublimated material which delivers the scene. This division is found in the juxtaposition of painted scene and bare canvas in Cezanne. It is also found in the presence of bare sections of canvas, noticeable in a number of Cezanne paintings when viewed closely; paintings such as *Gardanne* (1886) (Figure 14). As the eye travels typically from left to right and from top to bottom, it follows the village scene to the point at the bottom right where it gradually breaks up into the constituents parts of bare canvas and the rudiments of a pencil sketch.

The meeting is between the blank canvas support and the traditional requirement that something be depicted on that canvas. Indeed the art critic, Harry

Cooper recently made the claim apropos of Cezanne, that 'This demonstration of the equal semiotic rights of unworked, unmarked areas made everything possible in modern art'.[318] The thesis is in broad agreement with Cooper except that a semiotic democracy is not at play here. The division cannot be simply sublated as 'equal semiotic rights', established once the painter 'paints the first brushstroke', but rather must remain in tension as dialectically giving each part of the division a structural place: painting because not paint; painting because not canvas material; autonomy because not avant-garde and so on. These two meet only dialectically, and the identity of each, is generated structurally as what the other is not.

Figure 15

The content of individual works is not the issue but rather the place each occupies in the structure and the role of judgment in the process of bringing into being what was only becoming. The bringing into being is the meeting of structural opposites. The meeting is there in Cubist collage (Figure 15) in the tension between the 'reality' of the ordinary, found material such a newspaper and printed oil cloth, against the formal arrangement of tonal shading and 'little facet planes' as Greenberg called

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[318] H. Cooper, Cezanne Finished – Unfinished, *ArtForum*, October, 2000, p1.

them in Collage (1961).[319] In Picasso's *Bottle of Viex Marc, Glass, Guitar and Newspaper* (1913) (Figure 15), the meeting is between everyday life (commonly circulated newspaper) and the representation of life in paint, drawing, and paper.

The meeting of the two oppositional places was also argued in chapter 1 in the context of the historical and neo-avant-garde's repudiation of formalist autonomy. The support of autonomy or what Greenberg's called 'modernist painting' is similarly related to the historical, and neo-avant-gardes through opposition. However, in the case of Greenberg, maintaining the distance between the two avant-gardes was the (unacknowledged) objective of his criticism. For if he acknowledge the other avant-garde he would have to accept that the flat picture plane, the ultimate essence and end toward which modernist painting laboured, had already been reached by artists such as Alexandr Rodchenko and Kasimir Malevich and even Cezanne. In fact Barbara Rose makes the point in another way by saying 'Though Duchamp and Malevich jumped the gun…the avenue toward what Clement Greenberg called the "modernist reduction", was travelled at a steadier pace by others' .[320] Those 'others' are Greenberg's avant-garde. The two avant-gardes share, in retrospect, a destiny.

Before elaborating on this preliminary conclusion, a number of questions arise that require a response. What takes the thing from an *extra*ordinary object that 'sticks out' of tradition – shocking or provoking the audience – to a work of art, a

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[319] C. Greenberg, Collage, *Art and Culture*, Boston, Massachusetts, Beacon Press, 1961, p. 72.

[320] In her Seminal writing on Minimal art, or what she termed ABC art, Barbara Rose made the connection between the two avant-gardes by making the point that. See B. Rose, ABC Art, G. Battcock edited, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 278. I draw a different conclusion from the relationship between Greenbergian formalism and the historical avant-garde than Rose does.

work accepted even cherished, by the public as an object of good taste?[321] Why does the consensus Greenberg speaks of, form around a series of merely subjective judgments, making them objective? Greenberg misunderstood the nature of judgment, the fact that it is constitutive rather than reflective, that it does the *work* of the work of art. What is the *work* that is done to the offensive object in order that it be accommodated by art history? How can an anti-aesthetic object be aestheticised, or judged art? Finally, in what place can these two positions – avant-garde as shocking assault on tradition – and art as tradition of the new – take place?

The problem could be articulated through Kantian language: What is the structural relationship between the mere 'purposiveness', and the objective or actual 'purpose' the object is put to – let us say, between a Rembrandt painting, and one used as an ironing board as was Marcel Duchamp's suggestion?[322] Before answering these questions, it will be instructive to outline in more detail the context within which the problem of the difference between autonomy, in the form of modernist painting, and its Other, Bürger's avant-garde, should be placed.

Greenberg's canon of artists that comprise *his* avant-garde depended on the repression of this other avant-garde that chapter 1 outlines and Bürger refers to in his theoretical text. Greenberg's seminal essay, *Modernist Painting* (1965) is often ridiculed for two principal reasons: its essentialism; the suggestion that modernist

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[321] Arguably, the art institution's grudging acceptance of works of shock are now accepted, even courted by the art institution. The rise and rise of masters of shock such as Mathew Barney and Jake and Dinos Chapman are but two examples of 'bad taste', actually turning into good taste, i.e. desired by the contemporary art institution. The Tate Modern for instance, has numerous examples of 'anti-aesthetic' art representing the 'good taste' of contemporary curators. This is because they, like the two avant-gardes (Greenberg's and Bürger's) occupy two structurally opposed places which can change places. We find this occurring in the movie *My Fair Lady* or its later incarnation, *Changing Places*, or *Pretty Woman*. A hooker or a hobo can become a 'lady' or an investment broker if found in the right place, since it is not the object in itself, nor some 'content' it is supposed to possess, but rather the place is occupies symbolically in the structure that determines it 'meaning'.

[322] M. Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1973.

painting has an essence, and the fact that the *other* avant-garde was suppressed by his narrative of medium specificity.[323]   Greenberg understood the avant-garde to be comprised of the formalist experiments of the art-for-art's-sake autonomy.   Artists such as Edward Manet, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, Piet Mondrian, Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman are representative for Greenberg, of seminal modernist painters. As was pointed out in chapter 1, Bürger's avant-garde included Marcel Duchamp, Rene Magritte, Andy Warhol and others. The majority of contributors to art-institutional discourse of the last 40 years have endorsed a rejection of Greenberg's claims; however, while I agree it is worth questioning some of the details of the claims made by Greenberg regarding the art he championed as 'avant-garde', especially the Hegelian telos that apparently drove the picture plane toward flatness, should he be dismissed altogether as some commentators do.[324] Rather what has happened in modernist painting and the avant-gardes of which Bürger writes is an attempt to ground a new aesthetic on rejection or omission. Bürger's avant-garde rejects conventional (autonomous) art tout court, while Greenberg's avant-garde reject piecemeal the accepted and expected tradition, one convention at a time. The two involve degrees of rejection as much as different forms of rejection.

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[323] C. Greenberg, Modernist Painting, in G. Battcock, *The New Art: A Critical Anthology*, New York, E.P. Dutton, 1966.

[324] Such ridicule and dismissal of Greenberg was *de rigueur* for ambitious art theorists in the 1980's. The October Magazine in the 1980's undertook such an assault on Greenbergian formalism.   For a 1990' negative assessment of Greenberg see P. Wood, F. Frascina, J Harris, C. Harrison, *Modernism in Dispute: Art Since the Forties*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993.   Culture studies, semiotics, Marxist criticism and other recent trends in theory attempt to displace art criticism as a form of 'pure' aesthetic judgment with questions of ideology, race and gender issues and politics. For a more recent discussion of the critique of Greenberg see The Mourning After, *Artforum*, March 2003, pp. 206-247. Greenberg's name is rarely mentioned today. What we have instead is a kind of silent mediator for recent art that is often labelled 'everyday' which is analogous to saying 'not autonomous' or modernist. For a critical reading of this attitude see *In the Every Day: Critical and Theoretical Speculations on the 11th biennale of Sydney*, Sydney, Artspace, 1998.

There is, the thesis argues, a case to be made in support of the reductive argument in modernist painting Greenberg promulgates, but toward a different conclusion. The reductive argument as formulated by Greenberg basically understands modernist painting to be rejecting all that is inessential to painting as a specific media, and that this leads to an ever increasing flattening of the picture plane. Greenberg's other, related claim, was that modernist painting was in pursuit of purity, and that this was being achieved by painting progressively exploring its own media, defining its own specific domain or area of competence that it did not share with other media, or with common aesthetic objects such as kitsch. In both instances a rejection is involved: In the case of the flattening of the picture plane it is conventions such as the need to represent some external referent such as an historical scene or a noble person that is rejected. In the related issue of the specific domain of painting as media, it is the rejection of the conventions of other media such as the depiction of bodies in space that defines sculpture.

Figure 16   Figure 17

Figure 18   Figure 19

It is undeniable that modernist painting involved a flattening of the picture plane, a cursory glance at the history of modernist painting would reveal this: Jacques Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784) (Figure 16) is less optically flat than Manet's *Gare St. Lazare* (1873) (Figure 17). And when we observe Picasso's *The Guitar Player* (1910) (Figure 18), it appears even flatter still. Jackson Pollock's abstract expressionist paintings of the 1950's seem to evacuate pictorial space almost entirely. His *Lavender Mist* (1950) (Figure 19) is a cobweb of finely laced lines of paint that draw together to form a gossamer cloth that holds the eye at the surface of the picture plane.

Figure 20

The paintings of Barnet Newman take this flattening process even further. His *Onement VI* (1953) (Figure 20) presents a minimal difference between figure and ground represented by a monochromatic blue ground and a thin strip of white paint dividing the painting in two.

The monochrome paintings of the later 1950's and early 60's dispensed with the difference between figure and ground altogether. For example, the monochrome paintings of Frank Stella, the figure and ground are one and the same. The depicted shape of *The Marriage of Reason and Squalor* (1959) (Figure 21) doubles or mirrors the shape of the canvas in an attempt to present an object without any allusions to anything beyond its objecthood: reason and squalor, or the high and the low, occupy the one place seen as two.

Figure 21

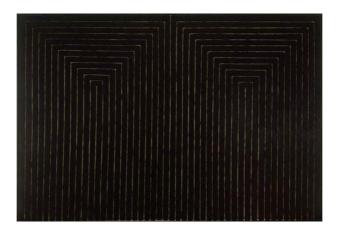There are exceptions of course where we see the same modernist painter producing varying levels of depth, but the trend toward flatness is there, and seemingly irrevocable. And yet the end point of the pursuit of purity, of isolating modernist painting from 'squalor', arrives at the same point as what it sort to avoid, in a painting that is nothing more than the 'marriage of reason and squalor'; the high with

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the low. Again, Greenberg's position should not be rejected out of hand since his observations of the art of his time were not altogether incorrect. What he misunderstood was the constitutive nature of his judgments the way that his judgments *are* modernist painting. To explain how the 'marriage' between the high and low, art and the ordinary object, occurred between the two avant-gardes, an extended engagement with Greenberg's narrative of medium specificity and the notion of flatness as essence, will now follow.

From his earliest writing Clement Greenberg, working (more or less) from within a Kantian frame, has sought to isolate art from what he perceived as a growing threat to the autonomous domain of fine art from the increasing presence of mere common things. From the outset Greenberg is at pains to defend arts autonomy from everyday life. In his early writing *Avant-Garde and Kitsch* (1939), Greenberg was anxious to distance the beautiful from the ugly, or kitsch aesthetic he saw spreading across the culture of the capitalist west.[325]

Greenberg begins this paper by making the observation that 'One and the same civilization produces simultaneously two such different things as a poem by T. S. Eliot and a Tin Pan Alley song, or a painting by Braque and a *Saturday Evening Post* cover.'[326] Immediately after this observation Greenberg goes on to ask 'what perspective of culture is large enough to enable us to situate them [the two perspectives: the high and the low] in an enlightening relation to each other?'[327] This is indeed the question the chapter asks and one that preoccupied Greenberg from the

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[325] C. Greenberg, Avant-Garde and Kitsch, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944.*
[326] Greenberg, pp. 5-6. In many ways Greenberg's bibliography reads as an extended answer to this question. His answer of course is questionable. He chooses Eliot over the Tin Pan Alley song; the Braque over the Saturday Evening Post.
[327] Greenberg, p. 6.

first. Greenberg already answers his own question - a certain 'perspective' will accommodate the two positions; or better, to allow the subject as viewer or judge, to see the one object two different ways.

Before I elaborate of this point however, we need to understand Greenberg's anxiety.   He must keep high and low apart in order to maintain the special place of modernist painting. The possibility of their coalescence would threaten the place of both. He argues, in dialectical fashion that has echoes of the arguments of his adversary, Peter Bürger, that 'The precondition for kitsch, a condition without which kitsch would be impossible, is the availability close at hand of a fully matured cultural tradition' from which kitsch apparently draws its life.[328] A little further in the same essay he begins to indicate the anxiety he will later express more urgently in the 1960's. In a very Platonic passage, he states that 'Kitsch is deceptive. It has many different levels, and some of them are high enough to be dangerous to the naïve seeker of true light.'[329]

The low and the high, kitsch and fine art, are at risk, as far as Greenberg is concerned, of forming one continuous plane. The 'danger' is that the autonomy that requires protection from mere things in our everyday reality will become tainted, even indistinguishable from those mere things. In *Towards a Newer Laocoon* (1940), Greenberg continues his quest for purity by enlisting the support of the 18th Century German critic and philosopher, G.E. Lessing to argue for a 'pure' art divorced from the corrupting influence of literature and 'confusion in the arts'.[330]

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[328] Greenberg, p. 12.
[329] Greenberg, p. 13.
[330] C. Greenberg, Towards a Newer Laocoon in J. O'brian edited, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, p. 24.

By 1944 we find Greenberg wrestling with the subject that would culminate in *Modernist Painting*, the difference between 'the illusion' of the transparent window and the 'flat forms' or the 'opaque surface'.[331] For example, in *Abstract Art* (1944), he argues that the flattening of the picture plane becomes increasingly pronounced in Manet and Courbet and after, in a more emphatic way, with Impressionism. 'Incited by a positivism borrowed from science', Greenberg suggests, 'the impressionists made the discovery…that the most direct interpretation of visual experience must be two dimensional.'[332] With Impressionism he argues, 'flatness begins to creep into' the paintings and the 'physical nature of the canvas and the painting on it' becomes explicitly present at the surface of the painting.[333] Again, there is evidence to support Greenberg here. The depicted scene of *Water Lilies* (1906) (Figure 22), by the French Impressionist, Claude Monet, is a case in point. The pond of water lilies is pressed flat against the picture plane. All perspective devices are abandoned and the familiar objects orientating the eye into the depth of the visual field are missing: no mountain range in the distance, no building or human figures through which the eye can enter the scene, just a decorative pattern of brush marks swirling into a semblance of recognisable imagery. For Greenberg, the emphasis on the presence of the medium is undertaken in order to emphasise the 'difference between painting and photography'.[334]

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[331] C. Greenberg, Abstract Art, in J. O'brian edited, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, p. 200.
[332] C. Greenberg, p. 201.
[333] Greenberg.
[334] Greenberg.

Figure 22

And yet Greenberg could hardly be thinking of the image above when he discusses Impressionism. The cropped image, the way photography artificially selects what is in and what is out of the frame at the snap of a finger. It is this fact, along with the way that the material of photography, the piece of paper that holds the image, can be held between the fingers like any ordinary object, rather than an image as window frame, draws attention to literal qualities of the surface. The 'difference' Greenberg sought however, will be shown below to be a structural difference rather than a positive difference resulting from actual or empirical differences between media.

In the same year as *Abstract Art* (1944) Greenberg embarked on his first serious engagement with the other avant-garde endorsed by Bürger when he took a passing shot at Surrealism in *Surrealist Painting* (1944). In this essay he comes close to praising the Surrealists for attempting to 'make art the affair of everybody', but that this 'laudable motive' unfortunately lead to a 'certain vulgarization of modern art' by 'depress[ing] art 'to the popular level instead of raising the level of

popularity itself.'[335] Greenberg is short on examples in this essay, however, an artist he might have discussed is the French painter, Rene Magritte.   For example, Magritte's seminal painting *The Treachery of Images* (1926) (Figure 23) is   an example of art made 'the affair of everybody', but, in the same way Duchamp's urinal/Fountain (1917) is the affair of everybody, this painting is more complex than its representation of an everyday object would suggest.

Figure 23

The caption at the bottom of the image reads: *This is Not a Pipe*. So what is it? It is clearly both a pipe (a painted representation of a pipe), and not a pipe (simply paint on canvas); it is both painting and paint; ideal and real. It is not so much a painting that makes 'art the affair of everybody' but rather a painting that divides art between an ordinary material and the same thing seen as art, or the two seen in parallax.

In *Cezanne and the Unity of Modern Art* (1951) Greenberg draws attention to the trend he found in Impressionist art to articulate the surface of the canvas and the materiality of the brush marks; a trend also shared by Cezanne. In his paintings Cezanne is said to 'cover his canvases with a mosaic of brushstrokes whose net

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[335] C. Greenberg, Surrealist Painting, in J. O'brian edited, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1, Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, p. 225.

effect was to call attention to the physical picture plane.'[336]   However, as argued above Cezanne's paintings also reveal the literal material canvas. We can almost detect Greenberg's anxiety found in later texts mounting here when he discovers (or invents) a 'new and powerful kind of pictorial tension' in Cezanne's canvases. The 'powerful kind of pictorial tension' is the one building from the time of Manet and Courbet; the tension between the 'surface' with its 'paint dabs' or literal material, and the 'illusionist depth'.[337]   The actual tension Greenberg wants to maintain is between the 'purity' of the medium, the way each media, when at its height of historical import, emphasises what is 'essential' to it by rejecting what is inessential. By this time, the essential is emerging for Greenberg as a flattening of the picture plane.

However, no matter the tension, for Greenberg, the best painting always manages to overcome the limitations of the literal media, elevating the ordinary into the extraordinary, or real into ideal. Greenberg's essentialism comes at the cost of a wilful ignorance of the other avant-garde, or what might, in the context of medium specificity, be labelled medium generality. For example, he makes the curious claim in *American Type Painting* (1955) that '[n]ew painting…still provokes scandal [and that] this may be explained by the very slowness of painting's evolution as a modernist art.'[338]   The 'slowness' of painting's 'evolution' as a specific medium is only tenable in isolation from the quickness of the Other avant-garde, the way Bürger's avant-garde abandoned convention as a stroke.

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[336] C. Greenberg, Cezanne and the Unity of Modern Art, in J. O'brian edited, *The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 3, Affirmations and Refusal 1950- 1956,* p. 85.
[337] Greenberg, p. 86.
[338] C. Greenberg, American Type Painting, *Clement Greenberg the Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 3, Affirmations and Refusals, 1950 – 1956*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995, p. 217.

There are two points that arise in relation to this claim by Greenberg. Firstly, he associates 'scandal' with abstract painting, something that might invoke the other, more scandalous, historical avant-garde. And secondly, the explanation for this scandal as being due to the 'slowness of painting's evolution as a modernist art' is questionable. In fact, the scandal Greenberg finds in the new painting of the time, for which the flattened picture plane of Barnett Newman will suffice as the example, has already taken place in the other avant-garde, of which Kazimir Malevich is the best example. His painting *White on White* (1918), (Figure 24), a scandalous painting for the time, would seem to have already produced the flat painting Greenberg understood as resulting from a 'slowness of painting's evolution', except that the Malevich was the result of the fast pace of revolutionary change.

Figure 24

In this painting Malevich appears to have come as close to the ordinary, blank white canvas only to divide it between a white square in the foreground and a different white as background – a 'minimal differerence' – not between two positive oppositions but between one and the same thing.[339] Another such tension or 'minimal difference' is

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[339] Alenka Zupancic makes a similar point to the one I make above by saying 'Where is the Nothing in this picture? It dwells in the very midst of whiteness: it is the shortest shadow, the minimal difference

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located in Greenberg essay on Collage (1958).[340] Here he attempts to draw the line between the 'inside', of the 'picture', and the 'outside' or the 'literal surface', between the 'depicted flatness' of the picture, and the 'literal flatness' of the materials, in order to maintain a 'minimal illusion of the three-dimensional space to survive between the two.'[341] Jo Baer will later play on this division between inside and outside with paintings such as *Untitled* (1963) (Figure 25). Around the edges of the canvas of *Untitled* (1963) a painted 'frame' delineates the space of painting, dividing it from what it is *not*, the space of everyday life. However, it is from within painting that Baer marks the boundary between painting and it's Other in a way analogous to the emergence of the historical avant-garde from within autonomy discussed in chapter 1.

Figure 25

In reference to the fact that collage works by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque included literal materials alongside depicted reality, Greenberg is adamant that 'wallpaper, oilcloth, newspaper or wood' are no more real or 'closer to nature, than

of the same.' See, A. Zupancic, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2003, p. 159.
[340] C. Greenberg, Collage, *Art and Culture*, Boston, Massachusetts, Beacon Press, 1961, p. 72. Originally published in 1958, as The Pasted-Paper Revolution, *Art News*, LV11, September, 1958, pp. 46-49, and p. 60.
[341] Greenberg.

paint on canvas.'[342] Instead of understanding the two domains – everyday life and autonomous painting as dialectically related he continues to hold them apart in separated categories as he maintains a distance between modernist painting and the Other avant-garde. Greenberg's essentialism, that is, the desire to keep the two domains – inside from outside, the literal from the depicted, the pure and the impure, autonomy from everyday life, one avant-garde from the other – in separate places, reaches its peak in *Modernist Painting* (1960). Here we find Greenberg defending his position on modernist painting through an appeal to Kant as the originator of a 'self-critical tendency'.[343] This 'self-critical tendency' is important for Greenberg in that it isolates the medium of painting from the outside or common reality. He states that the 'essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself – not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.'[344]

The subversion of tradition Greenberg alludes to here is the other avant-garde as Bürger understands it. If Greenberg's 'essence of Modernism' was to 'subvert' the 'discipline itself' rather than to 'entrench it more firmly in its area of competence', then he would be addressing the other avant-garde of which Bürger writes. An implicit separation of the two avant-gardes is reinforced here. The French philosopher, Jacques Ranciere argues apropos of Greenberg's modernism that 'you absolutely cannot reduce modern art to [a] short sequence of abstract painting. Modern art is also constructivism, surrealism, Dadaism…all forms of art with roots

[342] Greenberg, p. 71.
[343] C. Greenberg, Modernist Painting, in G. Battcock edited, *The New Art: A Critical Anthology*, New York, Dutton, 1966.
[344] Greenberg, p. 101.

in Romantic thinking about the relation between art and life.'[345] Ranciere interprets what he refers to as the 'aesthetic revolution' in modern art as an 'extension to infinity of the realm of language, of poetry', understanding, in a way analogous to the position of this thesis, that this revolution implies 'the ruin of the whole hierarchical conception of art'.[346] Where this thesis departs with Raunciere is with the conclusion he draws from this 'revolution'. He argues that the loss of hierarchy levels the distinction between the high and the low which produces an aesthetic democracy where 'paintings are everywhere…the beautiful is everywhere.'[347] On the contrary, the thesis argues that the two places, high and low, art and ordinary life etc, are held in dialectical tension; reconciled but divided by judgment. If 'paintings are everywhere' it is not because of a democratic levelling but rather because life begins to imitate art; otherwise why would we still recognise '*paintings* everywhere' if a category such as painting, or more importantly for the thesis, art, was no longer a separate category, or could not be recognised. Similarly, art is not a separate, hermetically sealed category but a dialectical Other to life as occupying a different structural place. Neither conflation nor separation is a sufficient explanation, rather each of the two places art/life, take place in the art structure and lend meaning, each to it's Other. Tradition, and the subversion of tradition, art and life, beautiful and sublime, are not polar opposites, but dialectically structured and take place within the art structure as 'necessary differences *in* art'.[348] The solution to the problem of opposition in Greenberg is to be found in the unacknowledged Hegelianism hidden in his Kantian form of aesthetic judgments.

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[345] J. Ranciere, Politics and Aesthetics: An Interview, *Angelaki, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Volume 6, Number 2, August 2003, p. 207.
[346] Raunciere, p. 205
[347] Raunciere.
[348] G.W.F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 73.

Despite distancing his avant-garde from the other avant-garde, Greenberg, in a very Hegelian passage from *Counter-Avant-Garde* (1970) begins to confront the relationship between the two avant-gardes, admitting that '[o]pposites as we know, have a way of meeting'.[349] And they do meet structurally: the high and the low, the inside and the outside, the pure and the impure. By 1970 Greenberg begins to fully recognise the other, repressed avant-garde, and addresses the problem of its increasingly felt presence in the neo-avant-garde. The other avant-garde of course is not the Kantian avant-garde supported by Greenberg; it is more conceptual, more Hegelian. Greenberg, in what is perhaps his most Hegelian statement adds, 'By being converted into the idea and notion of itself, and established as a fixed category, the [Other] avant-garde is turned into its own negation.'[350] He is only willing to adopt Hegel to destroy Bürger's avant-garde, to have it have it realise it own notion and promptly bring itself to an end. Therefore, on the one hand we have an avant-garde that is unselfconsciously avant-garde (Greenberg's avant-garde); its newness and scandal are mere unintentional by-products of the search for essence; and on the other hand we have a self-conscious, Hegelian avant-garde (Bürger's avant-garde). Greenberg dismisses this other avant-garde as 'avant-gardism'; an avant-garde which is intentionally 'shocking, scandalizing, startling', rather than unintentionally so.[351] It would seem then, that the two avant-gardes are different only by degrees and apparent intention.

The following year Greenberg writes the essay *The Factor of Surprise* (1971) where he attempts to make sense of the 'minimal difference' between the two avant-

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[349] C. Greenberg, Counter-Avant-Garde, *Art International*, 15, May, 1971, p. 16. I discuss this 'impossible meeting' again below.
[350] Greenberg, p.16.
[351] Greenberg.

gardes.[352] Greenberg states that '[e]sthetic experience depends, in a crucial way, on the interplay of expectation and satisfaction (or dys-satisfaction).[353] The factor of surprise is found in both 'superior art' and common art such as a 'detective story or melodrama'.[354] Surprise in art is linked by Greenberg to the 'interplay of expectation and satisfaction' which apparently 'work in a circular and reciprocal way'.[355] He might have said 'dialectical way'. What Greenberg is in effect saying is: neither expectation nor satisfaction can be understood in isolation from its other. Greenberg makes the further point that 'satisfaction (and maybe dys-satisfaction) can generate expectation retroactively, or, if not that, coincide with it in the same apparent instant.'[356] Standing before a hermetic piece of art, for example, an avant-garde object or a new abstract painting, the viewer might feel a sense of satisfaction or dissatisfaction before the object or painting, and that this feeling can 'generate expectation retroactively'. In other words, if a work surprises us with it's newness we might well be satisfied and that this satisfaction retroactively produces expectation. On the other hand, when we feel dissatisfied before a painting, this dissatisfaction raises retroactively, an expectation that is not met by the work; as if something tradition promises is withheld from us, like an ellipses in a sentence.

The two avant-gardes withhold expected content, and therefore surprise to different degrees. This withholding gives rise to expectation, and it's disappointment which leads to either an increased interest in the art with a piece missing, or anger,

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[352] C. Greenberg, The Factor of Surprise, *Homemade Esthetics: Observations on Art and Taste*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2000. The term 'minimal difference' is discussed in detail in chapter 3. It derives from Slavoj Zizek and relates to the minimal difference between one and the same thing. See S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006, p. 10.
[353] Greenberg, p. 31.
[354] Greenberg, p. 32.
[355] Greenberg.
[356] Greenberg, p. 31.

fear or frustration.[357] Darian Leader has recently argued that 'our visual curiosity is organised around something hidden [and that the] visual world becomes interesting for us as we seek to complete it by searching for the concealed element'.[358] In both examples of avant-garde, the art gains the public's attention through the withdrawal of expected content.[359] It also gains Greenberg's attention. Bürger's avant-garde rushes to the point at which an ordinary object of life and the place of art almost meet, whereas Greenberg's avant-garde moves at a more leisurely pace. It is only once we arrive at the neo-avant-garde of the late 1950's that the difference between the two avant-gardes, and indeed their similarity, becomes a pressing issue for Greenberg. The suppression of the presence of the other avant-garde was necessary for Greenberg because, to acknowledge it would be to understand art history, at least from Cezanne onwards if not earlier, as a dialectical relationship between the literal or everyday life, and the elevated or aesthetic, as not a choice between two substantially different realities, but between two differentially structured places. It would be to admit, that what separates the two is judgment itself, as even Greenberg, seems to imply. Judgment responds to the empty place or missing piece indicated, to varying degrees in the two avant-gardes, with judgment, both positive and negative.

Greenberg comes close to understanding the dialectical relationship between the two avant-gardes when in *Avant-Garde Attitudes* (1969) he makes the surprising claim that 'taste' plays a productive role in the ordinary being elevated to art

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[357] I refer obliquely here to Jacques Lacan's concept of *object petit a*, or piece of the Real as an object of desire, but also, in certain circumstances, an object of fear when approached to closely.

[358] D. Leader, *Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art Stops Us From Seeing*, Washington, D.C., Shoemaker & Hoard, 2002, p.11.

[359] In the introduction I point out the relationship between the withdrawal from nature and the 'content' of art. Particular contents of individual paintings are not the issue but rather how the positive content stands in for the missing nature or the expected content.

status.[360] He argues, 'Things that purport to be art [the other avant-garde] do not function, do not exist, as art until they are experienced through taste [and] until then they exist only as empirical phenomena'.[361] In other words, without taste, and therefore a basis on which to judge, an object such as an ordinary urinal, or box of soap pads, or pair of ale cans, is nothing but an empirical object. For Greenberg, it is judgment exercised in agreement with taste that assigns an ordinary object art status. Although such objects as the other avant-garde puts forward as art, will always be, as far as Greenberg is concerned, 'inferior art'.[362] But this form of judgment is not Kantian or reflective, but Hegelian or constitutive. What Greenberg does not yet fully appreciate is that negative judgments such as 'inferior art' carry the same ontological force as positive judgments. To admit this would be for Greenberg, to admit that the 'vulgar' taste of the 'common people' is dialectically related to the positive appraisal of high art. This common public is the very same public Greenberg considers back in 1939 as 'One and the same civilization [that] produces two such different things as ... a painting by Braque and a *Saturday Evening Post* cover.'[363]

If we remove from Greenberg's form of judgment, the notion of taste and measures of quality, and we add his idea of expectation deriving retroactively from dissatisfaction, we arrive at a form of judgment that the thesis has maintained: when presented with an avant-garde object or painting – of either avant-garde – the new registers against something withheld or omitted. The positive formal features or material 'facts' of the presentation stand in for the missing piece, giving the

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[360] C. Greenberg, *Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties*, a lecture given at The Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, 1969.
[361] Greenberg, p. 2.
[362] Greenberg.
[363] See footnotes 26 and 27.

impression that what is present is what is being judged in isolation from what is missing. If this withholding is subtle as in Greenberg's avant-garde, the dissatisfaction raises a subtle expectation not met by the painting (something is missing); the withholding of expected content in Bürger's avant-garde produces the feeling that one's expectation is profoundly disappointed, because the missing element is more pronounced. This missing element was not there in the first place, it is only, as Greenberg suggests, retroactively felt. This is precisely because it is not a positive, substantial element (flatness) that is essential to painting, but rather the positive 'content' stands in for the expected 'content', which has the effect of forcing a comparison between expectation and satisfaction; forcing an aesthetic judgment even when faced with an anti-aesthetic object, to divide one and the same thing in two.

The historical development of the modernist avant-garde cannot be understood in terms of an essential flatness as Greenberg argued. For example, in *Modernist Painting* (1966), the summa of Greenberg's critical career, he claimed that in 'pictorial art' it was 'Flatness alone [that] was unique and exclusive to that art.'[364] Finally he arrives at the sine qua non of his labours to excise modernist painting from all that might contaminate its purity: the other avant-garde, kitsch aesthetics, sculptural qualities, photography, and ultimately everything outside the hallowed walls of the medium of painting, that is, everyday life. Flatness, as some hidden essence of painting did not act as the causal factor; even if that cause is recognised after the event. Flatness was not the essence of modernist painting as Greenberg supposed, but the effect of a series of omissions and abandonments, and the critical,

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[364] C. Greenberg, Modernist Painting, p. 103.

judgmental response to those omissions and abandonments. In the case of the historical and neo-avant-garde, glaring omissions are indicated. In the case of Greenberg's avant-garde, minor, gradually produced, omissions leave all but a blank canvas separating ordinary things from art.[365] However, once the stage, where absolute flatness beckoned, the Belgian critic, Thierry de Duve tells us, artists did not exhibit the blank canvas, as we might expect, instead, they moved into the three-dimensional space formally occupied by sculpture.[366]

One of Greenberg's contemporaries, the American art critic, Herbert Crehan, wrote in 1953 of Robert Rauschenberg's white paintings that an 'esthetic of the purge, with its apparatus of elimination' was driving a number of modern painters at that time.[367] Crehan does not discuss Rauchenberg's *Erased de Kooning* (1953) (Figure 26) but it does illustrate his point perfectly and was executed in the same year as Crehan was writing. In this work Rauchenberg 'borrows' a drawing of the American abstract expressionist painter, Willem de Kooning, and erases the original drawing, leaving nothing but a framed, blank sheet of paper. Here, within the context of Greenbergian criticism, modernist painting, in the form of Abstract Expressionism, meets the other avant-garde through an erasure or rejection of content. In the de Kooning/Rauchenberg work, Abstract Expressionism meets what Greenberg feared in *Recentness of Sculpture* (1967) the literal 'blank sheet of paper'.[368] Perhaps more significantly, and apparently unknown to de Duve, is what

[365] T. de Duve, The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998.

[366] T. de Duve. A critical challenge the Lacanian theory of emptiness and its application to modernist and avant-garde art, can be found in John Rajchman's Deluzian account which was published in the same year as the work of de Duve cited above. See J. Rajchman, *Constructions*, Cambridge, Massachutts, MIT Press, 1998.

[367] H. Crehan, Raw Duck, *Art Digest*, Sept 15, 1953, p. 25.

[368] C. Greenberg, Recentness of Sculpture, in G. Battcock, edited *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 183. Brandon W Joseph understands

Crehan understood as driving this emptying of the canvas. Immediately after the above quoted passage Crehan refers to what he calls a 'cult of the bare canvas' which has, he argues 'always been the spectral hero' of the reductionist aesthetic.[369]

Figure 26

De Duve echoes Crehan's point four decades later when he writes 'For the modernist sensibility striving for purism and attuned to the "elements" of painting, the blank canvas's potential to become a painting had an extraordinary aesthetic appeal.'[370] The appeal of the blank canvas or real, literal support became increasingly felt as painting narrowed its formalist parameters, becoming reduced to a monochromatic surface of paint. De Duve argues that '[w]ith each convention that proved "expendable", modernist painting came closer to actualizing the blank canvas; adding 'the closer its actualization, the thinner its capacity to promise a future'.[371] If we accept that modernist painting involved an increasing reduction through

Rauchenberg's white paintings to be responding to Greenbergian criticism. See B.W.Joseph, White on White, *Critical Enquiry*, Volume 27, Number 1, Autumn, 2000.

[369] Crehan.

[370] T. De Duve, *The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas,* in Kant After Duchamp, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, p.252.

[371] De Duve, p. 253. In chapter 5 I discuss the 'capacity to offer a future' came, not just in the move into the space of sculpture in Minimal art, but also in the introduction of wall painting, the practice of painting directly onto the gallery wall or other architectural surface.

abandoning the inessential, then one would expect that either the blank canvas *is* the essence of painting, or once reduced to this material canvas, art is found to have no essence. Rather than concluding that painting was inevitably driven toward its essence, or that it has no essence, the solution this thesis proposes is to view the abandonments from another perspective, to 'see' them in parallax as an abandonment or rejection of the essential, rather than the *in*essential. It would be to see the rejection of the *essential* as what is paradoxically essential to modernist art, as what opened up within the art structure, a series of gaps or 'blanks' that both positive and negative criticism filled with 'content'. If the historical avant-garde undertakes an abandonment or rejection of the autonomous tradition by placing non-art objects into an art place or structure and thus gains the attention of the public that – through a largely negative reception – aids in the placement of the objects as art objects, then the formalist rejection is more subtle but of a structurally homologous kind. The rejection of the essential amounts to a rejection of what was considered conventionally or historically essential to painting: one-point perspective, representational realism, craft skills, expressive content, and eventually, modernist painting itself.

Beginning with the early abstract pioneers such as Picasso and Braque, Kandinsky and Mondrian, Pollock and Frankenthaler, Louis, Rothko, Newman and others, and ending with the monochrome in painters such as Frank Stella, we can understand the novelty in the paintings of these artists to arise from the abandonment, by degrees, of the essential or expected content. Picasso and Braque abandon one-point perspective for multiple views. The positive addition of the multiply views registers against the negative abandonment of a single view, rather

than having any positive quality of their own that might lend them identity as art. Wassily Kandinsky abandons representational realism for an organic, expressionistic abstraction. Again, it is not the result or the positive addition but rather the absence of what was expected; what tradition and taste demanded. Piet Mondrian abandoned the organic of nature for a flat space of geometric lines and planes of primary colours organised by a Hegelian dialectic.[372] The result of Mondrian's, Kandinsky's, Picasso and Braque's efforts could easily have been taken for mere ornament or decoration had the absence of expected content not attributed value or positive content to the result. Pollock's organic line – his 'drip' – as it came to be known, could have been understood as nothing more than a formless mess of dripped paint collected on the surface of a humble drop sheet had the missing content not drawn an interest from the public.[373] His drip is conspicuous due to this absence of expected content; including the expected method of painting with a brush.

However, what both avant-gardes also have in common is a mutual rejection of the other. The historical and neo-avant-garde overtly reject modernist painting, while modernist painting silently rejects the overtures to everyday life embraced by the historical avant-garde. The abandonments or rejections, when they are subtle, as in the case of modernist painting, are nothing more than the feeling that the artist did not do what was expected.

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[372] The art historian, Harry A. Cooper wrote his PhD on the subject of Hegelian dialectic in the Diamond Series of Mondrian. See, H.A. Cooper, *Dialectics of Mondrian's Diamond Series*, Unpublished PhD, Harvard University, Date of acceptance, May, 1997. While I agree with Cooper that Mondrian's Diamond Series display an dialectical structure internal to the canvas, this is largely beside the point I make in the thesis that the object itself begins to relate to other 'parts' in the Hegelian 'whole'. It is place in the structure and not particular meaning or compositional content that is gives a particular object its import as art. See Introduction.
[373] In fact the 'formless' quality of Pollock is the other Pollock that Rosalind Krauss emphasises. See *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993.

The introduction of the monochrome brings into view the shared field of the two avant-gardes. The monochrome abandons all internal syntax, and all visual incident for an absolute flatness. The monochrome of course abandons the last essential conventions, with nothing left to lose except painting as a particular category.

And this is what two painters did to become conceptual artists. The conceptual artists, John Baldesari (a former painter) produced, at the point of the missing blank canvas, *Everything is Purged* (1966) (figure27); and Joseph Kosuth, another former painter, produced *Paintless* (1966), (figure 28). These two 'paintings' are curiously absent from de Duve's account but they support his general claim. These artists of course play on the Greenbergian reductionist narrative against which to register their non-paintings.

EVERYTHING IS PURGED FROM THIS PAINTING
BUT ART, NO IDEAS HAVE ENTERED THIS WORK.

pāint'less, *a.* 1. lacking paint.
        2. incapable of being painted or depicted.
[Obs.]

Figure 27   Figure 28

However, rather than earnestly 'purge' there canvases of inessential content in the modernist sense, they conceptually draw attention to the idea of reduction. Even so, their conceptual 'paintings' are dialectically dependent on their rejection or 'purging'

of modernist narrative of flatness. In fact, in support of the point made in this chapter, the two artists abandon the essential, that painting be about the formal possibilities of its medium, or to employ the medium of paint, and in its stead, 'painting', now carrying inverted commas, is directed toward its own impossibility, through an explicit abandonment of painting for art.

With the potential of the monochrome exhausted, and nothing but a thin skin of paint remaining to separate the bare canvas or ordinary material from the painted canvas or painting as such, painting as a specific medium had nothing to lose; nothing to shed in order to gain the viewers attention lest a bare canvas be presented. In this case, no doubt, the presentation of the blank canvas *as art* would have drawn the spectator's attention to a complete overlap between an ordinary, useful object, a readymade canvas and art, in a way that was already present in Duchamp's readymade. De Duve suggests that to present the blank canvas might have appeared to simply repeat Duchamp given that the blank canvas is a readymade object.[374] He argues that '[S]een through Duchamp's eyes, the blank canvas *will have been* a picture, for in 1914 it was and in 1962 still is a *readymade*, in the past participle – a picture to be made and yet already made.'[375]

This overlap, or Hegelian sublation of the ordinary and the extraordinary, is what is primary: the point of art is to create a gap between the two by dividing the object into two, or the one thing seen in parallax: art/life. Duchamp understood this when he exhibited a literal urinal and called it *Fountain* (1917). The urinal is an everyday, functional object whose purpose is to be urinated in. The functional object displays an actual purpose or function, while *Fountain* (1917) is a work of art; not

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[374] De Duve.
[375] De Duve, p. 254.

because the two are substantially different, occupying on the one hand, everyday life in which we piss and shit as it were, and on the other, an elevated realm above everyday life, a timeless world of pure form or essence. It is rather the case of the One being Two – the one object as split into two – not in any substantial sense but only structurally; an object that occupies two different places in the art structure. Robert Rauchenberg understood this by replacing (re*placing*) de Kooning's modernist painting with the blank sheet of paper. In 1959 the artist, in an autobiographical note, argued 'painting relates to both art and life...I try to act in the gap between the two'.[376] However, Rauchenberg's position requires supplementing. The artist does not act in the gap between art and life but rather puts forward purposive objects that open up those gaps by withholding or removing something, by creating an empty place in the art structure to which the public, through its critical response, brings the thing into being as art, finds a place for it in the art structure. All that separates art from ordinary things, the high and the low, modernist painting and a blank canvas, is a perspective shift, a 'parallax view' that divides the one object in two: art/life.[377]

The purpose of this chapter has been firstly to illuminate the relationship between the two avant-gardes – Peter Bürger's and Clement Greenberg's – to show how they are dialectically different rather than two substantially different approaches to art. Firstly the two were shown to be related through a difference in the degree of abandonments or rejections of – in the case of the historical avant-garde – what is considered autonomous art, in favour of life; and – in the case of modernist painting

[376] R. Rauchenberg, *Untitled Statement*, 1959, p. 2.
[377] S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006. I have dealt with this division in relation to parallax in detail in the introduction, and with regards to the historical and neo-avant-gardes in chapter 1. I also locate this split in the chapters that follow.

– the abandonments were more subtle, an incremental abandonment of conventions thought essential to the medium of painting.   It was also argued that what sustained the structural place of each of the two avant-gardes was the place of its Other; the way that one lends meaning and identity to its artistic neighbour as what it was not.

Chapter 4

Minimal Difference: Painting, Object, Place

'I never set out to affirm so much as to negate (finding that the former flowed from the latter in any case)'.[378] Robert Morris.

Chapter 2 argued that in retrospect, modernist painting, under Clement Greenberg's critical gaze, involved a series of omissions and abandonments. This allowed for the creation of works that exhibited stylistic novelty while remaining within the confines of the specific medium of painting.   That is, until the historical point when monochromatic painting brought Greenberg's avant-garde up against its dialectical Other: the avant-garde represented by the German critic, Peter Bürger.   The hypothetical blank canvas posited by, most recently Thierry de Duve, and four decades earlier by the lesser known modernist critic Herbert Crehan, never actually surfaced, according to de Duve, yet its negative presence haunts both Greenberg's text, and modernist painting itself.

It was further argued that the 'missed encounter' between the raw canvas and modernist painting allowed for a critical reading of the various seminal contributors

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[378] R. Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993, p. V111.

to the debate. It was further determined that the reason for the missed encounter was due to the fact that the two avant-gardes were always-already One, that a primary sublation or synthesis of the Two seemingly opposed avant-gardes, the one formalist and the other literalist, or the one idealist and the other objective or realist, had already taken place from the beginning in the dialectic of high and low, inside and outside, art and life. The conclusion drawn was that the two diametrically opposed phenomena: the blank, readymade canvas and the autonomous formalist painting actually occupy two sides of the one thing, or the one thing seen from two different perspectives; a parallax view or judgment.

As Chapter 1 demonstrated, the perspectival system of pre-modern art, a system that organised vision and placed the viewer at an ideal viewing point, shifted with modernism, and increasingly the perspectival system became a structural relation between a range of objects and a subject as judge; a subject whose own perspective actually contributes to the thing becoming art. This perspectival turn emphasises the perspective the viewer takes, the way the object has no independent existence as art without the perspective view of the judging subject.[379] The non-art object is constituted as art via judgement, be it positive or negative. This perspective, it was argued, is not simply subjective – we see only what we want to see – nor objective – the thing is what it is and no more – but ontological: the perspective does not distinguish between mere ordinary objects of life, and art objects, but rather brings the distinction into being by splitting the one object in two; an ordinary object and an art object. The mere purposiveness of a Kantian judgment

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[379] In the context of German Idealism, the perspectival turn is announced by Kant as a 'Copernican' turn. However, unlike Kant's merely subjective perspective of the reflective judgment, a perspective that renders the object or thing-in-itself, as a merely ideal hypothesis, the Hegelian form of judgment referred to in the thesis as a parallax judgment, includes the object. Subject and object are inherently mediated so that the judgment is constitutive of the object as an *art object*.

becomes, under the judgmental input of the 'viewing' subject, the purpose to which the object, in retrospect, always already aimed; that is, to be art.

Chapter 2 developed this insight into the productive role of judgment, along with the division between the historical avant-garde and modernist painting, to show how the two were divided by the judgments made on their behalf; divided by a parallax judgment. It was demonstrated that due to the way purposive objects are assigned a place in the art structure through judgments, the meeting of the two avant-gardes had already taken place structurally if not actually. Judgments, aimed at keeping them apart, actually joined them because they were already dialectically related; the positive to the negative. It has been argued throughout the thesis, that Judgment does not involve the judging of an object of art, an object that is already art, as if art has an independent existence from judgment, but rather a judgment acts as a verb and brings the thing into being *as* art, by seeing the One thing as Two through a parallax judgment. There is no art prior to judgment, and no art outside a structure of differential art relations to which the judgment assigns the object a place.[380]

In this chapter I draw on Slavoj Zizek, in particular his concept of 'minimal difference': the 'noncoincidence of the One with itself' or the difference between the 'One and its empty place of inscription'.[381] This non-coincidence is what he refers to as the 'parallax gap'; a concept the thesis has been unpacking in previous chapters.

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[380] To address an obvious objection that supporters of context theory such as Arthur Danto and George Dickie: the context of art does not determine the object as an art object since an art context is the result of judgment itself. The placing of an object in a gallery, the awarding of a prize, the writing about an object, the refusal of an object, the destruction of an object of art etc, are contexts that have no apriori existence prior to judgment, since these contexts are the product of judgments. For example, to place an object into a gallery is not to place it in an art context but to judge it worthy of hanging before the public with the view that it eventually take place as art. All of these judgments *are* the context, and affect the structural parameters of the context as previously understood.

[381] S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006, p.38

However, in order to support my central thesis that the sublation feared by Bürger, and the encroaching menace of everyday life for Greenberg, is not the problem but rather the solution when viewed a certain way, I will explore a finer point in Zizek's concept, a point alluded to but not explicitly drawn upon by Zizek himself. This point is that the sublation is primary, that the two *are* sublated as one and that a judgmental perspective or parallax view splits the One into Two, structurally dividing the minimal *art* object from the literal material thing. This reading of Zizek in the context of Minimalism will shed light on the dialectical relationship between modernist painting and the object of Minimalism that emerges in the wake of modernist painting. However, before explaining Zizek's concept, a brief discussion of the field known as Minimalism will be given below, followed by an extrapolation of Zizek's concept of parallax in relation to the context of this chapter.

Figure 29

Figure 30

Figure 31

The emergence of Minimal art in the late 1950's in North America represents a shift in perspective away from the concerns of modernist painting. This shift indicates an interest in moving the site of art away from an emphasis on the particular medium and toward what might be referred to as the general site of art, or art in general.[382] Concerns such as the site of installation, the place of creativity or authorship, and the role of the spectator in the reception of the work as art, become the concerns and focus of Minimal art. Abstract Expressionism focuses on the subjective expression of the artist's creative will and subordinates the place of the viewer to the position of a passive receiver of the product of that artist's expressive output. The Dutch-born American painter, Willem de Kooning is an seminal example of expressive painting in the post-war period of the 1950's.[383] His work, *Excavation* (1950) (Figure 29), is an example of expressive painting. The brush, in the form of an index or trace of the hand, appears to dart about over the surface of the canvas; jerking back and forth as if tracing some pre-establish form that follows the dictates of the artist's subjective will .[384]

Another American, the painter, Jackson Pollock abandons the brush to get 'in[side] the painting'.[385] In *Number 1* (1948) (Figure 30) Pollock's 'painting' technique involves the pouring and dripping of paint from a stick, a piece nature, that replaces the mediating instrument of the paint brush. The abandonment of the brush apparently gave Pollock direct access to the thing behind the veil of language.

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[382] T. de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998.
[383] In chapter 2 I show how Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning* (1953) conceptually rejected abstract expressionism as a way to structurally assign his conceptual gesture as art.
[384] The loss of the subject's substantial being is what is most revolutionary about post-Kantian idealism.
[385] J. Pollock, Three Statements: 1944 – 1951, in H. B. Chipp edited, *Theories of Modern Art*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1968, p. 546.

Pollock famously claimed 'I don't paint nature, I am nature'.[386] These works and others like them have been understood as indexes of the subjective, unmediated expression of the artist's improvisational will.[387] Minimal art, by contrast, represents a shift in perspective from the subjective to the objective; the inside to the outside. The shift in perspective toward the object often took one of two forms according to Douglas Crimp: 'either by eliminating the object's internal relationships altogether or by making those relationships a function of simple structural repetition'.[388] The American artist, Robert Morris' *Ring With Light* (1965 – 96) (Figure 32) is an example of Crimp's first category, while Donald Judd's *Untitled* (1966) (Figure 31) is an example of his second category. The advent of Minimalism shifts the focus of attention away from subjective expression, and back towards the object, either as a singular, mute, impervious object, or to a serial situation where original expression is removed, and in its place is the potential for endless copies of identical, impersonal units. In both cases the object expresses nothing.

Figure 32

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[386]J.Pollock, *BriceMarden:Cold Mountain*, http://www.diaart.org/exhibs/marden/coldmountain/interview.html.

[387] The poet and art critic Harold Rosenberg is an exemplary case of the notion of an existentialist encounter between the artist and his or her canvas. For an overview of Rosenberg's account and the general, even wide-spread alternative to the formalist reading of Abstract Expressionism see D. Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Post War America*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998.

[388] D. Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993, p. 154.

The objects of Minimal art are often constructed with industrial materials, at times, by industrial factories, leaving the thing untouched by the human hand in contrast to the expressive touch emphasised by the early abstraction. The resulting 'aesthetic' is often hard and impersonal, made with industrial materials and processes. Donald Judd's *Untitled* (1966) (Figure 31), is an example of the turn toward an impersonal aesthetic. *Untitled* (1966) empties the object of its heated, expressive content; of the chaotic line of Pollock, and the angst of de Kooning's jagged and tormented brush marks, by presenting an altogether cold, metallic surface and serial production of identical objects. To discuss originality of the series, or the author's intention seems beside the point. These objects, and other industrial works of Minimalism, unlike the abstraction of the previous generation, could be made (not created) by anyone. They appear as a 'coolly forthright anonymity' Francis Colpitt suggests.[389]

Another objective of Minimal art is to place the viewer in direct bodily contact with the object and the prevailing experiential conditions as a phenomenological encounter. By doing so, it aims to challenge the autonomous art object of modernist art, and along with it, the ideal point of view by a disembodied subject of vision addressed by that art.[390] Minimalism as a phenomenological experience wants to replace the private modernist subject with an embodied, public

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[389] F. Colpitt, *Minimal Art: A Critical Perspective*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1993, p. 115. Indeed many of the works of Minimal art were produced in factories rather than created in studios.

[390] This phenomenological understanding of Minimalism is best articulated by Rosalind Krauss. See R. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1994; and R. Krauss, Richard Serra: A Translation, in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1985. Other seminal contributors to the phenomenological reading of Minimalism include James Myer and Amelia Jones. See J. Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001; and J. Meyer, *Minimalism: Themes and Movements*, London, Phaidon Press, 2000; and A. Jones, Meaning, Identity, Embodiment: The Uses of Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology in Art History, *Art and Thought,* Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2003.

subject, or a body as subject; a body in relation to other bodies as objects in an externalised spatial and temporal condition.[391]

The phenomenological reading of Minimalism is indebted to the writings of the French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), Merleau-Ponty critically evaluates the Western rationalist tradition that separates subject from object, mind from body, inside from outside.[392] For Merleau-Ponty the human subject is not isolated from the thing itself but rather related to it, *inter*dependent with, rather than independent from the thing. According to Merleau-Ponty 'the thing is inseparable from the person perceiving it, and can never be actually in itself [as Kant supposed] because it stands at the other end of our gaze or at the terminus of a sensory exploration'.[393] The point this chapter makes is that any immediate experience of the objects in a certain space by an experiential body is mediated by the structural removal of the relations internal to modernist painting and European art in general, and relocating them as phenomenological relations, structurally understood, not experienced immediately as phenomena, but as negatively experienced against modernist painting. The immediate phenomena might well be experienced by a body but this does not necessarily register as art but rather as one might experience any other object not considered art. The solution is to see how the two are related.

In this relating of the body to space, Merleu-Ponty is echoed by another French theorist, Henri Lefebvre, who argues that '[s]pace commands bodies,

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[391] Hal Foster has questioned Krauss's account of Minimalism. See H. Foster, The Crux of Minimalism, in *The Return of the Real:The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1996, pp. 35-70.
[392] M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, London, Routledge, 1998
[393] M. Merleau-Ponty, p. 320.

prescribing or proscribing gestures, routes, distances to be covered [were as] 'the "reading" of space is thus merely a secondary and practically irrelevant upshot.'[394] What both these theorists understand, each in their own way, is the presence of a body in a space is primary to our experience of space. The subject as body is understood as the immediate presence as object in relation to other objects, distanced only by literal space and time. The object and subject as body are caught in a situation involving multiple perspectives that shift and alter with every move and turn of the body experiencing the other bodies as objects in that situation. The cohabitation or interdependence of subject and object shifts the attention away from the author or artist and toward the embodied experience of the spectator, sometimes to the extent that the spectator is invited to participate in the art experience. However true this account might be of phenomenological experience of art, it does not explain how such experience is an *art* experience. This can only be understood structurally, in so far as *art*, understood through the Hegelian frame sketched in the introduction, is prior to the intuitive immediacy of the object. The phenomenological will need to be understood in relation to the art structure as its counterpart. Before developing this conceptual relationship, more needs to be understood about the category understood as Minimal art.

Another issue associated with Minimal art is the question of the art and life division, or more correctly, the question of art/non-art. The art/life or art/non-art division is at stake in both the phenomenological account and the anti-modernist, anti-aesthetic use of industrial, factory-made objects. A phenomenological immediacy of experience in these 'art' works is experienced in equal measure in non-

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[394] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Oxford, Blackwells, 1991, p. 143. Lefebvre gives a more complex account of the space than I am able to suggest. The 'production of space' is a highly politicised space driven or produced by the ruling elite.

art objects such as industrial products themselves. Quality is assured, not by the comparison with historical exemplars of quality as both Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried assumed, but rather quality is measured by the degree of build-quality delivered by the factory.

The spare, often empty forms of Minimal art have been understood, especially by the artists themselves, as an eschewal of critical response, denying the importance of critical judgment. The American critic, James Meyer, for instance has claimed '[t]he work of the so-called Minimalists resisted previous critical understanding, throwing criticism itself into a crisis.'[395] Meyer goes on to suggest '[t]he flourishing of critical art debate during the 1960's resulted from other material factors, such as the development of the commercial art magazine, in conjunction with an expanding art market.'[396] However, this does not explain the sudden increase in critical literature associated with Minimalism written by the artists themselves; and it also neglects the fact that the historical avant-garde also undertook to write about their works in ways that the pre-modern painters never did, and the modernist painter rarely did. For Meyer the critical writing and the art status of the Minimal object are not necessarily connected. The point, however, is to understand the connection between the emptiness of the minimal works themselves; their mundane appearance and lack of ornamental or decorative features, and the critical response to that emptiness.

If painting, as was shown in the previous chapter, was no longer viable, or was seen to be tainted with idealism, or Greenbergianism, then what came after, if it was not immediately recognisable as art, had to create a provenance, albeit a negative

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[395] J. Meyer, *Minimalism: Themes and Movements*, London, Phaidon Press, 2000, p. 17.
[396] Meyer.

one, that would lend it art status or identity, and so anti-painting, or anti-modernist painting, offered this possibility.   Judd echoes the point about provenance by saying that 'most of the new materials are not accessible as oil on canvas [therefore] they aren't obviously art', and so not necessarily 'interesting'.[397]   The attempt was made to identify the material presence or literal quality of the object with art.

The American critic, Michael Fried referring to the Minimalists as 'literalists', feared the emphasis on the presence of the obdurate material would spell the end of art.   In his seminal writing on Minimal art, *Art and Objecthood* (1967), Fried argues 'the literalist espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theatre is now the negation of art.'[398]   However, Fried's notion of Minimal or literalist art as the negation of art misses the point of the new art, and that is to occupy a place as art by employing the avant-garde's oppositional stance; to fill the emptiness with identity by opposing a modernist identity.   The 'negation' feared by Fried should be understood as a negating by the Minimalists of what was essential to painting; by negating painting itself.[399]   The American artist Dan Flavin seems to agree with this conclusion when he suggests, 'we are pressing downward toward no art [a condition involving a] 'pleasure of seeing known to everyone'[400]

If however, this 'pleasure...known to everyone' is not to be understood as a specifically art pleasure, then the obvious question is: how do we 'see' this new art among ordinary, non-art objects seen by 'everyone'?   Certainly Flavin's use of

[397] D. Judd, *Complete Writings, 1959-1975*, New York, New York University Press, 2005, p.187.
[398] M. Fried, Art and Objecthood, in G. Battcock edited, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 125
[399]This negation of painting leads, according to de Duve, to the general condition of art.
[400] D. Flavin, Some Remarks: Excerpts From a Spleenish Journal, *Artforum*, Volume 5, Number 4, December, 1966, p.27.

common fluorescent tubes in *The Diagonal of May* (1963) (Figure 33) is not helpful in distinguishing art from non-art objects, in so far as fluorescent tubes are found in any everyday context as lighting for buildings, homes etc. The best hint we have of distinguishing the real light from the same light as art is the diagonal placement of the object itself. It is placed at an oblique angle, 45 degrees from the floor of the gallery, rather than being placed on the ceiling of the space. The diagonal placement and relocation from its 'proper' place on the ceiling draw attention to a different place.

Figure 33

To take two more examples, Sol LeWitt's *Floor Plan # 4* (1976) (Figure 34); Carl Andre's *Equavalent V111* (1966) (Figure 35); are works that seem devoid of expressive or meaningful content. They appear banal, ordinary, and unremarkable. Both Andre's and LeWitt's works are 'constructed' from basic geometrically-shaped arrangements. Andre's is the more austere, being nothing but a shallow stack of readymade industrial pavers. Neither internal, formal syntax, nor expressive line is given to the eye to induce aesthetic contemplation. Colour is also missing from the object except for what is inherent to the material used. They appear as an aesthetic

desert. How can Donald Judd's dictum 'a work needs only to be interesting' apply to these objects when they appear anything *but* 'interesting'?[401]

How did these banal objects solicit our interest? The answer is contained in the question: it is precisely because they are devoid of internal, formal, or more generally, qualities of modernist painting, that they in fact did attract the spectator's attention as the fortunes of modernist painting declined.

Figure 34   Figure 35

It's what is missing or excluded that engages the 'interest' of the viewer; what the positive 'content' of the Minimal objects attempt to stand in for or take the place of. Morris admits 'I never set out to affirm so much as negate'.[402]   Richard Serra, as if in agreement with Morris, stated ''Little by little you discover your work by finding out who you are not, what you do not want to pursue, what you refuse to do'.[403], Such negations and refusals from Morris and Serra are a reminder of the historical avant-garde's negations and the refusals of the Salons that generated the interest in

[401]   D. Judd, Specific Objects, in *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975*, New York, New York University Press, 2005, p. 184.

[402] R. Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993, p. V111.

[403403] R. Serra, *Writings, Interviews*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press,1994, p. 225.

the historical avant-garde. It is a reminder of the dialectical connection between the rejection of the historical avant-garde by Greenberg and the positive 'content' of his judgments. In the modernist painting, especially Abstract Expressionism, it is the negation that provides the immediate reference for the neo-avant-garde and its seminal example, Minimal art, to turn against. More specifically, the absence or omission of painting is what generates the interest in these otherwise banal objects.[404]

The task of the Minimal artist was to get the viewer's attention; to wean them from modernist painting. What might turn a viewer of discrete and bounded paintings into a spectator and participant in 'theatre'?[405] What could turn a viewer of modernist painting into a spectator of objects that have little or nothing to say formally or visually, where the 'desert' Malevich spoke of, becomes the general condition of art?[406] One solution was suggested by Judd, who declared the new objects, once liberated from the 'set forms' of painting and sculpture, 'can be made [from] almost anything'; and that 'a work needs only to be interesting'.[407] The object, in order to distinguish it from 'almost anything' else in the world, needs only to engage the viewers interest, rather than their appreciation as objects of good taste, or aesthetic judgment in the traditional or modernist sense. The problem is the mundane, even boring objects that often exemplify Minimal art are anything but interesting in themselves. When compared to the heated expression of abstract expressionism, the Minimal objects are felt to be lacking the visual expressive quality that might solicit the viewer's attention.

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[404] Douglas Crimp draws attention to the link between painting and Daniel Buren's 'non-painting' striped works and modernist painting by suggesting that a Buren 'poses as painting'. See D. Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993, p. 87.
[405] M. Fried, p. 125.
[406] See chapter 1.
[407] D. Judd, p. 184.

In the post war period of the 1950s and 60s, modernist painting's series of abandonments or rejections left nothing but a skin of paint to keep the gap open between a painting and a blank canvas or literal (real) support. The name given this minimal skin of paint was monochrome painting. In this austere milieu, the series of abandonments that organised the reception of modernist painting was left with nothing to omit lest art itself be abandoned, artist abandoned painting itself for the object of minimalism. With nowhere to move within painting itself the artists moved out from the picture plane altogether, and into the architectural space, into the space of three dimensions occupied by sculpture.[408] As the previous chapter argued, it was through the rejection of the 'essential', rather than the 'inessential' as Greenberg supposed that modernist painting itself produced its other, Minimalism, which is founded – to a large extent –on another rejection: the rejection of modernist painting in total.[409]

While it could be argued, as I have above, that Minimalism shared a number of conceptual concerns with the historical avant-garde, especially Russian Constructivism, it was, by-and-large, founded on the rejection of modernist painting rather than on the positive presence of the material, or the influence of the historical avant-garde before it.[410] The Australian art critic Rex Butler has argued for instance that 'minimalism only had meaning while it had something to oppose, while it was

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[408] T. De Duve, The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas, in *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998. However, while Minimal art occupied the same literal space as sculpture (three dimensional space) it did not occupy the same structural space as sculpture since sculpture as art was historically supplanted by Minimal art.

[409] It has often been suggested that the reductionist programme of modernist painting was at work in Minimal art and that is why the 'aesthetic' is reductive, stripped of content etc. This is true to a point but the most important reduction, or better, rejection, is the rejection of modernist painting itself. See for instance, F. Colpitt, *Minimal Art: A Critical Perspective*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1993, p. 115.

[410] H. Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the Turn of the Century*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1996.

not true'. [411] The American critic, Rosalind Krauss, has also located Minimal art and other 'movements' from the late 1950s and early 60s, in terms of negativity in her influential essay, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1993). [412] Krauss argues that from the late 1950s 'modernist sculpture' became increasingly motivated by negativity to the point where 'sculpture appeared as a kind of black hole in the space of consciousness, something whose positive content was increasingly difficult to define, something that was possible to locate only in terms of what it was not.' [413]

Krauss' 'expanded field' structurally locates the positive presence of objects in negative relation to other categories in the 'field'. However, while this structural approach has merit it falls short of a satisfactory explanation for the emergence of Minimal art. For example, it doesn't fully explain the relationship between the different places in the structure, and the absence of modernist painting. Furthermore, it overlooks the impact of the real as gap between the positions or places in the structure. In other words, it emphasises the negative over the positive, the subjective over the objective. It also doesn't appreciate the role aesthetic judgment plays in the location of each art 'unit' in the structure. Finally, Krauss' structural theory ignores the fact that the expanded field or site of art also includes modernist painting as its Other because it is a postmodernist theory that wants to both reject aesthetic judgment and modernist painting with it.

The American critic, Arnold Berleant has commented on the relationship of Minimalism to its past by arguing that the 'pictorial or the sculptural feature that are

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[411] R. Butler, Soft Minimalism, *Eyeline*, no's. 22/23, Summer, 1993, p. 17.
[412] R. Krauss, Sculpture in the Expanded Field, in H. Foster edited, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Seattle, Bay Press, 1993.
[413] Krauss, p. 36.

present in traditional Western fine art appear to be missing.'[414]   Such negativity and forms of rejection are not merely incidental or an aberration, nor do they have a positive meaning in themselves, as if the artist was labouring to remove the obstruction to the thing itself so as to produce non-alienated art; an art of immediacy, or an art free of all institutional control.   In each case, it is the search for the thing-itself, whether it is the essence of art, the future, a communist utopia, the unconscious, the sublime, the literal or real; that actually constitutes the object sought or creates the conditions for a judgmental response.

The moment of minimalism's historical emergence in the early 1960's represents another avant-garde attempt to break free from autonomy; to once and for all leave behind gap between art and mere things of life, or to attain the 'thing-in-itself'.[415]   However the goal, to reach the thing itself, is the means not the end.   The same formal structure that organises the efforts of the historical avant-garde is present in the neo-avant-garde, in particular the Minimalist object which ostensibly aims to close the gap between the spectator's body and the object of art; to collapse the distinction between the art and everyday life.   The historical avant-garde faces a marginally different opponent than the neo-avant-garde however, in that the neo-avant-garde has the historical avant-garde as a source to plunder, but more importantly for this chapter, Minimal art had Greenberg's narrative and institutional dominance to oppose and lend their acts validity.   Given that the space of three dimensions was the space where modernist sculpture was found, the minimal artist was, in a sense, historically coerced into making some form of literalist art, or non-art, lest they risk simply repeating the idealist forms of modernist sculpture given

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[414] A. Berleant, The Visual Arts and the Art of the Unseen, *Leonardo*, Volume 12, Number 3, Summer, 1979, p. 232.
[415] Colpitt, p. 109.

that the new objects were to be found in the place formally occupied by modernist sculpture itself – three dimensional space.

There was no space left in modernist painting once the monochrome arrived on the historical scene.[416] If the new art could *not* be painting, since it occupied the place of sculpture, neither could it be painting in the modernist sense since the monochrome appeared to be the end of the reductionist line.[417] Modern sculpture, as a site, was equally problematic for the ambitious artist in the post-modernist milieu. Sculpture, understood as autonomous, elevated by the pedestal or plinth, and associated with internal syntax – something Donald Judd for instance, considered discredited – was therefore not the place for this new object either.[418] Modernist painting could serve the negative purpose of *not* being the new art, and thus lend the new art its positive status. The abandonment of painting for the three-dimensional space of ordinary objects could take its place against the formalist tradition, lending 'content' to the otherwise austere objects.

While it is true that the Minimal artists sometimes referred to their art as 'sculpture' (the title of Robert Morris' essay *Notes on Sculpture* (1993) is the obvious case in point) there was ambivalence surrounding the term.[419] This ambivalence is also often located through negative determinations. Morris, for example, states that 'I never set out to affirm so much as negate (finding that the

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[416] This conclusion does not mean that painting has ended but rather modernist painting has ended. Paint is but one of the mediums now in use.

[417] This 'end of the line' is not what actually happened. In chapter 5 I discuss the genre of Wall Painting as an practice of painting directly onto the gallery wall in order to extend painting as much as art.

[418] D. Judd, Questions to Stella and Judd in G. Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 150.

[419] Morris refers to his art as 'the new work' and as 'sculpture', stating that 'some of the new work has expanded the terms of sculpture'. R. Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1993, p. 17.

former flowed from the latter in any case).'[420] Affirmation, or the positive attribute of the Minimalist object, flows from negation for Morris. In Donald Judd's seminal thesis 'Specific Objects' (1965) we find the positive designation 'sculpture', and the 'specific' is often mediated by negative terminology as is the case when he argues that 'half or more of the best new work… has been *neither* painting *nor* sculpture', hence a 'specific object'.[421] In fact Judd, answering a question put to him by Bruce Glaser in 1966, stated 'I wanted to get rid of any compositional effects', and when asked why he wanted to abandon composition he added 'Well, those effects tend to carry with them all the structures, values, feelings, of the whole European tradition'.[422]

Despite his insistence on the 'specific object' or positivity, just one year prior to 'Specific Objects' (1965), Judd makes the necessary connection between the positivity of the new objects, the importance of negativity, and the abandonment of modernist painting.[423] In a review for Arts Magazine in 1964, Judd wrote an article on Dan Flavin's objects.[424] Judd begins by discussing Flavin's minimal works; describing his use of lights in positive terms, relating them the American formalist painter, Morris Louis. He refers to the lights as 'strong and specific', suggesting – through a reference to Kantian terminology –'they are things themselves'.[425] And yet he immediately goes on to qualify his positivism with the admission that 'there

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[420] Morris, p. V111. It should also be remembered that the term 'specific' (in Specific Objects) has an unmistakable Greenbergian ring to it given Greenberg's emphasis on specificity of the medium, and so to a degree, structurally locates Judd's objects within the modernist enterprise.
[421] D. Judd, Specific Objects in K. Stiles and P. Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artist's Writings*, Berkley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 114.
[422] Judd. It could be argued that the 'problem' of the European tradition is only a problem when understood in dialectical relation to Minimal art. There are no art 'problems' in themselves.
[423] D. Judd, *Complete Writings 1959-1975*, New York, New York University Press, 2005.
[424] Judd, p. 124.
[425] Judd.

are also several important negative aspects' of Flavin's objects.[426] Flavin exhibited two kinds of work for the show according to Judd: 'blocks', small square objects with lights attached; and the second, 'parallel arrangements of fluorescent tubes'.[427] Judd has some difficulty in critically understanding these two different groups. At first comparing them to the late works of the American formalist painter, Morris Louis, and secondly by defining them in negative terms. Judd then specifies these 'negative aspects' stating that the 'blocks are *not* paintings' and that 'they are *not* composed in any ordinary sense' and 'they *don't* involve illusionistic space' and 'they *don't* have modulated surface' and finally, 'they *don't* play with parts of the world'.[428] The use of negative descriptions is the only way to describe objects that no longer bare comparison to their referent. The negative descriptions stand in for the loss of positive, visual connections to the objects and a known referent. The only referent the objects have is art itself, and art no longer necessarily bares any resemblance to nature or the representation of nature. In the *Claustral* (1961) (Figure 36), the Louis painting is stained with acrylic paint. The paint is allowed to fall down the canvas under the direction of gravity, staining its white, pristine surface as it travels. The work is let take its own course without the hand guiding the way. It is, to a degree, impersonal.
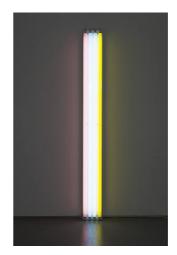
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[426] Judd.

[427] Judd.

[428] Judd. The emphasis is mine. The emphasis is intende to draw attention to the subtle negative emphasis that Judd must resort to when the positive condition of art is by this time no longer to be relied upon.

Figure 36   Figure 37

However, this literal or objective quality of the paint under the pressure of gravity is overcome by the illusion of the image, the way it floats against the white void of open space behind it to create a shallow illusionistic space. The painting reads as a picture of paint rather than a literal placement of pigment on a canvas material. The painting is also hung on the gallery wall in the convention of modernist painting. It is a painting in the modernist sense. Flavin's, *Untitled* (1964) (Figure 37), is a group of four fluorescent tubes much like any others found in hardware stores or attached to ceilings of homes and warehouses. It asserts its objectivity by literally resting on the ground or floor of the gallery as opposed to occupying the wall in the way the Louis painting does.

What Judd is actually doing in his review of Flavin's 1964 show is not so much analysing Flavin's art, as if it already had art status, but rather filling in the negative, empty place they inscribe, the not-painting etc, with critical judgment, and in doing so, bringing those negatives into a positive condition of art, opening up a place in the art structure to accommodate the not-paintings, as art. This is undertaken in two ways: on the one hand, by comparing them to Morris Louis,

suggesting that the 'simple, unstressed, unconcluded, placing of the adjacent lines [of tubes] relates to that kind of placing in Morris Louis' last paintings'.[429]   The 'placing' is rather a placing within the art structure through Judd's critical judgment and the judgment of others.

Richard Serra, another American Minimalist generalises the negativity implied in such rejections and abandonments. He states, with regards to his own practice, that '[l]ittle by little you discover your work by finding out who you are *not*, what you do *not* want to pursue, what you *refuse* to do'.[430]   What he negates in general, through these specific negations, in order to register his otherwise mute objects and processes as art, is modernist painting. In an article first published in *Arts Magazine* in 1970 he stated, in relation to his lead casts of the interstices between the gallery wall and its floor: 'The concern with horizontality is not so much a concern for lateral extension as it is a concern with painting'.[431]   Drawing closer, the dialectic between painting and the new 'sculpture', Serra added, 'Lateral extension in this case allows sculpture to be viewed pictorially' and by this he means 'as if the floor were the canvas plane.'[432]   The association of painting plane with floor is, to a degree, evident in *Gutter Corner Splash: Night Shift* (1969 – 1995) (originally *Casting Lead*) (1969) (Figure 38).

As the title suggests, *Casting Lead* (1969), is a series of lead casts of the interstice of wall and floor. The casts draw attention to the gallery as site but in as

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[429] Judd. I have added the italics to emphasise the subtle way in which Judd sneaks negativity into his critical assessment of the works.
[430] R. Serra, *Writings, Interviews*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 225 The emphasis is mine.
[431] Serra, p. 8.
[432] Serra.

complex way. The casts bridge the gap between the wall and the floor or the space of modernist painting and the three-dimensional, real space occupied by bodies.

Figure 38

Acting as a hinge, the resultant casts are an index of the point of connection between the two places: the wall and the floor, modernist painting and the Minimal object, ideal and real. The floor in this work, registers as a place of art by registering as structurally connected to the wall as what the wall is not. The literal joining of the floor to the wall does not make the object art but rather the structural joining of the floor to the wall as negation, as what the new refuses. This connection gives the object and its relation to the literal structure of the architectural space in which it is created, over to another structure, the art structure. This is because it is not the floor in isolation that Serra is working on but the connection between two different places hinged together by a hyphen, between the wall as an ideal location for modernist painting, and the literal floor that is now an art floor as a result of the casting. The floor had to find a structural place, its literal place was where everything that wasn't art stood, and historically, its place was taken by idealist sculpture underpinned, as Rosalind Krauss argued, by the modernist plinth.[433]

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[433] R. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1994.

The steel floor works of Carl Andre support Serra's argument even more emphatically than does Serra's own objects and process works. For example, *144 Lead Squares* (1969) (Figure 39), appears to be a geometric painting laid on the gallery floor as if it was in transition to the wall and the gallery staff had not finished their installation of the work.

Figure 39

Or more to the point, it is as if the show is over and the 'painting' is taken down, awaiting storage. Its horizontality is the counterpoint to the verticality of painting. The modernist grid embraced by scores of painters from Piet Mondrian to Agnes Martin is placed on the floor of the gallery as if it is in fact misplaced or in the wrong place. The 'right' place or the new place the grid finds itself in Serra's object, is dialectically dependent on the Other place from which the Minimal object has been removed, from the place of modernist painting. The white, monochromatic painting hung on the wall behind the Andre floor piece acknowledges obliquely the passage from the monochrome and the wall to the object and the floor. In the case of Judd, to conclude from this rejection of European composition with its internal syntax, that he

was not influenced by formalist criticism (if not Greenberg himself) is to misunderstand the context.[434]

In fact Judd reverses the terms set by Greenberg's essentialist criticism when discussing the work of other Minimalists such as Robert Morris, Dan Flavin and Frank Stella, when he states that 'many aspects often thought essential to art are missing, such as imagery and composition.'[435] Although Judd is not referring specifically to Clement Greenberg, his claim regarding the Minimal artists supports the point made in the previous chapter, that contrary to Greenberg, it is the essential that is missing or abandoned, not the inessential.   Judd was an American artist and former critic working at the time of Greenberg's assendency, and was well aware of Greenberg's presence, even haunted by it, referring in his seminal statement on his art, to his minimal works as 'Specific Objects' (1965).[436]   As critic, Judd often understood the minimal objects in terms of negation rather than positive terms. Robert Morris also emphasised negativity when he made the claim at the introduction to his collected writings, that 'I never set out to affirm so much as negate.'[437]

Another American artist, Tony Smith, found himself resorting to the negative when explaining his seminal work, *Die* (1962 - 1968) (figure 40), to Robert Morris. When asked 'Why didn't you make it [*Die*] bigger so that it would loom over the

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[434] D. Judd, Questions to Stella and Judd, in G. Battcock edited, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 150.

[435] Judd, p.165.

[436] D. Judd, Specific Objects in K. Stiles and P. Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artist's Writings*, Berkley, University of California Press, p. 114. The use of the term 'specific' to describe his object could not have avoided involving a response to the pressure of Greenbergian specificity when the artist was working in America and at the close of Greenberg's influence.

[437] Morris, p. V111. It should also be remembered that the term 'specific' (in Specific Objects) has an unmistakable Greenbergian ring to it given Greenberg's emphasis on specificity of the medium, and so to a degree, structurally locates Judd's objects within the modernist enterprise.

observer? Smith answered 'I was *not* making a monument.' And when asked 'Then why didn't you make it smaller so that the observer could see over the top?' he replied 'I was *not* making an object.'[438]

Figure 40

The negative assessments of Smith's object given by Morris's questions are matched by Smith's own negative responses. *Die* (1962 – 68) lies between these extremes of small, large, object and not object, but also, and more importantly, the thing is not painting and not sculpture, a non-art object now accepted as a seminal example of Minimal art. As was argued in chapter 1 the withdrawal from representational realism meant that the positive identity of the image ('this is a painting of a landscape') was no longer possible and the painting, or in this case the object, must be discussed and judged negatively through discussing what it is not, or what it refuses.

Echoing the negativity of Judd and Morris, the post-minimal artist, Eva Hesse stated in the late 1960's that she would 'like the work to be non-work'.[439] What

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[438] R. Morris, Notes On Sculpture Part 2, in G. Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 228. The emphasis is mine.

Hesse places her work in relation to is painting; to be a non-painting.[440] Despite the use of 'soft' materials, she is not so much pitting her work against the industrial manufacturing aesthetic of the objects of minimalism – Judd's boxes, Morris' geometric cubes or Andre's cor-ten steel works, but rather in relation to painting.

Figure 41

In this context *Hang Up* (1966), (Figure 41), is seminal. From out of the frame a wire exits, tracing a line into the literal three-dimensional space the gallery itself, only to re-join the frame on the wall. The 'non-work' Hesse refers to is not a literal object outside the discourse of art, but an object that attempts to introduce the outside, or non-art object into the inside, into the frame. Art does not enter life here but rather life enters art, or exchanges places with it. The negation of formalism and the recourse to negation in general, aims to maintain the negative; a silent authorisation for the objects proffered; a way of entering them into a system of

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[439] E. Hess, Untitled Statement in K. Stiles and P. Selz, *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artist's Writings,* Berkley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 594.
[440] Rosalind Krauss has argued a similar point to the one I am making here. She writes '*Hang Up* …declares her [Hess'] refusal or her inability to leave the territory of painting'. See R. krauss, Hesse's Desiring Machines, in M. Nixon edited *Eva Hess*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2002, p. 50.

differences; a system of art objects in much the same way that language carves up the world into tables as *not*-chairs etc.[441]

Richard Serra's process works and steel structures from the 1960's on make the place of site, along with the spectator's phenomenological experience of the combination of site and structure, the conditions of experiencing the work. Apart from an admission of Brancusi as an influence, Serra largely aimed to situate his work in the phenomenological conditions of experience: 'space, place, time and movement'; but also the way a material behaves under certain conditions.[442] Moving away from what he referred to as a 'pedestal site', and into the everyday or urban context, Serra would seem to repudiate sculpture.[443] But rather than do so he refers to his objects without pedestal as sculpture claiming 'They relate to sculpture and nothing more'.[444]

Of course in making this claim he is trying to distance his large-scale objects from monuments, but he is also on record as saying, and his work also attests to this, that the objects relate to the site of installation: 'the experience of the work is inseparable from the place in which the work resides.'[445] However, Serra demonstrates an acute awareness of the problems of identifying the object when its medium is no longer simply paint, or in his case, marble or stone which carry with the material an historical association with art.[446] 'It's possible' he says, 'that now there is a kind of sculpture that's reduced to a photograph only…But if everything

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[441] This oblique reference to the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure is dealt with in some detail in the introduction.

[442] R. Serra, *Writings interviews*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 29.

[443] Serra, p. 127.

[444] Serra, p. 135.

[445] Serra, p. 129.

[446] Serra's use of cor-ten steel does, however, link him to certain modernists who used steel such as Anthony Caro and David Smith but with the idealist internal relations removed.

from photographs to performance is considered sculpture, what is *not* sculpture?'[447] However, as this chapter has demonstrated, it is the negative or refusal of painting that creates the gap in the structure that provides a place for the otherwise ordinary object – the not-sculpture – to register as art.

In a statement that has an obvious negative reference to Greenbergian criticism, Morris for instance, argues that 'the concerns of sculpture have been for some time not only distinct from but hostile to those of painting'.[448] Perhaps more tellingly, Morris claims 'The clearer the nature [Greenberg calls it 'essence'] of the values of sculpture becomes the stronger the opposition [to modernist art] appears'[449] In other words the closer the approach of the work toward its 'nature' or 'essence' the more the negative is stressed. Take for instance Morris' most commonly quoted statement defining the aim of his work: 'The better new work *takes relationships out of the work* and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision'.[450]

What Morris indicates here is the importance of relationship, or what might be called structural places. The object's positive qualities are dependent on 'relationships' between elements rather than having a 'meaning' in-itself. The use of relational elements is evidenced in *Slab (Cloud)* (1973) (Figure 42), where the objects, all painted white, appear connected, both to each other and to the gallery

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[447] Serra, pp. 129-130.

[448] Morris. Greenberg is in fact quite perceptive in understanding the interest of the Minimalists (and the avant-garde generally) with a negative attitude toward what is already accepted as art. He understands the move of Minimalism with the strategic production of 'non-art'. He says 'they [Minimalists] commit themselves to the third dimension because it is, among other things, a coordinate that art has to share with non-art'. See C. Greenberg, Recentness of Sculpture, in G. Battcock edited, *Mimimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 183.

[449] Morris, p. 17.

[450] Morris, p. 15.

wall, as if the 'relationships' are taken out of the space of painting and placed in relation to each other and in relation to the structural parts of the gallery itself rather than discrete objects.

The light from the gallery bounces off the surface of the painted aluminium objects. With the visual all but denied the body as material object in a specific place is solicited. However, in order that the positive experience of the work be an experience of *art* after modernist painting, the internal 'relationships' of painting must be figuratively removed from the discrete, bounded space of the painting and extended into the literal space of the gallery.

Figure 42

This moving of the internal 'relationships' and placing them in an external place of the art gallery can only take place structurally, as objects occupying a different place in the art structure. However, what this removal actually indicates is not simply the shift from the internal space of the modernist canvas to the outside or everyday life, but the final abandonment or rejection of painting itself which brings into view this alternative place.

As it was argued in chapter one, the historical avant-garde already took the 'relationships out of the work' making them, not so much a phenomenological

'function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision', but rather submitting subversive and provocative gestures on the one hand, and formal experiments on the other, to an art structure in order that they find a place in that structure. Art, in order to solicit the viewer's attention, must display in some form, an intentionality or purposiveness. Frank Stella understood this requirement that the ordinary object assert intentionality. In an interview with Bruce Glaser in 1966 Stella, echoing Judd's assertion that the object 'needs only to be interesting', noted the new art was 'still dealing with the same old problems of making art' and that in order to 'evaluate' the minimal works, one only need consider the object as 'art, or [that] it wants to be art, or it asks to be considered art.'[451]

How does Stella's object go from paint on canvas to a painting – from life to art? One must be able to tell the difference between Stella's minimal canvas and the same canvas as material stuff. The difference is not visually apparent. This form of difference that allows us to 'see' the difference between the two is a form of difference Zizek refers to as 'minimal difference', or a difference between the One object and its place of inscription; the one object seen in parallax.[452] The minimal difference is between the literal object of life and the same thing 'seen' as art.

This is not because art and life form a continuum but rather that a primary sublation – the two as one – is divided, seen in parallax as two through a parallax judgment. Minimal objects, like the other objects mentioned above, must draw attention to their purposiveness; as being more than what they seem. Their purpose is not consumed by our response to them (we don't actually use them) and nor did

[451] F. Stella, Questions to Stella and Judd, in G. Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, p. 163.
[452] S. Zizek, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2006, p. 30.

they present themselves (at least in their historical moment) as art, but rather what art – understood as modernist painting – was not. The spectator is not just a spectator but a participant, not in the sense of directly interacting with the object, or, as the advocates of 'relational aesthetics' would suggest, the innocuous participation between social groups, but rather in the Hegelian sense as constitutive of the object as an object of art through a parallax judgment.[453] The judgment is not merely subjective but rather the subjective made objective by the forming consensus of judgments, both positive and negative.

As was argued in chapter 2, a non-consensus or merely subjective judgment, meets its other as opposites correlate structurally to form an objective judgment over time. The subject as judge is placed in the minimal or 'parallax gap' between modernist painting and the literal object; between purposiveness and actual purpose; between the high and low; between the one object seen as art and non-art, ideal and real, painting and object, art and life.[454] The difference is minimal, a 'minimal difference' or gap between the One thing seen in parallax. Minimal art is not art in isolation, but rather in relation to other art; Minimalism stands in place of the now disavowed modernist painting; it occupies the place of the void beneath the structure of aesthetic relations as an index of judgments made to testify to the objectivity that can only be evoked through the pointed finger, never proven as such.

After the introduction to the context of Minimal art in relation to both an industrial aesthetic and the context of abstract expressionist painting, this chapter has argued that the historical moment of Minimal art in the late 1950's and early 1960's

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[453] Aesthetic relations precede 'relational aesthetics'. The relation is between art objects which precede, even determine, any 'relational aesthetics' between 'individuals'. See N. Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon, Presses du reel, 2002.
[454] Zizek, p. 19.

does not represent the end of autonomy or modernist painting in a positive sense, but rather stages its positive objects through a negative assault on modernist painting. This assault is not simply a challenge to the hegemony of Greenbergian criticism and modernist painting in general but a dialectical dependence on it as an Other against which to register its provocative objects as art. It was demonstrated that this was the way the Minimal artists critically explained their objects, resorting to negative definitions.

It was argued that by the time of Minimal art, it seemed all had been rejected from modernist painting, only painting itself remained to be abandoned, and this last abandonment, it was suggested, opened up a space in the structure for Minimalism. Finally, the concept of parallax judgment was deployed as a way of explaining the minimal difference between the literal, phenomenal object and the modernist painting, or art work. It was shown that through a parallax judgment the minimal difference between one and the same thing, an ordinary thing and the same thing seen as art, acts in the gap between the two places of modernist painting and the Minimalist object; the literal and the ideal, assigning a place to each in the art structure. The 'better new work [can] take relationships out of the work and make them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision' as Morris argues, but because, as the thesis has maintained, the art structure is a system of negative relations of art and non-art objects, and as such the 'relations' cannot be taken out of the 'work' altogether. Even the discrete, isolated forms of modern art required the negative relation to life outside their bounded spaces.

Chapter 5

The Dialectics of Place: Installation, Site-Specific and Outside-Art

'Dialectics is not only the ideational formula of thesis – antithesis – synthesis forever sealed in the mind, but an on-going development'[455] Robert Smithson.

Chapter 3 examined the series of abandonments and rejections that lead modernist painting to the minimal difference between a blank canvas or ordinary object, and a painted canvas as art. The concept of minimal difference was employed to explain the difference between the two seemingly opposed structural places occupied by the blank canvas or material thing, and an art object. It was demonstrated that a dialectic was operating in Minimal art and its reception; not a dialectic driven by an essentialist movement toward a synthesis of art and life, but a dialectic of the two as one, a synthesis that is fundamental to modern art itself; a synthesis that is divided by judgment. The meeting of the two places in the art structure was understood as a way of 'seeing' or finding in one and the same thing, art and non-art. It was argued that the minimal difference between an ordinary object and the same object seen as art was due to a parallax judgment.

It was demonstrated that the negativity present in the modernist abandonments were carried over into the Minimal art that developed out of modernist painting through the general abandonment of painting itself by the

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[455] R. Smithson, *Collected Writings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 44.

Minimalists. The claim often made of Minimal art – that it is an object immediately experienced in the phenomenological conditions of the site in relation to the spectator's body – was repudiated; and the argument was advanced that prior to this immediacy, the structural requirement that the immediate experience be an art experience, recognised as such, and as such, that the purposive gesture, the object proffered, be registered against the formalism it rejected. In its place, the argument was put forward that the actual site was to be located in art as a structure, and that the absence located as rejection or abandonment, or negativity, was an absence that drew attention to an empty place in the structure. That empty place generated the interest from the spectator in the new presentation. The spectator of Minimal art was shown to be more than a spectator and that, in a Hegelian sense, the spectator as judge was constitutively involved in the thing becoming art, in giving the object as signifier, its signified or meaning as art. It has been a constant point of this thesis, again raised in the previous chapter, that if the object no longer represents an external referent, its positive condition is marked by the absence of art's prior purpose or duty to represent another, external world.

More specifically, with Minimal art the external referent (modernist painting) is in fact internal; an Other to which it can negatively position itself.[456] The Other to Minimalism was argued to be, primarily, modernist painting as articulated by Clement Greenberg. The 'demise' of modernist painting created the frame through which the phenomenal presence of the object of minimalism was viewed *as art.* It was argued that the abstruse, unfamiliar object put forward for consideration in

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[456] In this chapter, a full appreciation of the dialectical relationship between Other and other should become apparent. The totality of the structure determines the Other to the one as part of its meaning as art. The Other is not outside the system of relations but what allows for such a system. The other is appropriated but only because the one is never itself.

Minimal art, negatively draws on the absence of modernist painting. The spectator as judge feels this absence and begins to fill it with curiosity, interest, interpretation, speculation; or, in most instances, a further rejection because the presentation of the object is deemed not equivalent to what it aims, ultimately, to structurally replace: the thing itself presumed to lie beneath the structure or beyond representation.

The presence of the Minimalist encounter with the objects in space was marked by this missing element; its pared back aesthetic was devoid of decorative flourishes, internal composition or representational detail. It was argued that the notion of a direct bodily relationship with the thing itself as accounting for the object taking place as art was insufficient. The 'literal' object and the actual site in which the object is encountered, is not the site of the thing *as art*. On the contrary, it is the site or place the object occupies, or ends up occupying in the art structure that locates it as art. It is by virtue of the structural place the thing occupies that identifies it as art. The structure distinguishes even an ordinary object *as art*, from the same kind of ordinary object as *not art*. Structurally the negative (not art or life) is not an alternative to the positive condition but its dialectical Other upon which it is dependent. Minimal art, by breaking *with* modernist art, expanded the general notion of art that emerged with the retreat from representational realism in the late 19th Century and the introduction of the two avant-gardes in the first decades of the twentieth century. This general expansion of art has been understood throughout the thesis as an art structure.

This chapter undertakes an examination of three structurally related categories of art which further expand the general conception of art or art structure: Installation art, Site-Specific art, and, what I refer to as Outside art, or art that

attempts an escape from the confines of the gallery or museum and enter the 'outside' world.[457] The term Outside art will replace terms such as Land art, Earth art and Environmental art. The term Outside art does not refer to the commonplace idea of a art as a marginalised or eccentric activity, but rather a reference to art that attempts to occupy a site external to the literal space of the white cube or modern art gallery.

Firstly the chapter will examine the genres of Site-Specific and Installation art as a related pair in isolation from Outside art. This approach is undertaken because the categories of Site-Specific and Installation often share a structural vocabulary not so much evidenced in ether the writings of the Outside artists, or the critical literature in general. Rather than overtly critique the gallery as a site as does Installation art, or critique the broader art institution as do Site-Specific installations; Outside art (especially when the appellation 'environmental art' was placed on such practices) aims to affect an escape from the confines of the gallery, and as such, this 'genre' was often accompanied by romantic or spiritual rhetoric.[458] The rhetoric of Installation art involves an address to the art institution through the literal spaces of the architectural sites that constitute the bricks and mortar of that Institution, and as such, is closer to Minimal art than Outside art. Equally, Site-Specific art, as an extension of the critique of the art institution from within its literal walls, is nearer to Minimal art than is Outside art. Outside art, is connected to Site-Specific and

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[457] I use the term Outside art rather than Land art, Earth art or Environmental art, because the central theme of all these three is the idea of escape from the inside or gallery as site. .

[458] There have been various attempts to align Land art with environmental issues and with politics more generally, but these issues do not help locate these practices *as art*. A recent example of 'eco-art' is an exhibition curated by Stephanie Smith, held in 2005 at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago. The, exhibition: Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art, is motivated, as much as anything by a desire for a romantic return to nature, or a Gaia's revenge theme.

Installation art, as it is to Minimal art, in that the site or location of the work is paramount.

An introduction to the categories of Installation and Site-Specific art will be given below by discussing a number of key historical and theoretical texts. Following this introduction to the theoretical problem of site, an historical account of site related works of the avant-garde in the early 20th Century will be given which will provide a background to later developments. The historical examples will be juxtaposed with contemporary Installation and Site-Specific works in order to mark both the similarities and the differences between the antecedent works and the later developments. Following this engagement with Installation and Site-Specific art, the category of Outside art will be addressed and its structural relationship to the other two categories will be established. It will be argued that the Outside artist, Robert Smithson understood better than any of his contemporaries that a dialectic of inside and outside was necessarily involved in any move beyond the physical boundaries of the art gallery or museum.

The chapter argues that all three categories of art are practices aimed at bringing to the fore the problem of site, or location, not as a positive experience of objects in a particular space or site, but as the location of a thing as a place in the art structure. It will be demonstrated that the site aimed at by the various examples of art; the critical responses to that art, and artists writings discussed, is not the literal site of the Installation or site-oriented work despite the rhetoric; nor the conceptual or political site located within the specific work, but rather a site that involves a shift in perspective between the literal site and the site of art or art structure. Thus a dialectic informs these movements and generates the place in the general art site or structure,

as a structural place. It will be concluded that Installation, Site-Specific and Outside art are not unique in drawing the connection between art and site but rather they represent more recent examples of a tendency in art dating from the later 19th Century. In fact all art, from the moment of withdrawal from representational realism, is nothing but an addressed to the problem of place or site, an attempt to fill the void in the structure created, paradoxically, by the art that occupies such a place. The three art categories examined here are but the most conspicuous forms of such site-oriented art.

The artist and critic, Erika Suderburg, confronts the problem of containing the scope of Installation art, by assuming there isn't one. She claims that 'The material content and constitution of installation suggests ever more complex and varied sources and legacies, including everything from Neolithic standing stones to eighteenth-century human garden statuary…'.[459] In 1997, the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, opened the exhibition, *Blurring the Boundaries*, a survey show of Installation art from 1969 – 1996. The exhibition attempted to frame a category of art that apparently has no boundaries by conveniently bracketing it between the historically symmetrical points of 69 and 96. In the introduction to the catalogue, titled *Introducing Installation: a Legacy From Lascaux to Last Week* (1997), Hugh M. Davies, attempts the same vein course of explanation as Suderburg. He argues for instance, 'far from being the latest movement or a new development in contemporary art, the installation art we celebrate today…is only the most recent manifestation of the oldest tradition in art.'[460] Davies expands by suggesting that

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[459] E. Suderburg, *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p. 6.
[460] H. M. Davies, Introducing Installation: a Legacy from Lascaux to Last Week, *Blurring the Boundaries: Installation Art 1969 – 1996*, San Diego, Museum of Contemporary Art, 1997.

Installation forms a conceptual continuum with 'gloriously simple drawings in the Lascaux and Altamira caves'.[461] This kind of infinite expansion of time, place and intentionality, suffers the same categorical fate as any definition or explanation that seeks to include everything: it includes nothing since the word 'installation' signifies all things, all places and all times, and therefore ends up signifying nothing. However, the editors of the catalogue more helpfully suggest that 'the broad spectrum of works described as installation art share a common aspect: they are *not* spatially autonomous art objects.'[462]

In other words, the positive designation, Installation art, is negatively defined as *not autonomous art*, that is, *not modernist art*. The 'boundaries' that are apparently 'blurred' are, on the contrary, more defined by the work of Installation, Site-Specific, and Outside art. The 'boundaries' or rather the site or structure of art itself, is more clearly defined by Installation, Site-Specific and Outside art in that they draw attention to site or location more explicitly than does any other category. As was argued in previous chapters, and will be argued in chapter 5 below, the attempt to escape institutional and categorical confinement, actually brings into relief the boundary, or division that the artistic act tries to breach, and along with it, the delineation of the actual site or place to which the art escapes: the art structure.

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[461] Davies, p. 8.
[462] *Blurring the Boundaries*, p. 31. The emphasis is mine.

Figure 43   Figure 44

Installation and Site-Specific art have, to varying degrees and in different ways, the objective of bringing into view what remains hidden within the art institution, or ignored or suppressed by the ideology of modernist art. Installation art seeks to draw the spectator's attention to the physical, material conditions of the space in which the work is installed; sometimes to the degree of becoming part of the spatial coordinates; merging with its architectural host. Site-Specific art on the other hand, is more often than not, engaged with political, economic, and broader social issues that remain untouched, or largely ignored by modernist art, Minimal art, but also to a degree, Installation and Outside art. Installation art and Site-Specific practice indicate the implication of site or place in the exhibition of art more explicitly than does any other practice. As we have seen in previous chapters, the question of place or site is at the origins of modernist art rather than something invented by the post-Minimal art world. And yet, it is with Installation, and in particular, Site-Specific art, that that place is marked quite explicitly through the attempt to place objects within the actual architectural coordinates of the site; or draw attention to the politics of particular sites.

Histories of Installation and Site-Specific art, when not tracing provenance in pre-historical cave drawings, tend to locate the origins of these tendencies with works such as El Lissitzky's *Proun* (1923), (Figure 43); Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* (1923-1937), (Figure 44); the *International Surrealist Exhibition* (1938); *First Papers of Surrealism* (1942), (Figure 45); and argue from these humble beginnings to Happenings and Environments of artists such as Allan Kaprow (Figure 46) in the late 1950s, and finally onto the fully fledged practice of Installation and Site-Specific art in the 1970's and 80's.

Figure 45   Figure 46

While there is some benefit to the reader in constructing this linear form of timeline in that it packages a complex phenomenon for easy consumption, it often overlooks the impact of later reception of these 'origins' in constructing such lineages, and it ignores different elements of specific practices and points of conflict between them.[463] However, there are conceptual and structural continuities between some of these earlier tendencies and later practices and, in addition, they often do address the problem of site, therefore a brief outline of the field covered by the terms Installation

[463] On the limitations of this linear narrative approach to Installation art, see C. Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, London, Tate Publishing, 2005. This problem mirrors the problem of the historical and the neo-avant-gardes addressed in chapter 1.

and Site-Specific is given here in relation to both the historical works and contemporary developments.[464]

Some of the similarities and differences between the early 20th Century examples of objects installed with the location of that installation in mind, and more recent works are easily found by examining some of the seminal examples of both the historical avant-garde and more contemporary works. For example, El Lissitzky's *Proun Room* (1923) (Figure 43), is an 'installation' that shares some of the concerns taken up by later developments understood as Installation art. It also diverges from those later concerns in a number of ways. At one level the *Proun Room* (1923) is an installation of geometric objects placed directly onto the wall of the room instead of discrete, framed paintings occupying the wall – paintings that ignore the architectural dimensions of the room. Neither do the objects occupy the idealist space of the plinth which supports traditional sculpture, elevating it above the ordinary, social space occupied by the 'general public'.

However, the room, of which the objects of *Proun* (1923) comprises a part, was constructed specifically for their installation and would serve no purpose except for the placement of the objects. In this way the objects belong to a specific context having no reference outside the constructed space. What makes them differ from what is referred to today as installation art is that they do not attempt to draw attention to a readymade or given site by being embedded within the given context, but rather construct the context for viewing a range of related objects. Unlike its historical progeny, the construction site of *Proun* (1923) is a purpose built room or site, and the objects constructed for that site, are constructed for that site, and as

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[464] I do not attempt to cover the entire field because it is too broad and would require a dissertation of its own.

such, read in total, as an autonomous unit isolated from any given social context. The objects are embedded in *this* site, but only because they are made to order, or constructed with the site included as one work.

Rather than embody an intervention of objects and materials into a given art-institutional site such as a museum or art gallery – a practice which marks the later forms of installation art – *Proun* (1923) constructs a special, art context, within which to view the situation, a situation that gives it a certain distance from our bodily experience of the objects in actual or literal space; a distance that lends our experience of the work a feeling of what Walter Benjamin called 'aura'.[465] Aura, or the distancing affect of aesthetic art is implicitly critiqued by later Installation and Site-Specific art through the contrivance of an association between embodied spectator and literal site of exhibition. This auratic element is also indicated in *Proun* by the fact that the eye is encouraged, by the 'lines' along the two sides of the space marked by the presence of linear objects attached to it, to move along both walls and into the depth of the installation. This has the effect of giving the whole an optical, even pictorial quality; something generally missing from what might be referred to as 'installation proper'.

Figure 47

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[465] W. Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, *Illuminations*, London, Fontana Press, 1992, p. 216.

Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* (1923-1937), (Figure 47), might seem to embody a more direct relation between object and site than the El Lissitzky work. *Merzbau* (1923-37) is an 'collage' of various pieces of found materials installed in the artists Hanover apartment. The individual objects, to a degree, blend with their location by being almost exclusively white. The whole space is largely monochromatic, figure and ground are collapsed, making a kind of total environment or *Gesamtkunstwerk* ('*Merzkunstwerk*' as one commentator put it).[466] The Schwitters' installation differs however from what later became known as Installation art in that it never seeks to critically engage with the art-institutional site in any direct way; it is more personal, even eccentric, occupying the private space of the artist's home. It is rather our reception of the *Merz* project, our retroactive gaze that locates it as belonging to the category of Installation art. Furthermore, if the romantic notion of the immersive experience of the 'total work of art' provides an interpretation, it is not altogether the same experience as we find with more recent immersive installations.[467]

The more recent examples (discussed below) immerse the viewer in a specific art gallery context with the view to create an inclusive experience of the whole. James Turrell and Robert Erwin will be discussed below in this context. There are other points of divergence between the two periods as well. There is no overt relation between post-minimalist Installation and mathematical concepts found in El

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[466] The commentator was Marc Dachy. See, E. Burns Gamard, *Kurt Schwitters' Merzbau: The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2000, p. 3.
[467] The concept of a 'total work of art' is an interpretation of installation that originates in the operatic theory of Richard Wagner. Claire Bishop has termed such forms of installation 'spectacular immersion'. C. Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, London, Tate Publishing, 2005, p. 37.

Lissitzky's *Proun* (1923) works[468], nor the developmental, organic, 'site' of a 'living erotic system' of *Merzbau*.[469]

Another avant-garde artist considered a historical antecedent to installation is the Russian Constructivist, Vladimir Tatlin, in particular, his series of *Counter Relief* (1914 – 15) (Figures 49). These works are a response to the wood and metal constructions of Pablo Picasso, such as his *Musical Instrument* (1914) (Figure 48), a sheet metal and wire construction that draws attention to the materials used in its construction rather than pressing a material into the service of an ideal form.
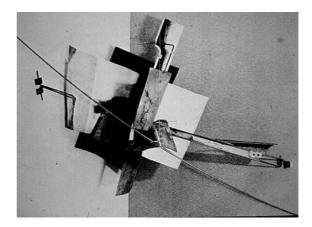

Figure 48

Figure 49

However, they do not simply develop out of Cubism's multi-perspectival concerns – the way analytic cubist works present the object in multiple views in an attempt to give the viewer the back, sides and front of the object from one viewpoint. Rosalind

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[468] The connection between El Lissitzky's *Proun* works and mathematics is discussed at length by Esther Levinger. See E. Levinger, Art and Mathematics in the Thought of El Lissitzky: His relationship to Suprematism and Constuctivism, *Leonardo,* Vol. 2, 1989, pp. 227-236.
[469] E. B. Gamard, *Merzbau: The Cathedral of Erotic Misery*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, 2000, p.117.

Krauss has contrasted Tatlin's use of real materials in real space, to the ideal space of the Cubist structure. She argues that the Tatlin differs from its Cubist parent in that 'The radical quality of Tatlin's corner reliefs (Figure 49) stems from their rejection of this [Cubist] transcendental space'.[470]

Krauss goes on to describe two basic differences between the two artists, 'first' she argues, the anti-illusionism of their [counter reliefs] situation and second in the attitude they manifest toward the materials of which they are made.'[471] The objects occupy the 'real' corner of the space in which they are installed; bolted onto the wall in such a way that the material, structural configuration of the object's fastening device is revealed as part of the work rather than hidden as would be the case when mounting a painting for instance, where the 'ropes and pullies', or the string and nails etc that fasten the object to the wall, are hidden. By doing so, painting appears to occupy an ideal space in contradistinction from the actual architectural space within which it is actually hung. The painting Krauss describes miraculously holds to the wall. Krauss calls the alternative, constructivist objects 'corner reliefs' rather than their actual title *Counter Relief* presumably because the objects are almost invariably mounted in the corner of the space, bridging the gap between the two walls. However, her admission that they aim to reject the idealism of Cubism indicates that the title used by Tatlin is the more appropriate: they *counter* Cubism by opposing its idealist space, and as such, aim to structurally take the place occupied by Cubist art by supplanting it.

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[470] R. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1994, p. 55. Indeed the thesis would make the point that this 'rejection' gives the Tatlin works their being as art.
[471] Krauss.

To this extent Tatlin's relief constructions inform later site-oriented works. However, they differ in so far as the later developments are less concerned with the construction of discrete objects installed in a given site and more concerned with the articulation of an interaction between site and sited object. Another work often cited as a precedent for the later works of site is the *First Papers of Surrealism* exhibition held in 1942, (Figure 45).

Figure 50

In particular the work of the French Dadaist, Marcel Duchamp is cited as being a significant reference for later work. The work in question is Duchamp's *Mile of String* (1942) (Figure 50) in which the artist has unravelled a mile of string and attached it to various locations around the site including the paintings that share that space. The mile-long cobweb of string visually and literally inhibited the viewer's experience of the paintings, preventing both the passage through the space in which the paintings were exhibited, but also through the ideal space contained within the frame of individual works. Duchamp apparently arranged a number of small children to cry in order to further disrupt the enjoyment of the paintings.

This work of Duchamp's is more closely related to what is now understood by the term 'installation'. The string is literally attached, at numerous places within the space, rather than being a discrete object attached to one location in the space. In this way Duchamp creates a particular space rather than space in general. However, this particular space includes the 'capture' of painting by the tangle of string. The site as a literal site is derived from a negation of painting as much as a positive intervention into three-dimensional, literal space. If post-minimal examples of site-oriented installations are indebted to these historical antecedents it is due to the interest in site or place in the general structure of art, how to locate an act or object *as art* in a general milieu, or 'expanded field' where the use of specific media no longer defines the limits of art, not because there are no longer any limits, but because the limits or boundaries of the canvas, or the autonomous space of formal sculpture, are no longer the site of the art.[472]

Figure 51

When we compare El Lissitzky's *Proun* (1923) with Richard Serra's *Gutter Corner Splash: Night Shift* (1969 – 1995) (Figure 51), we notice that the Serra work requires for the generation of its specific form, the actual dimensions of the room in

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[472] The term 'expanded field' is Rosalind Krauss' term for the post-minimal, post-medium condition of contemporary art. See R. Krauss, Sculpture in the Expanded Field, *October,* 8, Spring, 1979, reprinted in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1985.

which the piece was cast: the specific place where the wall meets the floor.[473] In this

it is not unlike the Duchamp work discussed above. In much the same way that

Duchamp's *Mile of String* (1942) required the negation of painting, the Serra work

depends for its meaning on a structural relationship to painting.

Serra's work, in contrast to that of Lissitzky's, carries an indexical trace of the

interstices of the gallery, between wall and floor. The object as indexical trace in the

Serra casting is a work that could only have occurred at this particular site. Any

attempt to match the actual casts of the corner with any other site would reveal gaps

between the cast material and the site.   In much the same way that ballistics

measures the corresponding marks left by the barrel of a gun on the bullet fired

through it, the Serra work could be traced to this particular site.

It might be concluded from this that the Serra work has a direct link with the

site in which it is cast, and therefore a more direct intervention into site than the El

Lissitzky work. And in a way this is what does differentiate the two works.

However, structurally, the difference is minimal; both occupy marginally different

structural places of the One, general site – the art structure.[474] As was shown in the

previous chapter, the floor in this Serra work in fact registers in relation to the wall of

which it is *not* a part. This registers the floor structurally as *not* a wall, and allows

the object to find its place in the art structure. The Lissitzky work incorporates site

and object as if the two are necessarily joined while the Serra draws our attention to

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[473] The Minimal work of Richard Serra entitled *Gutter Corner Splash: Night Shift* (1969) is exemplary here in that the material object is a cast of the corner of the gallery wall in which it was exhibited.
[474] I refer to a term used by the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Zizek. For Zizek this term refers to the minimal difference that divides something from itself not the difference between different things.

the site as if it was something separate from the object and only part of it if indicated as such by the intervention of the art, by the casting process.[475]

The French artist, Daniel Buren is, along with Richard Serra, a seminal artist for the later development of Installation and Site-Specific art, and the critique of the art institution. In 1973 Buren installed a series of readymade striped material cloths that would come to be his seminal statement on the boundary between the gallery space and the space of everyday life; between the inside and the outside of the art institutional frame. In *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973) (Figure 52), first shown at the John Weber gallery, Buren installed a series of visually identical units reminiscent of Donald Judd's serial works.

Figure 52

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[475] In the Serra work, molten lead is flung at the corner of the gallery between the wall and the floor, ironically referring to Jackson Pollock's dripping process. Serra casts only to remove the cast lead 'forms' from the intersection of wall and floor , taking from the floor a formless canvas and stretching it and mounting it on the wall as was Pollock's method of making in the 1950's. The use of media, contra Greenberg, is not why we refer to Pollock as a painter but rather because he placed his works on the wall making paintings out of the process. Pollock's seminal works of the 1950's begin life on the floor as a group of materials and end as art on a wall. The wall makes of the formless materials, a painting, it makes art out of non-art. As the previous chapter indicated, Serra understood 'the operative rational that allows the work to find its place' involves a negation of painting and transposing this negativity onto the floor 'as if the floor were a canvas plane'. R. Serra, *Writings and Interviews*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 8. I stitch together a number of quote fragments that not so much ignore Serra's intention as bring out his greater concerns: to find a place for his art-like or purposive gestures.

But whereas the Judd work is fixed to the gallery wall or rested on the gallery floor, the Buren work literally and symbolically extends out the window of the space and into the public space outside. Buren's work is an explicit challenge to the modernist claim to autonomy. *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973) invokes the sublime expansion of painting beyond the contained, ideal space of the canvas. His series of striped (anti) paintings attempt to leave the ideal space of painting by leaving the literal space the gallery and moving into the social space outside.

The French postmodern philosopher, Jean-Francois Lyotard, in the context Buren's work argued 'it does not necessarily follow that because anything may be read and reading may be anything, the work escapes designation, the benediction of meaning; rather, designation is an inevitable result of reading'.[476] Lyotard adds 'we can no longer expect a single view' and that 'arts cannot claim a unified field' [consequently] 'the goal of art criticism and theoretical writing in general [must include] the dissolution by contemporary artistic practice of the principal of the proper view'.[477] The thesis is in agreement with Lyotard in so far as art such as Buren's (and the other examples given in this chapter) do expand the field of art beyond traditional boundaries. However, I disagree with his suggestion that a 'unified field' is therefore impossible, and that 'reading' results in the object coming into being as art. Indeed a unified field remains, along with the necessary, single point of view. The difference between inside the gallery and outside, or ideal and real, is structural, not in the sense of an endless sublime differential that spills out of the frame of art and enters life, but as the difference between two points of view, or rather, the one point of view, a parallax view, that sees the same thing two ways; a

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[476] J. F. Lyotard, Preliminary Notes on the Pragmatic of Works: Daniel Buren, *October*, Volume 10, Aurumn, 1979, p. 59.
[477] Lyotard.

point of difference that indicates a shift of perspective; a shift between inside and outside; art and non-art; literal site and art site.[478]

Figure 53

More recent examples of Installation art take for granted this expanded site by creating environments that reference pop art, deal with the body, introduce light as a literal material, or address 'real life' issues such as poverty etc. The pop-inflected installations of the Japanese-born American artist, Yayoi Kusama create a kind of total installation, or emersive environment that evokes a theatrical contrivance that in once sense can be traced back through the staged objects of Minimal art, through Duchamp's 'installations' and to Kurt Schwitters Merzbau. In the case of *Dots Obsession, New Century* (2000) (Figure 53), soft plastic forms are covered in circular spots of various colours which are repeated on the walls, the ceiling, and the floor of the gallery.

This creates an immersive, theatrical experience where the beginning and end of the work is not confined to an isolated sculptural form, but rather spreads over the entire space of the gallery. This has the effect of linking the objects placed in the

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[478] J. Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987.

site, with place itself. The viewer, becomes an actor paticipating in a theatrical situation that includes their body as the site of vision. Lyotard's denial of a 'single point of view' would appear to be upheld by such work. And yet, for all the loss of self in the spread of coloured dots and soft material, the viewer, albeit an embodied one, must 'see' the one thing as two otherwise the experience would be an imersive experience as such and the question of its art status would never arise. The viewer as embodied, must 'see' the one thing as a piece of theater that directly addresses them – to paraphrase Michael Fried – and something that addresses art.[479] The viewer must divide the work between the body, or literal material stuff, and the same thing understood as art.

The Brazilian artist Ernesto Neto draws on the relationship between the space, the objects installed and the perceiving body, often constructing situations and encounters where the body of the spectator is confronted with very bodily materials and forms that reference the gravitational forces imposed on the body as inherent to its existence in a temporal and spacial world. There is also an implied critique of the use of hard, geometric shapes in Minimal art through the use of soft, intestinal forms. For example, in *The Dangerous Logic of Wooing* (2002), (Figure 54), Neto attached to the ceiling of the gallery a series of gossimer-thin nylon materials filled with weights that drag down their translucent mass toward the floor of the gallery. They appear as soft, intestinal forms that evoke the vunerable, intestinal body reminding us

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[479] M. Fried, Art and Objecthood, in G. Battcock edited, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995. See the discussion on Minimal art in relation to the literal body and the same body or object seen as art.

that the blue collar industrial aesthetic of Minimalism addressed at best, the body in general, the body as an abstract idea.[480]

Figure 54

Some forms of Installation art, the so-called 'light and space' variety, draw the viewer's attention to the overlooked, to the seemingly incidental aspects of the gallery space: the gaps in the floor, the sound made by the body traversing the space, the voices of those bodies as they bounce off the walls, to the cracks or marks on the wall itself, the lighting of the space, the height of the ceiling – to anything that marks this space as *this* space occupied by *this* body now.

Artists such as James Turrell, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin and Michael Asher fit into this category. Robert Irwin 'disks' – curved disks of acrylic or aluminium – are attached to the gallery wall and heavily lit. In *Untitled* (1967), (Figure 55), for example, the lights that flood the disk projects shadows onto the wall which creates a dependency between the literal object installed, the wall to which it is attached, the lighting flooding it, and the shadows cast by the lights fixed to both the ceiling and

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[480] Anna C. Chave drew attention to the macho aesthetic of Minimalism. See A.C.Chave, Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power, *Arts Magazine*, Volume 64, Number 5, January, 1990, pp. 44-63.

the floor. There is no way of experiencing this work by viewing the disk in isolation from its theatrical context.[481] And yet the use of the disk at the centre of the wall gives the object and its illuminated space a focal point or centre of attention. As a result the work is divided between a centre of attention and the loss of centre.

Figure 55

Many works by James Turrell further immerse the viewer in the work by filling the gallery site with light that surrounds and envelops the viewer including them as part of the environment created in the space.

Turrell's *Ondoe* (1987 – 2004) (Figure 56) is one such work where the intense blue light projected onto the corner of the room spreads a luminous blanket across the walls, floor and the ceiling of the space making of every detail a part of the whole experience. The use of luminous colour and the frequent use of the rectangle format indicate that Turrell, while not a painter as such, is a 'painter' of light. Painting has always been associated, to some degree, with light but in a way quite different from the way Turrell employs it. Pre-modern art illuminated the

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[481] The term 'theatrical' refers to the position Michael Fried takes in relation to Minimal art. Fried is discussed in the previous chapter.

scene from within the depicted scene itself in such a way that it often appeared as if the light emanated from inside the painting, as if the image itself were alight. The romantic painter, J.M.W. Turner is a prime example of the pre-modern use of light.

Figure 56

The modernist picture was flooded with artificial light from without. The use of artificial, gallery lighting served the purpose of making visible an isolated, discrete object. Light was functional; serving a purpose that was divorced from the object clarified under its luminous field. And yet, despite its obvious presence and function, gallery lighting was understood as invisible, and excluded from consideration when viewing the discrete painting. The viewer of the modernist painting was an ideal viewer whose perspective was strictly understood as an observer of an independent object complete in itself.[482]

Installation art, in contrast to modernist painting, includes conditions such as lighting in the construction of the art rather than as a merely functional object that

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[482] This is how formalist critics from Roger Fry and Clive Bell onward understand modernist painting. I argue in Chapter 1 that at the beginning of modern art the observer is included in that the object's function is brought into question and the response of the viewer as judge has a constitutive role, and therefore, is included in the painting so to speak. This inclusion becomes increasingly understood by artists from Minimal art onwards, as a body to include rather than a self-conscious subject.

sheds light on another, autonomous object. While most Installation is distinct from Site-Specific art by the fact that most installations are not overtly political; most site-oriented art on the other hand, has politics as its primary focus. One exception is the installations of the Brazilian artist, Helio Oiticica. Beginning in the later 1960's, Oiticica constructed what he called *Penetrables*. The most influential of these was *Tropicalia* (1967) (Figure 57), an installation that aimed to include the viewer, as both an embodied subject, and a politicised one. The installation allowed the spectator to penetrate the surface of the work by both entering into the installation and interacting with its organised space. But more importantly for Oiticica, the installation allowed the spectator to enter into the politics encoded in the arrangement and choice of installed materials.

Figure 57

The 'tropical' environment constructed by Oiticica included materials such as paint, wood panelling, cotton cloth, gravel and sand, indoor plants, and even parrots. The spectator could not simply view the work from a single point, but had to negotiate the structure as one might make their way through a maze. This 'maze' was meant to invoke the slums of the Rio hills from Oiticica's Brazil, calling on the 'viewer' to

become politicised, to understand that media and materials are never neutral but rather embedded in political contexts.

Minimal art, by contrast, understood space as space-in-general and the body as an indeterminate *any*body; a body without specific sex, gender, or political location. Installation art understands the gallery as a site that can be occupied by any media; a location that is more specific or particular than was often the case with Minimal art installations. Benjamin Buchloh defines Minimal art as 'Sculpture as place'.[483] Installation art expands this place to include the architectural details of the gallery site, while the body is often address in a more visceral, less abstract manner than was the case with Minimal art.

Site-Specific art expands this idea of a specific location and visceral body, to include other details about both the particular space such as its hidden histories; it sources of funding; its missing underlying agendas; while expanding the notion of body to include its gendered division, its politicised character; its unacknowledged, or unconscious racism or sexism, its assumptions of an able-body, its hidden association with power structures, etc. The body that navigates the place of a Site-Specific work is not just *this* body but this *gendered* body; this *political* body; this *post-colonial* body; this black or this white body. Site-Specific art is more concerned to highlight socio-political details either overlooked or deliberately repressed by the modernist art institution. According to Benjamin Buchloh, Site-

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[483] B. Buchloh, *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2003, p. 16.

Specific installations are but a particular example of a more general tendency in Minimal art where location or site comes to the fore.[484]

Site-Specific art as it developed after Minimal art owes a debt to the seminal Minimal 'sculptor', Richard Serra. Serra's process works and steel structures from the 1960's on make the place of site, along with the spectator's phenomenological experience of the combination of site and structure, the conditions for experiencing the work. Serra largely situated his work in the phenomenological conditions of experience: 'space, place, time and movement'; but he also explored the way a material behaves under certain conditions.[485] Moving away from what he referred to as a 'pedestal site', and into the everyday or urban context, Serra wanted to move beyond the internal syntax and ideal forms of modern sculpture.[486] But rather than completely abandon sculpture he still refers to his objects without pedestal as sculpture claiming 'They relate to sculpture and nothing more'.[487]

In making this claim he is also trying to distance his large-scale objects from modern monuments, but he is also on record as saying, and his work also attests to this, that the objects relate to the site of installation: 'the experience of the work is inseparable from the place in which the work resides.'[488] Serra never viewed the site as a thing in itelf or real upon which the art would rest. For him, the site was always becoming.

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[484] If the space of Minimal art was general, and Installation art included the gallery as a specific place, Site-Specific art further particularised place to include gender, race etc.
[485] R. Serra, *Writings interviews*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 29.
[486] Serra, p. 127.
[487] Serra, p. 135.
[488] Serra, p. 129.

He explained, 'the placement of the sculpture will change the space of the plaza. After the piece is created, the space will be understood primarily as a function of the sculpture.'[489] In fact, the plaza became so altered by *Tilted Arc* (1981) (Figure 58) that it was famously at the centre of a legal battle to have it removed from public space, in order to restore the integrity of the site. The challenge to the Serra work came, ironically, from the same department that commissioned it in the first place, the General Services Administration (G.S.A.). The National Endowment of the Arts (N.E.A) where charged by the G.S.A. to commission an artist to produce a work for the plaza site in lower Manhattan. *Tilted Arc* (1981) was the controversial result of N.E.A.'s commission. According to Harriet Senie, the 'critical reception of the piece was mixed', with the employees of the site apparently confused by the identity of the work, referring to it as a 'wind breaker'. [490]

Figure 58

According to Senie, the term 'wind breaker' is 'in appreciation of its [Tilted Arc] decidedly non-art function.'[491] The legal stoush was correctly fought over the identity of the work: was it nothing but a massive rusted piece of steel cutting the

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[489] Serra, p. 127.
[490] H. Senie, Richard Serra's Tilted Arc: Art and Non-art Issues, *Art Journal,* Volume 48, Number 4, Winter, 1989, p. 298.
[491] Senie.

public space in two, or was it a work of site-specific Minimalism; a work of art?   In

1984, the G.S.A appointed William Diamond to head a panel (jury) to challenge to

N.E.A.'s commission and have the offensive object removed from the public site.

According to Senie, Diamond was not basing his opposition on aesthetic criteria, and

that 'his judgment was not aesthetic and that he was not censoring a work of art'.[492]

Instead, Diamond was arguing against the Serra work on political grounds.   For

Diamond, the object was obstructing the movement of the workers and the public's

experience of the plaza, and as such, it was out of place.   He suggested a solution to

the problem of location by suggesting that 'the sculpture [should] be relocated'.[493]

The division created by *Tilted Arc* (1981) as far as Diamond was concerned,

is between public and aesthetic space, or art and everyday life.   The public was

disturbed by the intrusion of the Serra piece because, as Senie explains, 'If we can't

place a work of art in an understandable context, we are emotionally and

intellectually threatened.'[494] She explains 'quite literally, people couldn't see beyond

the size (12 x 120') and the material of the sculpture.'[495] Serra's legal team argued

for the work's merit *as art*, and that his first amendment rights had been violated.[496]

Serra quite rightly argued that to relocate *Tilted Arc* (1981) would be to destroy it,

because its identity was associated with a specific location; it would turn the art into

nothing more than a piece of Cor-Ten steel measuring 12 feet x 120.   Serra lost the

court case and *Tilted Arc* (1981) was removed from the site, but not from the site of

art; only indifference or judgmental neglect can do that.

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[492] Senie.
[493] Senie.
[494] Senie, p. 299.
[495] Senie, p. 300.
[496] Senie.

Serra demonstrates an acute awareness of the problems of identifying the object as an art object when its medium is no longer simply paint, or in his case, marble or stone which carry with the material an historical association with art.[497] 'It's possible' he says, 'that now there is a kind of sculpture that's reduced to a photograph only…But if everything from photographs to performance is considered sculpture, what is *not* sculpture?'[498] The question could be expanded. If everything is painting, what is *not* painting? More generally, if everything is art, what is *not* art? This is the whole question of the art and life debate. Is art part of life; is it indistinguishable from it or elevated above it, isolated from it? If art *is* part of life, how do we recognise the art; how do we see it as art if everything that surrounds it is art also? The employees of the nearby shops and businesses of the plaza site appeared to have such difficulty is because 'couldn't see beyond the size… and the material of the sculpture' – they couldn't see art![499]

In what might be understood as an ironic reversal of Marcel Duchamp's rejected urinal/*Fountain* (1917), the fountain, seen just to the left of *Tilted Arc* (1981) is never in dispute as a legitimate object for such a site. Not because it has a natural right to occupy that site, but because this is the place we expect to find a fountain, therefore, it is not rejected. A large steel structure that obstructs the movement of people in a public space, is seen as a large steel structure, and not a work of art one would normally expect to find in the public place.

The reason *Tilted Arc* (1981) was literally moved from its spot is because the public mis*placed* the object. They could not see it as art; that it was a work of art

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[497] Serra's use of cor-ten steel does, however, link him to certain modernists who used steel such as Anthony Caro and David Smith but with the idealist internal relations removed.
[498] Serra, pp. 129-130.
[499] Senie.

aiming to occupy a place in the art structure. All they could see was a huge steel structure literally obstructing their view. They were not looking at art but at life. The public, when they judged Serra's object, were not judging it as art but as a thing in itself. However, the literal removal, like the loss of the original urinal of *Fountain* (1917), does not remove the object from it place in the art structure, if anything, it actually aids in reifying that place. The Serra work is split between a huge piece of steel or real thing in itself, and *Tilted Arc*, a potential work of art. Serra's object allows us to see how the site of the work is the site of parallax, the referent of the judgment. It is the parallax view that allows us to see the one thing as two.[500]

However, if Serra's site work was unintentionally political, arising from a public objection, other artists coming after Serra produced site-oriented work that is overtly political; work that has politics as its motivation. The American art theorist, Miwon Kwon, uses the term place as location in an encompassing sense.[501] Kwon defines the move from the architectural details of the gallery as place, to the social or political as 'place' by suggesting that with artists such as Hans Haacke the 'site shifted from the physical condition of the gallery…to the system of socioeconomic relations within which art and its institutional programming find their possibilities of being'.[502]

Nick Kaye has argued 'Haacke's later work [after his biological work such as the *Condensation Cube* (1963 – 65)] extends the concept of "real time systems" from organic and biological processes toward the social and political relationships

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[500] Serra made the point that 'space systems are different from linguistic systems in that they are nondescriptive.' Serra, p. 36. However, he did not contemplate a linguistic system or structure as I do here. This form of structure does not involve description or meaning except the works occupying a place in the structure *mean* art.
[501] M. Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2002.
[502] Kwon, p. 18.

underpinning the authority of the museum'.[503] In *Gallery Goers' Birthplace and Residential Profile* (1969 – 70), Haacke inverted the gallery visitor's expectation of being the one doing the observing and questioning, by making the public itself the point of the art, asking them a series of questions about their personal lives and converting the result into art.   Haacke's work increasingly focused its attention on specific political issues associated with a number of large corporations such as the Jaguar Car Company; British Leyland's sponsoring South Africa's appartheid by supplying their military with vehicles. Other works attack such commercial targets as Mobil Oil, Mercedes Benz, and the tobaco company Philip Morris, all three being sponsors of art exhibitions or museums.

Figure 59

For his work *Homage to Marcel Broodthaers* (1982) (Figure 59), Haacke painted a portrait of the American republican president, Ronald Reagan and installed it as one would a priceless work of art, complete with ropes and red carpet. This all-America image was sometimes juxtaposed with an image of a crowd in Bonn

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[503] N. Kaye, *Performance, Place and Documentation*, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 193.

protesting against the Reagan administration for its support for the suggestion of deploying American missiles in Germany. These political site-oriented works of Haacke depend on the the viewer/political critic being divided paralactically, to see the one thing as two.

More recently, artists such a Renei Green and Mark Dion, and what is referred to as 'relational aesthetics' have extended the institutional critical work of Haacke and others in ways that are a little less didactic but still privilege political function, or social interaction over formal qualities and material displays. Here also, the work has to divide itself into art/non art or art/life, and it does so in the same way as all the other art the thesis has addressed, by a paralax view of the one thing as two. It is always as a structural place or site that the work can be seen as two.

What is variously termed Land Art or Environmental Art or, Earth Art, is not part of the shift Kwon identifies but nevertheless it shares the post-Minimal moment where the rhetoric of liberation from the constraints of orthodoxy were again on the art agenda. What is referred to in this chapter as Outside art shares the same historical 'origins' with the other two categories, that is, Minimal art. Equally, it shares the liberatory drive of the other two genres to expand the site of art "outside" its institutional confines, but is not a development out of Installation art as is Site-Specific art. The term Outside art better reflects the practices (especially those of the seminal artist, the American, Robert Smithson), considered in this chapter, than does the existing terms such as land or earth art. This is because it is the outside as site, more than the extension of media to include earth or the landscape that is the central issue for these artists.

Rather than critique the Museum, Outside artists largely reject it by moving beyond its physical boundary; and this rejection or abandonment also impacts on the reception of the art and the place it occupies structurally.[504] Installation and Site-Specific art reject modernist formalism and the blind faith in the neutrality of the museum by deconstructing it from within; Outside artists on the contrary reject the museum by working outside its walls.[505] Artists such as Nancy Holt, Michael Heizer, Alice Aycock, and Dennis Oppenheim reacted to the structural restraints on art imposed by the museum with works that extend beyond the limiting boundaries of that site and into the 'outside' environment.

What all the above categories of site-oriented art such as Installation and Site-Specific practices, and many artists working outside the confines of the gallery, misunderstand is the dialectical relationship between what they reject or abandon, and what they adopt as a positive response. Site, understood structurally, requires a site-less notion of autonomy against which to register; the floor as the site of objects requires the rejection of the wall as the site of the subjective space of modernist painting; the Outside requires the inside.

Robert Smithson understood this dialectical relationship at a more sophisticated level despite his naive use of non-traditional materials and an appeal to an outside site. Whether working outside the literal spaces of the art gallery, or outside the confines of a specific medium such as painting, or attempting to escape

the confines of the art-institutional structure, the American artist, Robert Smithson understood that the idea of escape was problematic, and more complex than often thought.

Smithson's response to the problem of inside and outside was to invent the 'dialectic of site/non site'.[506]   The 'site' for Smithson is the literal, 'physicality of the terrain' while the 'non-site is usually an interior space' which contains 'abstract' documentation of the literal site outside the gallery walls. In this way outside and inside, non-art and art, site and non-site are dialectically co-dependent places with neither side able to 'realise its Notion' without the Other. In his site work Smithson leaves the gallery for remote locations where he both worked with the site and photographed that site for the non-site part of the installation.

Figure 60

For example in *Non-Site (Franklin, New Jersey)* (1968) (Figure 60), the rocks contained in a sculptural set of boxes and the stylised photographic image of sections of the site are displayed as the non-site part of the dialectic of inside/outside,

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[506] R. Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1996, p. 190.

site/non-site. Smithson's dialectic of site/non-site involves an implicit critique of the naiveté of the historical and neo-avant-gardes rhetoric of escape. The dialectic of site and non-site attempts to overcome the simple location of art either inside the gallery or outside the gallery in the cacophony of competing banality. Equally, the proffered work can no longer assume legitimacy by aligning itself with a particular medium. By using 'non-traditional' media such as earth, however, the medium specificity of modernist painting is also invoked as structural support.

However, for Smithson the 'dialectic' of inside and outside is more complex than a choice between a conservative attachment to the medium of painting and the gallery system, or a radical escape from the confines of the art-institutional frame. Explaining the concept of site in an interview with Anthony Robbin in 1969, Smithson argued 'you have to set your own limits' rather than subscribe to the simple idea that once outside the gallery the artist is free to make whatever, wherever.[507] Again, in another interview, Smithson reiterates this point by arguing 'All legitimate art deals with limits' while 'fraudulent art feels that it has no limits'.[508]

He also suggests that those limits are related dialectically to the limits of the framing edge of painting. He states, again in 1969, that 'I don't think you can escape the primacy of the rectangle. I always see myself thrown back to the rectangle.'[509] This being 'thrown back to the rectangle' should be understood dialectically as the positive 'site' gaining a place through the negative relation with the 'non-site' of painting or the inside. A comparison of the 'site' work of *Mirror Displacement:*

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[507] Smithson, p. 175.
[508] Smithson, p. 194.
[509] Smithson, p. 190.

Cayuga Salt Mine Project (1969) (Figures 61 and 62), with its 'outside' or non-site 'mirror' or copy, reveals the outside involves the intrusion of mirrors or cultural objects into the place of 'nature' while the inside gallery work involves the intrusion of nature into the place of art. Smithson divides the work between the site outside the gallery where he inserts the mirrors and the non-site inside the gallery.

<table>
<tr><td>Figure 61</td><td>Figure 62</td></tr>
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While Smithson is the most important artist working with the outside, and his concept of the dialectic of site and non-site represents a major conceptual advantage over more simplistic understandings of outside and inside art, the thesis disagrees with Smithson on one significant point. Smithson's concept of dialectic requires supplementing. He understands the outside as the site or originating point, and the gallery as the non-site or secondary location, the mere documentary part of the two sites. And yet he claims, 'I don't think you can escape the primacy of the rectangle.'[510] If the 'rectangle' or the framing shape of painting is understood as the primary location, then the non-site of the gallery should actually be understood as the 'site' or prime location, with the outside site, as secondary. Smithson's work does not need to divide on the point between site and non-site since the non-site or inside,

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[510] Smithson, p. 190

is itself a site – the gallery site and the documentation within it are the One site divided into Two, or two perspectives on the one thing. A art work conducted outdoors is always already an indoor work; part of art's Notional structure. A work of art, as soon as viewed as such, is divided between the two sites which are in fact the one site seen from two perspectives, and both sites belong to the general site of the art structure.

The division, as was argued in chapter 1, in relation to Malevich's concept of non-objective art, it is the use of the hyphen that both separates and joins 'non', or the negative, to site, or the positive. In Smithson's case the hyphen both divides and joins at the same time, 'site' and 'non-site', or negative of site. Equally, the site of non-painting is joined to, and separated from, painting. The outside site is, Smithson understands, the origin of the work. However, it is the notion of removal from the site or place, and the re*placement* of the object, that must be understood. Smithson says at one point 'If I take somebody on a tour of the site, I just show them where I removed things.'[511] While Smithson is speaking here of the literal removal of material from the outside site, and placing it in another, inside site, he could be understood, if seen from another perspective, as saying something quite different. If, taking Smithson slightly out of context, we run together Smithson's statement about not escaping the 'primacy of the rectangle' and the above statement about taking somebody to the site outside and showing them 'where I removed things' we can understand Smithson's significance for Outside art. Smithson could be understood as saying that the artist removes content from within the "frame" of painting or the structure of art. He suggests in fact that 'a museum devoted to different kinds of

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[511]Smithson.

emptiness could be developed.'[512]   Smithson's art is in fact a removal from within the structure of art, and this removal opens up an empty place in the art structure to which the spectator or viewer responds with judgment. The judgment is a 'seeing' the one site as two; as inside and outside, site and non-site, art and life.

The thesis has been arguing that the boundary between inside and outside, art and life, should be understood as a parallax perspective on the one thing seen as two. The actual dialectic is between the one site seen differently from two perspectives, through a parallax view. In this chapter Outside art was understood as connected to the two examples of site-oriented art – Installation art and Site-Specific art – but was treated to a degree as separate because Outside art also involved a re-introduction of the historical avant-garde's attempt to escape the art-institutional structure and enter life.   However, whereas the historical avant-garde conducted their "war" on convention and autonomy from the inside through the exhibition of predominantly ant-art and ant-aesthetic objects, the Outside artists attempted to literally escape the art institution by working outside the art gallery itself in the outside environment. The seminal artist of Outside artist, the artist who understood the dialectic of inside and outside, Robert Smithson, it was argued, understood correctly from the thesis's point of view, that the outside is dialectically dependent on the inside as much as the inside depends for its meaning as art on the outside or life.

This chapter also demonstrated how an unacknowledged dialectic informs the other, structurally related categories discussed. The dialectic between literal site of the gallery and the site of modernist painting; between the wall and the floor in Installation; between the discrete object of modernist art and the dispersed object of

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[512] Smithson, p. 44.

Installation art; between the representation of light and the literal use of light; between the single point of view and the multiple; between a body and the absence of one; between an a-political autonomy and the politics of Site-Specific art. All these categories were understood dialectically rather than as having positive meaning in isolation.

Chapter 6

The Wall of Language: Wall/Painting in Parallax

'I work with the painting plane in relation to the wall plane'[513] Robert Ryman.

The preceding chapters have each developed the concept of site or place as the location of a range of seminal movements and individual artistic practices of both modern and post-modern periods. The previous chapter discussed the notion of site itself as represented by the categories of Installation art; Site-Specific art, and Outside art. It was argued that these specific uses of the language of site or place are but pointed examples of the general expansion of site that began in the late 19th Century and came to the fore with the development of modernism in the 20th Century. Site, understood as the art structure, was shown to be the general location of art, and that a dialectic between art and life was operative in the concept of site along with the necessary place judgment plays in the location of otherwise non-art objects as art; as occupying a specific place in the general structure of art. The previous chapter explored the concept of site in relation to the art structure and in relation to the concept of parallax or the gap between two seemingly irreconcilable positions such as art and life, inside and outside the art gallery. It was also demonstrated how these two positions are in fact two different perspectives on the one thing seen in parallax.

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[513] D. Bachelor, On Paintings and Pictures: An Interview With Robert Ryman, *Frieze*, Number 10, May, 1993, pp. 42 – 46.

This chapter will investigate a recent category of painting that deals with the problem of site or place after the abandonment of medium specificity as expressed in Greenbergian theory and criticism and other developments in Europe. This recent trend in painting involves the emergence of what I am referring to as Wall Painting, the practice of painting 'directly' onto the wall of the art gallery or other site, rather than a conventional canvas support.[514] The way of working with the wall understood as Wall Painting will include media other than paint. However, despite the absence of paint as a medium these practices will be understood structurally as painting-related practices. The chapter will discuss the difference between an ordinary wall covered with paint – a painted wall – such as the wall of an office building or domestic house; and a Wall Painting; a purposive object intended as art. Implied in this discussion is a fundamental question that has been addressed in preceding chapters: can something, in this case a painted wall, be both art and an ordinary object that occupies the same place or site as objects in everyday life? To what extent can the artist paint 'directly' onto a wall, *as art*, and to what extent does this literal, structural wall require another wall, a symbolic wall or 'wall of language'[515]? A further question addressed below is: can the artist breach the 'wall of language' and work directly on the literal structural wall, or do such practices work within the gaps and empty opened up within the symbolic wall, or art structure?

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[514] Below I defend the use of the term 'wall painting' rather than the term 'wall drawing' used by the conceptual artist, Sol LeWitt for instance; or the general term 'wall works', by drawing the connection between the emergence of wall painting (and other movements and practices) and medium of painting as such.

[515] The term 'wall of language' was coined by Jacques Lacan to refer to the linguistic barrier that divides the subject from the Kantian thing-in-itself or real, by the division of the signifier; the subject's immersion in the symbolic structure and the desire to breach the wall, to escape the linguistic [art] structure.   See J. Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, New York, London, Norton, 2006, p. 292.

In many instances, to the observer, the empirical difference between, say, a functional wall painted in a home or an office building, and a wall painted as art, is not immediately apparent because the difference is not often visible. This is because the two walls can appear visually identical. The different geographical locations, or the phenomenological context within which the different walls are experienced, does not necessarily assist in our differentiating between the painted wall as art, and the wall in everyday life. Rather than understanding the wall as a phenomenological presence, or a merely functional structure that supports a roof, this chapter will argue the wall is analogous to a linguistic structure, a kind of 'wall of language' which divides the two walls: the literal, structural wall, and the wall as an work of art, or more precisely, a Wall Painting. In this context, the question the chapter asks is: Can artists breach the 'wall of language' and directly paint an ordinary wall *as* a wall of art or is the place of each of these two walls determined by its structural relation to its other – the literal, structural wall in dialectical relation to the wall as a Wall Painting?

This question will, as was the practice in previous chapters, be explored through the central concept of parallax, that is, the shift in position that allows the subject (spectator/viewer) to 'see' or understand the one wall as two, a shift that is neither a purely subjective view, nor an objective observation of the literal 'facts', but a split between the two or the one 'seen' as two. This chapter will argue that painting from 1950's begins to address the issue of the gallery wall as the site of modernist painting. It will be argued that this address to the wall takes the form of a series of 'removals'.

These removals come in various forms, from the literal removal of paintings from their frames, to the removal of paintings from the wall to place them on the gallery floor, to the removal of modernist painting itself from the history of art. The successive acts of removal increasingly opened up an empty place in the art structure for the creation of Wall Painting; that is, using the gallery or other wall as the support for painting rather than a traditional canvas support. The conclusion drawn from the above questions will be that the wall of language creates, or locates, the division between the inside and the outside, art and life and that the parallax view of the spectator as judge has a productive role in making the literal wall a Wall Painting.

It is not an uncommon event to come across an object of everyday life that reminds us of a particular art work. Alternatively, finding an object in an art gallery that appears no different than objects we encounter in ordinary life is a common experience today. This situation has occurred frequently throughout the history of modern art from the use of ordinary materials in Collage, to the use of readymade objects, to installations that utilise common household utensils.

Figure 63   Figure 64

If we enter a gallery context and are met with a white wall, visually this is no different than a white wall anywhere else. Furthermore, if we experience a white wall outside the gallery it may appear no different than the wall inside the gallery

space. Alternatively, we might compare two walls outside a gallery context and despite the two walls appearing different; the difference does not result in a clear distinction in relation to the context of art. There is nothing optically or materially essential to either art or life that would draw a neat line between the two domains. When it comes to the wall of the art gallery, the same problem of identification arises. Compare, for example *Signpost and White Wall* (2007) (Figure 63), and *Passageway* (1990) (Figure 64). Visually the two walls are white, although the lighting in figure 1 might suggest an almost grey colour.

Figure 63 is an image of an ordinary public space in London. To the left of the image there is a recessed area that appears as if a window had been filled in with concrete or plaster preventing our visual penetration of the surface. It is suggestive of a painting or the absense of one, as if a painting has been removed. To the right stands a sign for bycycle, while in the middle of the two a graffity tag is partially visible suggesting the wall is signed.

Given the sugestion of a missing painting, the tag as signature, and the sign of a bycycle, a semiotic reading of the image might suggest that this work makes some comment on Marcel Duchamp's abandonment of painting for the readymade; his *Bycycle Wheel* (1913) (Figure 65). The author of figure 63 says of the image nothing more than: 'I liked the mix of colours and shapes in this scene'.[516]

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[516] www.urban75.org/photos/london/lon001.html

Figure 65

Figure 64 appears to be an ordinary passageway or entry to a building; the point where the outside meets the inside. Like the image above it, it is also painted white. It occupies a public space, a place of pedestrian traffic, a place of ordinary life. Is it art? The use of white paint dose not, in itself, signify an art space despite the fact that it is the conventional colour associated with the modernist art gallery. In fact, figure 63 is a London scene in Covent Garden photographed and called *Signpost and White Wall* (2007) by the tourist who took the photo. It was not intended as art despite the language used by its author to describe it and defend the aesthetic judgment made on its behalf: 'I liked the mix of colours and shapes in this scene'.

Passageway (1990) (Figure 64), is an artwork by the German artist, Karin Sander. Sander painted the passageway white in such a way that the 'white cube' of the modern art gallery might be evoked.[517] *Passageway* (1990) is not only a literal passageway between two spaces, it is also a metaphorical or symbolic passageway between two structural places, which to the empirical eye appear the same in so far as they are places in social space, not objects or images occupying the ideal space of

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[517] B. O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999.

the modernist gallery, or the ideal space of modernist painting. It is easy to see that visual cues are insufficient when it comes to identifying the 'work' as art, or distinguishing an object of ordinary life from an object of art. What is required is an understanding of the context with which a *passage* between a painted wall and a Wall Painting can be traversed.[518]

Wall Painting has precedents in the wall painting workshops of Wassily Kandinsky at the Bauhaus; De Stijl's construction of painted environments; El Lissitsky's Proun constructions, and Kurt Schwitter's *Merzbau* project. However, its imediate reference is the neo-avant-garde and the 'end' of modernist painting in North America. The required context is firstly modernist painting and its history of essential abandonments which lead to the moment when Mimimal art abandoned painting altogether for the space of three-dimensions.[519] The abandonment of painting involved art leaving behind the gallery wall as it entered the 'real' space of three-dimensions.

There are several reasons for relying primarily on the American context for the discussion of Wall Painting. Firstly, one of the 'founders' of Wall Painting in the post-Minimal context, the German painter, Blinky Palermo, unlike the Minimal artists in the US, was not given to writing about his art, and nor was much writen about it by the German press at the time. What *was* written, often associated Palermo with existentialism and expressionism, or trauma associated with the artist's

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[518] The use of the word context is controversial. The thesis does not endorse a context theory. Art is not determined by an art context or 'atmosphere of theory', but is the product of a series of judgments that have the combined effect of placing the object alongside other objects of art within the art structure. A judgment is always in response to art history even if ones art history is limited.
[519] The point is discussed in detail in both chapter 2 and chapter 3.

adoption.[520]   Secondly, in 1967, Carl Andre showed at Konrad Fisher gallery in Dusseldorf which left an impact on the Palermo's turn to Wall Painting. Also, the association between the touring of American Minimalism and in particular, the exhibition of art by Sol LeWitt in Germany at the same time Palermo embarked on his work on the wall in 1968, suggests an American context for both artists. Another reason is the association with Mel Bochner's (an American artist) first measurment room which also toured Germany in the same year as leWitt's exhibition. Also in the same year *Documenta 4* showed wall installations by the American, Dan Flavin wich ran along the walls of the space. However, perhaps the most significant influence of American art on Palermo was the major experience of Minimal art that came in the form a touring survey exhibition *Minimal Art* which travelled to Dusseldorf in 1969.

Without dismissing the European association, especially the historical avant-garde, the most compelling context for the new forms of Wall Painting is the North American, post-Minimal art milieu.   The abandonment of modernist painting by the Minimal artists is the imediate context with which to structurally place the emergence of Wall Painting. Chapter 4 explained the dialectical relationship between the leaving of the gallery wall and the move to the three-dimensional space of the floor. The move to the floor, in other words, should not be understood in a positive sense as if the meaning of the shift is isolated from both the development of Minimal art and the empty place in the art structure left by the move from the wall.

However, the empty structural place left on the wall by the removal of painting as a specific medium allowed for painting as a general art form to further expand the general site of art to include the practice of Wall Painting. The modernist

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[520] For information on Palermo's German reception see C. Mehring, Decoration and Abstraction in Blinky Palermo's Wall Paintings, *Grey Room*, Winter, 2005, issue 18.

wall could now be seen, not as a literal, albeit neutral structure to hang a modernist painting, but rather as a place in the art structure to occupy with paint and other media, to create a Wall Painting. The wall as a site for Wall Painting becomes a structural possibility, as a place in the art structure, once painting as a specific medium is abandoned for the three-dimensional space occupied by Minimalism.

As a result, medium-specific painting is removed from the art structure leaving an empty place to be filled by a range of artistic responses know generally as postmodernism. Wall Painting is one such response to the empty place in the art structure created by the abandonment of modernist painting. Wall Painting pioneers such as the American conceptualist, Sol LeWitt, the German artist, Blinky Palermo, and contemporary Wall Painters such as Katherina Grosse and Felice Varini, have in different ways responded artistically to the structural emergence of the wall as a site for painting after the demise of modernist painting.

Sol LeWitt and Blinky Palermo were the first artists to work 'directly' on the gallery wall in the form of Wall Painting as a site of painting after the 'end' of modernist painting. The two artists have a number of things in common: they both began to work on the wall in 1968. They both began as painters painting monochromatic works before abandoning painting; and both were influenced by Minimal art and the development of painting as object. Palermo began making his serial paintings, and cloth 'paintings' – or monochrome objects that hung on the wall as surrogates for paintings – in the early 1960's. LeWitt began to move away from painting to the object at around the same time. Both artists showed early Wall Paintings in Dusseldorf. Sol LeWitt, while preferring the term conceptual artist, participated in group shows with numerous Minimal artists in American museums

and art galleries in the 1960's. In addition, Sol LeWitt showed one of his *Wall Drawings* at the Konrad Fisher gallery in Dusseldorf in 1969.

Figure 66

LeWitt's seminal early wall work, *Wall Drawing # 146* (1972), (Figure 66), installed at the Guggenheim Museum in New York is a work drawn directly onto the gallery wall rather than a canvas or other support. Like all of LeWitt's conceptual works, *Wall Drawing # 146* was executed by a group of assistants who followed a conceptual 'menu' of directions given by the artist for executing the work. By doing so LeWitt also challenges the commonplace notion of the artist as author of the work, something essential to much of the rhetoric that surrounded Abstract Expressionism. By doing so he falls into line with the theory of the French Structuralists Roland Barthes (1967), and Michel Foucault (1969) which challenges the conception of the author as origin of the art.

Barthes for instance, declared in 1967, just one year prior to LeWitt's inaugural wall works that the author as the origin of works of art, was dead; carved up by the differential movement of language.[521] Both medium and author are missing or absent in LeWitt and in their place is a conceptual system or list of rules

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[521] R. Barthes, The Death of the Author, *Image, Music, Text*, London, Fontana Press, 1977, p.147.

that the assistants carry out on the artist's behalf. These assistant's are acknowledged by LeWitt himself as part of the works themselves rather than simply tradespeople carrying out the duty of some master. However, to understand LeWitt's gesture in purely positive terms is to misunderstand the way his gesture of 'drawing' on the wall, and abandoning the traditional notion of author for conceptual systems carried out by others, are structurally related.

Figure 67   Figure 68

By allowing others to literally execute the work LeWitt does not abandon authorship so much as negatively locate the author as a place in the art structure; the name given as the author of the idea or concept behind the executed work, not the person who literally executed the work.[522] Blinky Palermo was not so hostile to the concept of authorship using his hand to measure the 'frame' of colour in his seminal Wall Painting, *Wall Painting on Facing Walls* (1971) (Figures 67 and 68) shown at the Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich.

Where LeWitt was determined to distance himself from the influence of Clement Greenberg, for Palermo, the end of modernist painting was a given and

[522] In the conclusion I again raise the issue of authorship as a possible area for further study.

something to move beyond. As a result he does not place as much emphasis as LeWitt does on opposing or rejecting the medium of painting through the use of drawing or conceptual determinations or the use of others such as art students to execute the work. While it is true Palermo does refer to some of his works as 'wall drawings' he also often labelled them wall paintings as the above example shows. This is something LeWitt was not willing to do until the 1980's arrived and the threat of Greenbergian reduction was safely distanced. Much has been said about the phenomenological experience of Palermo's wall paintings, about the disorienting effects of the work, about the way they make the 'viewer' aware of the relationship between their body and the altered space within which it is experienced.[523] What has not been noticed is the difference between *Wall Painting on Facing Walls* (1971) and the more phenomenological works.

What is interesting about *Wall Painting on Facing Walls* (1971) is the way one wall is treated as the inverse of the other; how it mirrors the other, not by copying it but by presenting it exactly as a reverse image as one finds when one looks an image of their own face in a mirror: it is exactly the same but exactly the opposite. In other words, the one thing is seen as two or divided in two. Each 'reads' only in relation to its other, as what it is not. However, it is the passage, as was shown above in *Passageway* (1990) (Figure 64), by Karin Sander, it is not just a literal or phenomenological passage between two actual, experiential spaces, it is also a passage between that space and an art space or place in the art structure. The Real is the gap between the two places, between the two 'views' of the one thing or the one thing seen as the inverse of the other.

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[523] C. Mehring, Decoration and Abstraction in Blinky Palermo's Wall Paintings, *Grey Room*, Winter, 2005, issue 18.

It is this form of opposition that is of most interest here, the way it register a gap or empty place in the art structure. Equally, the abandonment of paint for other materials by LeWitt in his Wall Paintings (he refers to them as wall drawings) should be understood as registering against the Greenbergian narrative of medium specificity. His wall works should be understood as negative paintings or not-paintings; where again, the hyphen both separates, and joins together. Both LeWit and Palermo were painters before working with the wall as site. And it is in the context of their abandonment of painting that the wall registers as the site of painting after the 'end' of painting. In the post Greenbergian milieu, the use of paint immediately tainted one's work as essentialist. Despite, or perhaps because of, his use of other materials besides paint as a medium, LeWitt's wall work should be taken for works that stand in for, or take the place of painting in the art structure. This is why they are referred to in this thesis as Wall Paintings. In fact, later in his career LeWitt abandoned the apparent fear of the medium of paint.

Figure 69

In his recent *Wall Drawing #948:Bands of Colour (Circles)*(2003) (Figure 69) executed at the TV Asahi Head Quarters Tokyo, for example, LeWitt maintains the

term 'drawing' but actually has the work executed in acrylic paint. The wall is all but covered with a repeated pattern of multi-coloured circles. Overlaying the pattern is a grid that creates a shallow optical space that brings to mind the geometric paintings of the Dutch artist, Piet Mondrian. Contained by the grid, but also visible behind it, is evidence of the literal wall of the gallery space. This is a highly decorative work but neither the decorative treatment of the wall, nor the use of a serial readymade motif of a repeated circle, is of most interest, but rather the way this mundane format is broken by the black grid and the empty white spaces that interrupt the repeated circular patterns. The overlay of the grid disrupts both the simple pleasure of the pattern, but more importantly, the assumption of a potentially endless repetition of the same. However, it is the gaps in pattern, the presence of the white wall that alerts the 'viewer' to the non-place of the empty place, or the place that has no place in the structure. These empty spaces of white indicate the division between the literal white wall and the same wall decorated as art. The empty or blank places in the structure of the Wall Painting itself are indications of function these empty places, brought about by the introduction of new art, created in the art structure itself.

To explain the importance of these empty places for the generation of the desire to interpret, I will now turn to the theory of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. Lacan has theorised the structural problem of an empty place in his seminar, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1997).[524] He begins a discussion of sublimation by drawing to reader's attention to a case study of a patient by the name of Ruth Kjar as described by the Austrian psychoanalyst, Melanie Klein. Lacan recalls Klein's account where Kjar, suffering from depression, begins to fill, by way of painting, an

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[524] J. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book vii, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, New York, London, Norton, 1997.

'empty space on a wall'; a space vacated by the removal of another painting previously placed there by her brother-in-law.[525] Kjar begins in earnest to paint a variety of subjects 'directly' onto the wall in an attempt to fill in the bare space opened up by the removal of the painting that formally occupied its place. Lacan tells us that the wall was, prior to the removal of the painting, covered with other works created by Kjar's brother-in-law. The paintings that remain on the wall create the empty space as much as the removal of the paintings. What is important to note in the above account however, is that the empty space created by the removal is indicated only through the presence of other art, the paintings that remain on the walls and surround that empty space. In much the same way, it is the overlaying of art on the bare wall of the LeWitt that indicates the white empty spaces on the wall.

In Lacan's example, it is the other works that produce this empty space; it is not the actual presence of the wall in isolation from the art that surrounds the exposed section, nor simply the paintings themselves (their codified meaning). Like an ellipsis in a sentence, the missing work acquires meaning from the surrounding context, as much as the context is altered by the omission. The wall, if never having been covered with art would register as a literal wall, a wall, the meaning of which is completed by its architectural function. It is the presence of art, forming a kind of network or structure that 'frame' the empty space on the wall, that allow it to be registered as a void or break in the visual field. This point is crucial to understanding the importance of this example for the subsequent argument, because we find in art history a number of analogous removals.

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[525] Lacan, p. 116.

One such 'removal' was undertaken at The Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1960. The exhibition showed a series of paintings by the French Impressionist painter, Claude Monet in which the curator, William C. Seitz, removed the canvases from their frames, setting them against the bare wall. The effect of this removal and subsequent placement, according to the English art critic Michael Archer, was that 'picture and support surface formed one continuous plane'.[526] Commenting on the same show, Brian O'Doherty, stated that 'the undressed canvases looked a bit like reproductions until you saw how they began to hold the wall'.[527] What Archer is arguing, and O'Doherty appears to be supporting, is the suggestion that the relationship of object to the wall as site in the subsequent development of installation art is here in its nascent state in the Monet exhibition. Archer's association of such curatorial experiments and subsequent developments in installation art have some merit – the way some examples of installation art emphasise the relationship between the site and what is installed for example – but the relationship between picture and support does not form 'one continuous plane' as some examples of Installation art appear to suggest.

O'Doherty seems to be making a similar point except that for him, the Monet canvases bring out what was implicit in Monet all along, that is, the relationship between the broad, lateral expanse of the Monet, and expanse of the wall or 'the way they hold the wall'. However, rather than simply make the wall and painting coincident or form 'one continuous plane', the Monet exhibition involves, on the contrary, an interruption of continuous space, a creation of gaps, both literally of

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[526] M. Archer, *Installation Art*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1994, p.2.
[527] B. O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999. P. 25.

course, in the functional understanding of the wall; and structurally/linguistically, as a disruption to the site or location of painting as an autonomous experience.

By doing so the Monet exhibition contributed to the opening up of the place of painting to other practices in the name of painting, to be located in its place. This occurs because the viewer's attention is drawn, not simply to an illusionistic image of some other place; a visual window to somewhere else – to the outside – but rather to an empty symbolic place, not visible when the wall functioned literally as a place to hang a picture. The wall begins to enter the place of painting; as a new location or site. The placement of the canvas without its frame does not act to literally align the picture surface with the surface of the wall but rather, in the context of the structural account of painting undertaken by the thesis, it acts as a mark made to the wall. The Slovenian philosopher, Alenka Zupancic, has made the point that like any symbolic mark, art objects simultaneously create an empty place beneath them, a lack in the symbolic structure of art to which the act of directly hanging the frameless canvases would seem to fill.[528]

While it is true to say that at one level, the removal of the canvas' from their frames draws attention to painting's relationship with the surrounding space, in particular the gallery wall, in a way that modern painting generally understood as an autonomous field of enquiry, could not; the removal also indicates the relationship between the removal and the filling of the emptiness as Wall Painting. This drawing of attention to the wall however, should not be understood as the literal wall as a structural object that divides space and supports the roof, but rather to a wall as linguistic structure, or the wall as registering within the art structure itself, as *not* the

[528] A. Zupancic, *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2003.

literal wall. Because, as I will demonstrate below, the wall as linguistic structure or 'wall of language' to appropriate Lacan; is the site of both walls: the literal and the art wall or Wall Painting.[529] By setting up a relation between art and the literal structure of the gallery space that space becomes included as a differential unit in the linguistic structure rather than a location outside art history or beyond autonomous art as part of a gallery context as literal location.[530]

It is just as important that the Monet paintings were removed from their traditional support, as is their actual placement against the bare wall, since this removal is not only practically useful in drawing attention to the conditions of exhibition, as structurally necessary if the works are to relate to the wall in a way that was previously unseen in modernist painting: as not simply hanging on a wall; that is, a wall that serves the function of holding pictures; but rather a wall as a site for painting within the general site of art. In this way, the gesture locates the wall as an art gesture. This seemingly incongruous move by the curator of the Monet exhibition is quite understandable when viewed retrospectively in light of subsequent art such as Installation and site-specific art, which lent the curators act a degree of meaning as a gesture of art. More significantly in the context of the present chapter, the act of removing the painting from its traditional place, indicated an empty place in the structure to which the practice of Wall Painting is the response. It indicates a place was coming into view in which such gestures could signify as art gestures.

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[529] J. Lacan, *Ecrits: The First Complete English Edition*, London, New York, Norton, 2006, p.292. Lacan does not use the term 'wall of language' as I do here but rather as a general metaphor for the symbolic field of structural relations.

[530] Lacan, p. 292. Also, I discuss the questionable claim that minimalism is outside artistic convention and history; a notion implied by Tony Smith's anecdote of the New Jersey Turnpike, in the chapter on the neo-avant-garde and minimalism.

The removal of the Monet's in isolation from subsequent art historical events would doubtlessly be forgotten by history or treated as an aberration, had not other removals occurred at around this point in art history. In fact a widely publicised case of painting removal occurred ten years earlier in 1950. The artist was not, as might be expected, a conceptual or avant-garde artist, but rather a modernist painter, Jackson Pollock. The exhibition was held at the highly influential Betty Parsons Gallery in New York. In this exhibition Parsons 'installs' a number of un-stretched 'paintings' directly onto the gallery wall covering almost the entire wall space. Not insignificant is the fact that a number of seminal Pollock canvases are shown in this way including *Number 1 (Autumn Rhythm)* (1950).

The exhibition was of course not merely the instigation of Parsons; Pollock is quoted as having considered the place of the wall in future art seven years prior. Pollock expressed an interest in the wall itself as long ago as 1943 when he stated 'I believe the easel picture to be a dying form, and the tendency of modern feeling is to the wall picture'.[531] Five years after Pollock's announcement, the American formalist critic, Clement Greenberg, detected an impulse toward the wall, an 'urge…to go beyond the cabinet picture…to a kind of picture that, without actually becoming identified with the wall like a mural, would "spread" over it and acknowledge its physical reality'.[532] This tension between the canvas and the wall in fact comes to a head by the late sixties. So much so that Greenberg is forced to again demarcate the domain of modernist painting from all that it is not by arguing in 1967 that 'A monochromatic flatness that could be seen as limited in extension and

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[531] P. Wood and F. Franscina, and J. Harrison, *Modernism in Dispute: Art Since the Forties*, New Haven, London, The Open University, 1993, p. 152.
[532] C. Greenberg, The Situation at the Moment, *Partisan Review*, Volume 15, number 1, January, 1948, p.84. It should be remembered that Pollock, like Monet, was one of Greenberg's canonical artists.

different from a wall henceforth automatically declared itself to be a picture, to be art.'[533]

The fact of being 'different from a wall' is a structural difference that is born out in subsequent art. The difference rests between what Greenberg refers to as a 'picture' and what he refers to as 'art'. He appears to understand the two as one and yet, if Thierry de Duve is correct, a 'picture' refers to the specific category of painting, while 'art' refers to the general category of art; what the thesis refers to as the structure of art, to which Wall Painting is addressed.[534]

The American critic, Rosalind Krauss, draws our attention to the fact that Pollock's seminal abstract works were painted on the floor on un-stretched canvases and only once painted did they get placed on the wall.[535] However, Krauss misunderstands Pollock by drawing attention to an apparently repressed formless quality in his paintings; the horizontal moment before the painting was hung in the vertical, on the wall. Krauss believes she can bring us back to this pre-optical moment, an 'optical unconscious' point before the Pollock is hung on the wall through Greenberg's criticism; a criticism that draws attention to the optical, vertical elements and ignores (or suppresses) the formless or horizontal Pollock.[536] There are two points that follow. Firstly it is modernist painting which is prior – not just historically or temporally – but structurally prior to the formless quality Krauss wants to bring out in the Pollock. While it is true the formless has precedents that arise historically prior to Pollock, Krauss mounts her argument against Greenberg's

[533] C. Greenberg, Recentness of Sculpture, in G. Battcock, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, p.181. The use of italics is my own.
[534] T. de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1998.
[535] R. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1993.
[536] Krauss.

position.   Thus her claim requires Greenberg's position as it's dialectical counterpoint.[537]   The formless can only register as art and not as actual formless material, because a place is indicated structurally by the prior presence or dominance of modernist painting and its historical removal. It is against this, that a formless argument can be mounted, or indeed formless art itself can be located structurally as art.

There is no repression as such, just the structural necessity of seeing the two from different perspectives, a parallax perspective. The other thing to note is the significance of the moment of horizontality, the moment when the painting, or better, the formless thing, was off the wall, or better, *not on the wall*, not yet painting. It seems more than a coincidence that the same artist who worked on a canvas on the floor hypothesised about a day when painters worked directly on the wall. Did the wall become structurally visibility to Pollock as a future art site, taking the place of modernist painting because, in working on the floor, he could envisage another wall?

It was (perhaps unconsciously) the working off the wall, and the subsequent placing on the wall, as a kind of baptismal moment, that gave Pollock the suggestion for working 'directly' with the wall as a site, because he intuitively understood the importance of the wall and the site or place of painting in making his perhaps formless, non-art drips, into painting; into art.   In the year immediately following Pollock's speculation about the wall as a future site for painting, another American artist, Elsworth Kelly began an address to the gallery wall.

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[537] Krauss.

Kelly, beginning in 1951, started to reference the wall in such paintings as *Colours for a Large Wall* (1951) (Figure 70).

Figure 70

Kelly stated at this time, echoing Pollock, 'I believe that the days of the "easel" painting are fading, and that the future art will be something more than just "personality paintings" for walls of apartments and museums. The future art must go to the wall itself.'[538] In this work, and others from this time, Kelly's painting addresses the wall through both the title of the work, and through the use of the colour white which creates a series of voids or empty places in the geometric field as if pieces in a geometric puzzle were missing. The title of the work indicates the literal site of the work – where it is to be placed – these are 'colours for a large wall'. The work consists of sixty four square panels measuring in total 240cm x 240cm, and painted in a variety of colours with white panels breaking up the surface like pixels in a television screen. The colours optically push and pull with the yellow coming forward and the darker blues and the blacks receding. This push and pull effect is a familiar device employed by the modernist painter, the origins of which can be

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[538] M. Plante,Things to Cover Walls: Ellsworth Kelly's Paris Paintings and the Tradition of Mural Decoration, *American Art*, Volume 9, Number 1, Spring, 1995, p. 46.

located in the visually deeper pictorial spaces of figurative art. Where this work departs with this optical tradition is with the arrangement of separate units (the individual panels), and in the use of white; the colour of the modern art gallery wall.

The use of differential units arranged on the wall accomplishes two things: it draws attention to the arbitrary arrangement (each panel could have been placed in a different place in relation to the others), and the fact that the object as a whole appears to have been assembled for the large wall on which it is placed. In an analogue to linguistic theory the arbitrary 'arrangement' of the differential units, at one level, works to displace the modern tradition of the artist as creative genius – anyone could arrange the panels in any order – and undermines the tradition of European composition and its demand for balanced composition. In this way Kelly, forms a kind of bridge between the chance experiments of Dada; the authorless gestures of Duchamp and Malevich; and the flattened picture plane in modernist painting. He also signals the later focus on site found in Installation and Site-Specific art that was to follow. But most importantly in the context of this chapter, *Colours for a Large Wall* (1951), draws attention to the wall through the missing pieces of the painting indicated by the white blanks that break up the surface.[539]

In the same year Kelly began to address the wall, the American artist, Robert Rauchenberg produced his *White Painting* (1951), (Figure 71), at Black Mountain College in America. This seven-panel monochromatic painting is painted entirely white with all representational depth omitted leaving the blank 'presence' of the

[539] It should be noted however, that the paintings of this time were executed by Kelly in Paris where he resided from 1948 – 1954. The fact that the paintings were well received in Paris by the local art establishment indicates that the interest in the wall was not limited to America. In fact, Michael Plante commented on the presence of both the emergence of the wall for the modern mural as he understood it, and the positive reception of Kelly in Paris. He also quotes the French painter, Ferdinand Leger as saying that modern art should aspire to 'an abstract art which must adapt itself to the wall'. Plante, p. 46. Plante and I differ greatly on our reading of Kelly in terms of the wall.

stretched canvases covered by a thin film of white paint. The gap between the white

of the panels and the white of the wall behind them is all but erased, only a minimal
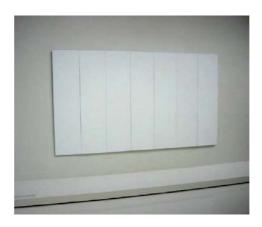
difference between the two places remains

Figure 71

The work as a whole acts as a 'portable wall' placed against another wall as much as

it does a painting – the object is caught between being a painting and being a wall.[540]

The American painter, Robert Ryman also felt the pressure to address the literal

material wall. But he did it by remaining within the medium of paint. He stated 'I

work with the painting plane in relation to the wall plane'.[541] And it is the

relationship between these two places, the place or site of painting and the site of

Wall Painting, that is the central issue addressed in this chapter.

Ryman's material or literal paintings are often coloured white which

emphasises this relationship between picture plane and wall plane as *Untitled* (1958)

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[540] O'Doherty, p. 18. The point made below is that this division between the painting as a wall (Wall Painting) and the actual gallery wall cannot be breached literally by directly working on the wall but rather only structurally on the split between painting and the painted wall or Wall Painting as art and the literal painted wall. The division is only overcome through the concept of parallax, or 'seeing the one thing as two.

[541] Ryman quoted in D. Bachelor, On Paintings and Pictures: An Interview With Robert Ryman, *Frieze*, Number 10, May, 1993, pp. 42 – 46.

(Figure 72) shows. Again, like the Rauchenberg, the Ryman painting is nothing but an empty white field or void.

Figure 72

In the same year as the Ryman painting was executed, the French painter, Yves Klein began his somewhat mystical monochromes that referenced the idea of a spiritual void. He created *The Void* (1958) (Figure 73), for the Gallery Iris Clert.
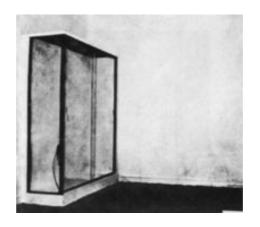

Figure 73

Klein's *The Void* (1958) consisted of nothing more than the removal of all art from the white-walled space, leaving an empty, glass display case as the only object in the space. Klein painted the display case white like the rest of the space anchoring one container within another. It is significant historically that the show prior to this

empty space was a show of monochrome works by Klein himself. It was the removal of Klein's own monochrome paintings that created this empty space. In the year prior to the Iris Clert show Klein had cut holes into the surface of his monochrome paintings creating a void in the surface. *The Void* (1958) (Figure 73) is an extension of the void from the painting surface to the gallery as surface or site of painting.[542] It is not the literal empty space itself but rather the empty place created in the art structure, to a degree opened up by the previous incisions into the space of the painting which structurally gave a place to the gallery as void. However, simply to show an empty gallery *as art*, in the way Klein did, indicates the force of emptiness as a generator of interest that leads to the positive placement of the gesture as an art gesture.

Figure 74

The void or empty place in the structure opened up by Klein and the other artists mention above, created a ready-made reception for the work of another French artist and close friend of Klein, Arman. Arman showed at the same gallery in 1960,

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[542] The Austrian artist, Erwin Wurm is a recent example of the use of cabinets and other spaces to indicate emptiness. His series of untitled glass cabinets provoke the viewer to wonder what might be missing from the object or what might fill it.

exhibiting his response to Klein. *The Full Up* (1960) (Figure 74), was the result. The work consisted of the empty gallery Klein created as art filled with all manner of objects and collected rubbish. Arman's filling of the gallery after Klein's emptying of the same space demonstrated the relationship between an object and the structural place it occupies. Any rubbish can become art if it occupies the right place.[543] But this place is not the literal gallery space but rather the structural place. The void and the full are a correlation between the rubbish or introduced object and the empty place of inscription.

Figure 75

Another painter who addressed the wall and the concept of removal just under a decade after Klein's removal was the Dutch-born, American painter, Jan Dibbets. In 1967 the artist produced one of his seminal works, *Stapelschilderij* (1967) (Figure 75), a stack of monochrome paintings placed on the floor of the gallery reproduced above from a 2004 exhibition entitled, not insignificantly, "Before the End (The Last Painting Show)". The Dibbets work is comprised of eight square canvases. Five are

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[543] S. Zizek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or Why the Christian Legacy is Worth Fighting For*, London, Verso, 2001.

monochromes painted in pink, blue and yellow – a pastel invocation of Rodchenko's Three Primary Colours. Resting on top of these monochromes are three blank, stretched canvases. Our first reaction might be to see these canvases as objects on the floor, in much the same way that we saw in the previous chapter on Minimalism, many of the Minimal art objects occupying the gallery floor.

However, the work is comprised of monochrome 'paintings' and blank canvases. What is most conspicuous in this work is not so much the empty blank canvases in isolation, or the fact that the objects, which clearly refer to monochrome painting, are simply placed on the floor, but rather the empty wall behind them; the fact that they are *not* on the wall where we would expect painting to be, even monochrome painting. They are out of place. This empty space on the wall, and with it the paintings clearly occupying the wrong place for paintings, is what lends to other place – the floor – its significance and opens it up as a place in the art structure. Again, it is not the empty place on the wall perse but the structural place the gallery wall occupies as a site for modernist painting that is addressed by the empty place. If these canvases were merely pieces of wood we might not see them in relation to the wall. But they are paintings, and unpainted blank canvases placed tantalisingly close to the wall behind them which indicates a relation between the two places; a dialectical relation between the structural place the empty wall began to occupy, and the new location or site of the floor as an art site.

Another American conceptual artist, Lawrence Weiner, drew attention to the gallery wall in the exhibition held at the Jewish Museum in 1970. Weiner began his career as a painter, but began making conceptual work in the 1960's. In his seminal painting from the 60's, *Removal Painting* (1968), the artist exhibited an almost

monochromatic painting which had a small section removed from the bottom left-hand corner.

In the same year he produced another important work *A 36 x 36 Removal to the Lathing of Support Wall of Plaster or Wall Board From a Wall* (1968) (Figure 76).

Figure 76.

This work was again executed for the *Using Walls Indoors* (1970) exhibition two years later at the Jewish Museum. What is involved in these *Removal* works is the literal removal of a piece of the gallery wall as if the gallery wall itself comes into view at this time and the only removal available is the wall itself. Brian O'Doherty makes the point that when the wall was finally joined with painting it was first undertaken through a reference to the wall wherein the 'blank was filled in by flat things that lie obligingly on the literal surface and fuse with it [and from there to other] 'solutions that cut through the picture plane…until the picture is *taken away* and the wall's plaster [is] attacked directly.'[544] O'Doherty, reflecting on this state of affairs makes the comment, 'I've always been surprised that Color Field – or

[544] B. O'Doherty, B. O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1999, p. 26.

modernist painting in general – didn't attempt a rapprochement between the mural and the easel picture.'[545]

The answer O'Doherty is looking for is this: modernist painting would not be modernist painting if such a rapprochement occurred; modernist painting *is* modernist painting in relation to its Other, the literal, the outside, the historical avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde, the everyday. However, as was argued in previous chapters, the 'rapprochement' has, in another sense always already occurred, not in the way that O'Doherty suggests, but structurally, the two walls are the one thing seen differently, the wall seen in parallax. Numerous artist responded directly to the wall as a new structural place from the early 1960's.

Figure 77

The seminal example is from the Minimal artist, Tony Smith. Smith's *Wall* (1964) (Figure77) is a Minimal art object (not unlike his other geometric objects) that nevertheless acts as a 'floating', gallery wall. It is painted black, the exact opposite of the white gallery wall, its dialectical Other. Smith's wall is like a mirror image of the white wall of the gallery; a wall in some alternative aesthetic universe. In fact

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[545] O'Doherty.

Wall (1964) represents the split between the two walls; the wall as a modernist site for painting, and the wall as the place abandoned by the objects of Minimal art when it entered 'real' space. Smith sublates the two walls in one creating a synthesis of the ideal and the real or the One seen as Two.

Numerous other artists at this time paid close attention to the place of the wall as it was then emerging as a place in the art structure. Sol LeWitt, just prior to his work with the wall, placed empty frames on the floor below an empty frame on the wall above drawing attention to the place of removal. Robert Mangold produced *Masonite Walls* (1964 – 65) in which the artist painted large Masonite panels that referenced the walls of the gallery. The American artist, Robert Duran created *Untitled* (1966 - 67) when he placed four white Masonite "canvases" on the floor of the Bykert gallery in New York. David Novros painted shaped canvases that were, in his own estimation, more about the wall than the shape perse. He stated in 1983 for instance, that 'Pretty much all my work of the 1960's was made to respond to wall painting'.[546] Anastasi produced "South Wall" (1967) and "North Wall" (1967). Both these canvases were virtual reproductions of the actual gallery wall complete with joining seems and air conditioning ducts.

What these removals indicate is that what is removed or missing is of more interest than what is present in the work. This missing piece initiates our desire to interpret the work. It acts in a way analogous to Lacan's *objet petit a* discussed in chapter 1; that is, the missing object of desire; the little piece of the real lost with the

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[546] M. Poirier and Jane Necol, The 60's in Abstract: 13 Statements and an Essay, *Art in America*, Volume 71, Number 9, October, 1983, pp. 122 – 37, p. 135.

subject's formation, or the body entry into language systems.[547] In the context of Wall Painting, the desire to interpret involves the desire to see the wall as more than bricks and mortar (or concrete and plaster); the desire to interpret comes not from the literal missing piece but rather from the piece removed from the art structure: this piece is the piece that stands in for that other, more fundamental loss issuing from the formation of the subject through its entry into the symbolic realm of language.

The missing piece, or *objet petit a*, is not to be confused with an actual piece of being literally lost through entry into the symbolic or 'wall of language', something that might one day be found to complete the subject; but rather something, due to its being perceived as missing, the constitution of the subject is announced at the level of the signifier.[548] Because the subject, by virtue of being a subject, is removed from direct contact with the wall itself, the wall can also occupy a place in the art structure, or at least indicate a purposive intention that requires a critical intervention from the subject as judge. This response is what converts the subjective response to an objective place in the structure.

The developing desire to see the wall in another way came to a head in 1970, when the Jewish Museum in New York staged an exhibition of work that deals 'directly' with the wall. The exhibition, "Using Walls (Indoors)" came less than four years after the same museum held the seminal exhibition of Minimal art entitled "Primary Structures" in 1966.[549] *Using Walls Indoors* exhibition included many of

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[547] J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, London, Random House, 1998. It is important to note however, that this object was never possessed by the subject because loss, and the desire that attends it, only come about through entry into the symbolic field. Prior to this point, there is no subject.

[548] S. Zizek, *Enjoy Your Symptom: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out*, London, Routledge, 2001.

[549] S.T. Goodman, Using Walls, and exhibition at the Jewish Museum, New York, May 13 – June 21, 1970, p.1. Just five years after this exhibition an art journal was launched called *White Wall Review*. This journal is still operating and can be sourced from: www.ryerson.ca/wwr/

the Minimal artists themselves such as the Americans Sol LeWitt; Robert Morris; Robert Ryman; and a number of American conceptualists such as Lawrence Weiner and Mel Bochner. The assistant curator of Using Walls, Susan Tumarkin Goodman, drew a contrast between the use of walls in Western art in the pre-modern past and the use of the wall by the artist of the 1960's. She argued that despite the use of the wall in art of the past, the contemporary work was different because 'In the past…the wall was often viewed as an architectural support to be painted away, or a surface to which decorative elements were added that served only to articulate the wall.'[550] Goodman goes on to add: 'To these artists the wall, newly affirmed for itself, is no longer a surface simply to be covered with paint, or upon which to hang an object. Rather, it has become one of the elements in a work of art'.[551] Goodman doesn't attempt to ask the obvious question: how did such 'newly affirmed' conditions arise, and does the wall 'newly affirmed' relate to all those other walls experienced in everyday life?

The empty place indicated by the removal or omission does not only draw attention to the place of the object, allowing an ordinary or literal object to be located structurally as art, it also indicates the difference between the literal thing, in this case a wall, and a Wall Painting. This difference is one of parallax, an impossible meeting between a literal functional wall and an art wall or Wall Painting. Impossible because to see the one as literal or a functional wall that merely held paintings, is to necessarily 'see' the other as just that, its Other, a wall as art or Wall Painting. And this 'seeing' can only occur within the art structure, through parallax where the wall can take on a different meaning.

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[550] Goodman.
[551] Goodman.

he meeting occurs negatively, as a meeting through opposition in the same way that Duchamp's urinal meets *Fountain* (1917) as a division between one and the same thing, or the One thing 'seen' as Two: as an ordinary object and as art. This structural meeting allowed pioneers of Wall Painting such as Blinky Palermo and Sol LeWitt to begin making responses to the wall in the form of Wall Paintings. It allows contemporary a Wall Painters such as the Swiss/French Wall Painter, Felice Varini, and the German artist, Katherina Grosse to execute Wall Paintings as art.

For Grosse, the use of paint itself as a medium does not pose the same problem as it did for her German predecessor, Blinky Palermo. But even so, from her earliest Wall Painting, she makes the connection between the possibility of the new way of painting and the loss of the modernist space of painting. In numerous works the artists indirectly references painting. From her early monochromatic paintings to the more colourful, immersive works, the artist indicates, not just through the use of paint as a medium, but more significantly through the indication of the empty rectangle or painting itself, the place emptied by the abandonment of modernist painting and the move into three-dimensional space. Paint as a medium will serve just as well as a 'non-art' material for Grosse. This 'real' space is yet another art space.

Figure 78

Bee Troot (2005) (Figure 78) is a case in point. The artist sprays various colours around the walls and onto the floor of the gallery leaving an empty square of white occupied by nothing but a white canvas covered in painted circles of various colours. Works such a Grosse's require that the spectator be more than someone who experiences the literal materials in a literal space but someone who divides the two spaces – the space of painting and the space of the gallery. It also divides the subject into an embodied spectator and the same spectator as a critical judge of the otherwise artless material.

The place of the subject as judge is even more pronounced in the Wall Paintings of the Swiss Wall Painter, Felice Varini. In fact the viewer's participation is vital to the painting being seen as art; the mediating point between the formless painting and the Wall Painting. Varini's Wall Paintings divide at various points: between two and three dimensions; between the literal space and ideal space; the virtual and the real; between detail and form; between painting and installation; art history and the post-historical or expanded field. The viewer/spectator must occupy

the gap between these two perspective onto the work, both literally and art historically.

In *Trapezoid With Two Diagonals* (1999) (figures 79 and 80) what appears to be a simple geometric form breaks ups into its constituent elements which turn out to occupy, not just the ideal viewing place from which lines form a trapezoid, but also the literal place of the details of the architectural space. The further the viewer (the one who 'sees' the work as art) moves away from the ideal one-point perspective of the trapezoid figure, the more the form breaks into fragments of line, the less sense the visual image presents, and the more the body of the spectator, inaugurated by Minimalism, comes into play.

Figure 79   Figure 80

Varini is well versed in rennaissance perspectival conventions and knows how to manipulate them to an almost disturbing effect. An effect that splits the subject into disembodied viewer and embodied spectator; a subject of reason and a subject as mere body among other bodies or objects occupying literal space. What Varini demonstrates is the dependence of both perspectives on each other, and how they cannot be so easily separated as post-modernist art often asserts by claiming to

address the immediate body in a literal space without reference to the ideal or privaledged perspective of modernist painting as a dialectical Other.

Varini manipulates the conventions of perspective that have organised visual space for centuries. The tecnique he uses is anamorphosis, or the distorting of perspectival space. A good example of this form of anamorphotic distortion from the history of art is Han Holbein's *Ambassadors* (1533) (Figures 81 and 82). In this work of Holbein's the Renaissance perspectival system that organised and rationalised the external world for the subject is radically critiqued by the distortion of the image.

Figure 82

Figure 81

In Figure 18 the 'normal' perspective view reveals the 'objective' state of things, how the 'Ambassadors' would like to present themselves as cultured men of the world; as men of arts and letters. But in the foreground of the picture, a peculiar

object appears to interrupt the ordered, contrived image, by cutting across the foreground surface. When we look at the image from another perspective, as shown in Figure 19, the formless shape comes into view at the bottom of the image as a human skull. At the same time, the 'reality' of the image becomes blurred. What this image and the work of Varini allow the viewer to see, is another way of seeing, another perspective. This perspective, allows the viewer to see the one thing differently, to see the literal, real marks, the blurred image, and the same image in focus. Varini employs the same technique as Holbein, but does so in three-dimensional space, allowing the viewer to divide one and the same thing, into the literal marks on the surrounding space and those same marks as art, between paint and painting, the wall and Wall Painting, art and life.

This chapter has argued that this shift in perspective is but one example of the many addressed by the thesis. It is a new perspective that had its origins in the move in modernism away from a perspectival system that mapped an external world to a form of perspective I have been calling a parallax view. Art and life are considered the One thing seen in parallax. Artists using the wall do not escape the 'wall of language' but rather make available the ordinary wall as a wall for the art structure. Through a shift in perspective, the artists considered in this chapter allow the viewer to see the wall as more that a structural support. They allow us to see the wall as a place in the art structure, as a Wall Painting The difference between a gallery wall and a wall in everyday life is structural and dialectical: it is the One wall seen in parallax as a Wall Painting.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, the central concept of parallax was deployed in each chapter which provided a theoretical tool to explore the historical and theoretical problems relating to art as they arose after the withdrawal of art from its representational function in the later 19th and early 20th Century. The theoretical problems were determined to include the structure of art and the function of aesthetic judgment in an art world that includes the anti-aesthetic as well as the aesthetic object. The concept of parallax was introduced and understood as a form of judgment that did not depend on an aesthetic realm in isolation from the anti-aesthetic but rather in dialectical or structural relation to it as its Other.

This thesis argued that the broader philosophical context within which to explore the departure of art away from representational realism and the perspectival system and toward an autonomous field, was a Kantian and Hegelian critical frame. This critical frame, as later developed by the Slovenian philosopher, Slavoj Zizek, provided a method of understanding the consequence of the departure from a representational model and toward a structural understanding of art; in particular, the place of painting in a post-modern milieu. The central concept of parallax theorised by Zizek underpinned the argument presented by the thesis through the historical contexts provided by each chapter. A parallax perspective or view, it was demonstrated, involved a perspectival point of view that replaced the system of perspective that underpinned representational realism, once that system was abandoned in the later 19th and early 20th Centuries.

It was further demonstrated that the abandonment of representational realism lead to the construction of a structure of art in a form analogous to a linguistic

structure; and that the formulation of a theory of art as a structure was the most compelling way of understanding the means by which a very disparate group of objects and artistic intensions could be absorbed by the art institution and recognised, not only for what they are but for what they are not. It was argued that like the linguistic structure of differential relations beneath which lay nothing but an empty void where nature was once presumed to stand, so too is the theory of a structure of aesthetic relations comprised of a network of differential units of art-meaning supported by nothing but the judgments that assigned them their respective places. The empty place or void is what takes the place of the originally withdrawn, natural referent at the origins of modernism, and is what allows the comparison between vastly different works of art. With the abandonment of a presumed verisimilitude, or correspondence between image and nature, the referent becomes the art structure. The perspectival system gives way to another form of perspective: a parallax perspective.

This theoretical context explained how contradictory and antithetical examples of art and positions on art, could occupy a place in the structure as art, not in isolation from life, nor simply as embedded in life, but in dialectical relation *to* life. The antinomy of art and life: art is isolated from life because it is autonomous/art is nothing more than the objects of experiential life; was explained through the concept of parallax judgment. The concept of parallax was linked, through the activity of judgment, to various examples of art throughout the 20th Century with the intention of investigating the way in which objects become art or take place within the art structure, through the exercise of aesthetic judgment. It was argued that the art structure mediates the two positions linking the identity of one

position to the identity of its Other through judgment. The concept of parallax judgment was understood to provide the solution to the antinomy of art and life through the theorisation of a form of judgment that divided the One object into Two: art/life, and assigned a place to each in relation to its structural Other.

This form of judgment accounted for the dialectic between subjective and objective; aesthetic and the anti-aesthetic; the ordinary and the extraordinary; the purposiveness and the objective purpose; the functional object and the object as art; painting and the literal object; inside and outside the gallery; the wall and the floor; the real and the ideal, art and life. The thesis explained how an object gains the public's attention, and thus solicits a judgment from them by either producing a novel contribution within a particular media through the abandonment of an expected content or provoking their outrage through the presentation of a shocking object. In each case an empty place in the structure is suggested by the object put forward for attention, to which the public's response – either in the form of a positive judgment or a negative one, it did not matter – the purposiveness suggested by the object was given its actual purpose (to be art) by the judgments passed on its behalf. Thus it was shown that the particular form of judgment, a parallax judgment, was, in a Hegelian sense, constitutive or ultimately objective, not merely reflective or subjective in the Kantian sense.

The thesis also explained how a broad spectrum of art genres and positions on art could be sanctioned as art through this theory of judgment; how even an object repudiated by the art institution could take place as art. It was shown that there is no substantial difference between art and non art objects but rather the difference was understood as structural, and as such, a negative judgment has the same effect in

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according a place in the structure for the rejected object as a positive judgment. Through this structural model the thesis clarified a very perplexing problem for art after the end of modernist painting; that is, the role of aesthetic judgment in a supposedly post-modern, post-aesthetic, milieu.

The concept of parallax was applied within the specific context of each chapter to explore the relationship between art and its various Others, and how they enter the art structure. It was found that the modernist form of aesthetic judgment inaugurated by Immanuel Kant and endorsed by modernist critics, in particular, Clement Greenberg, was insufficient to explain the relationship between aesthetic and anti-aesthetic, formless material and formal judgments, the sublime and the beautiful, art and life. In its place the thesis explored, through various contexts, works of art, artist's statements and manifestoes, theoretical arguments and critical pronouncements, that the only form a judgment could take that would encompass the broad spectrum that is 20th Century art, is a constitutive form of judgement theorised in the thesis as a parallax judgment. These general conclusions were linked specifically to different developments in art over the modern art period and after, through the problems explored in each chapter.

In chapter 1, these general conclusions were linked to the art and life debate as articulated by Peter Bürger. In this chapter the avant-gardes critically examined by Bürger were understood as attempting to break free from the autonomous art institution by locating the site of advanced art beyond the confines of that institution in the domain of everyday life. Bürger, working within an Hegelian frame, argued that avant-garde art and autonomy should be understood each in relation to the Other; that only within the context of the emergence of autonomous art does the historical

avant-garde derive meaning as art. Thus it was argued that the relationship between the two is dialectical rather than the presentation of a positive difference. It was further argued that the avant-garde's attempt to escape autonomy and enter life, created the outside or Other to the autonomous art institution.

As a result, it was suggested, any attempt to escape became dependent on the conceptual constitution of that outside or free space. It was argued that a dialectical opposition was operative between the avant-garde art or the sphere of everyday life, and the sphere of autonomous art removed from life. It was demonstrated that this dialectic allowed each of the two positions to register as art within the art structure as an opposition that could sustain the positions of both. Moreover, it was demonstrated how the dialectic of art and life involved the judgment of the viewer whose parallax view actually contributed to the object being art. Judgment was understood as productive of art rather than merely reflective on an already agreed example of art. This insight into the role of judgment resulted from immanent, critical engagement with Bürger's own thesis. The thesis generally agreed with Bürger's position, including his conclusion that art has failed to enter life. However it was shown that a paradox was at the heart of the problem: art and life cannot join because they are already one, or structurally dependent on each Other for meaning. Rather than simply accept that art and life are sublated, or deny that such a sublation is possible, chapter 1 argued that it is the sublation that is primary and that judgment tares asunder what is in fact joined. The avant-garde and institutional autonomy is art itself seen from two perspectives, or the One thing seen as Two; the one thing seen in parallax as art/life.

It was shown how when the "viewer" is confronted by a "non-art" object the rejection that often accompanies the presentation of such objects such as "that is not art" or "that is rubbish" or "my six-year-old could do better", involves a division of the One object into Two: the ordinary non-art object and the place where "real art" is thought to reside. A parallax object results and the place opens in the structure for the object to become an object of art through its critical reception. Negative judgments produce (retroactively) the same result as positive judgments: they produce, out of a merely purposive object, an object of purpose, an art object. The object will have had the purpose to be art. It was argued that the subject's or spectator's judgment takes the form of a parallax view which divides the one object between art and life allowing for the coming into view of a non-art, even anti-aesthetic object, to become art, to enter the art structure. It was argued that this elaboration of an insight into the productive, constitutive role of the subject as judge, issued form Hegel's critique of Kant's epistemology, and that this frame underpins the "development" of painting from the mid 19th Century, and is central to all (purposive) objects presented as candidates for a place in the art structure.

In chapter 2 the Other avant-garde – modernist painting – supported by Clement Greenberg was understood as the dialectical Other to the avant-gardes examined in chapter 1. It was argued that the avant-gardes theorised by Peter Bürger in fact responded to a crisis in representational realism and as such were in fact structurally dependent for meaning as art on both the loss of representational realism and the place autonomy occupied in the structure. It was argued that Greenberg's autonomous avant-garde as a development of autonomy generally, was dialectically,

rather than positively, opposed to Peter Bürger's avant-garde, an avant-garde whose source of meaning derived in turn, from its opposition to autonomy.

The chapter followed Clement Greenberg's narrative of medium specificity through a close reading of a series of his seminal statements by the author on modernist painting and its relationship to otherness. It was argued that Greenberg was close to correct when he theorised the development of modernist painting as a drive toward purity. However, the unacknowledged Hegelian telos that underpinned Greenberg's essentialist theory of flatness was not the place to find the "meaning" of modernist painting. Two central points where concluded regarding Greenberg's narrative.

The first point was that the essence of modernist painting did not involve a drive toward purity by the rejection of the impure; an inexorable movement toward the flattening picture plane. Rather the 'pure' or flattened picture plane involved the abandonment of the essential or at least conventional: representational realism, including sculptural, three-dimensional form; craft skills, expressive content, authorship, even painting itself. The essence of modernist painting was understood paradoxically to involve the rejection or abandonment of essence.

The second point was that the form of judgment underpinning Greenberg's claims to medium specificity was not, despite his own claims, a Kantian, reflective form of judgment, but rather, a form more akin to what Hegel meant by the term 'constitutive', or 'speculative'; an identity of the highest with the lowest. In the context of the central concept of the thesis, a parallax judgment was driving Greenberg's critical output. Greenberg's judgments divided art between autonomy and what it was not. The picture plane *did* increasingly flatten, not because of some

insatiable drive toward the essence of painting but because in retrospect, the product of Greenberg's own judgments favoured flatter art.[552] This, it was shown, was how Greenberg's subjective judgments became objective. His judgment created the frame within which to view the apparent essential move toward flatness. The point is that the isolation and purity of Greenberg's own avant-garde or canon of modernist painters were only pure if seen in isolation from both everyday life and the other avant-garde of which Peter Bürger was the theorist. Greenberg's avant-garde are dialectically dependent on those Others. Purity is dialectically meaningful, or meaningful as art, only in relation to those Others that occupy other places in the art structure. His judgement is therefore a parallax judgment, in that it divides art between flatness or purity in opposition to the Other that does not represent flatness or purity. The division between the two perspectives is created by the judgment; a judgment that is therefore necessary to the ontological placement of each.

The emptying of the field of painting through the succession of abandonments had the effect of drawing attention to what was missing from painting – what was conventionally expected from the medium of painting – and therefore gained the interest and critical response from the audience. This process of essential abandonment lead to the two avant-gardes almost colliding at the point of the blank canvas, a point where the ordinary canvas as a literal, humble material of everyday life, occupies the same structural place as the elevated, autonomous art object. It was concluded that the meeting had always already taken place in so far as painting is nothing but the bringing-together of a number of ordinary, commonly found materials seen from a certain perspective, a parallax perspective, as painting. This

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[552] This might be referred to as an unnatural selection.

parallax view is the point at which the ordinary object can be seen as more than formless material or an article of everyday life. When any object including a formalist painting gains the "viewers" attention by withholding something from expectation, the viewer's critical attention involves a conceptual division of the one thing into two: the literal material and the same thing seen as (potentially) art. In this way the blank canvas while in one sense was always already art if seen from a certain (parallax) perspective, the literal object after modernist painting in the form of Minimalism and later developments, introduced the literal object into the art structure where it occupied a place in opposition to "high" modernist painting where it could generate meaning as art.

Chapter 3 explored the consequences of the end of modernist painting and the emergence of Minimal art. The chapter questioned the simplistic phenomenological arguments that suggest Minimal art should be understood in a positive sense as a range of objects occupying "real" space alongside other objects known as (human) bodies. It was argued that understanding Minimal art as involving the abandonment (in a positive sense) of the ideal space of modernist autonomy was equally naive. The structural emergence of Minimal art, it was demonstrated, involved a reaction to the series of abandonments that lead to modernist painting and ultimately the presence of the monochrome which represented a minimal difference between art and an ordinary blank canvas. This reaction took the form of moving the site of painting to the site previously occupied by sculpture within the art structure: from two to three dimensions. While it was acknowledged that the reception of Minimal art was in part due to the recognition of that art's rejection of modernist sculpture; developing the consequences of Thierry de Duve's argument, it was understood

primarily as a move, both from within modernist painting, and against modernist painting. Minimal art, it was argued, does not acquire meaning in itself, but rather through its dialectical relationship with what it is not, that is, modernist painting. Aesthetic judgment, in the form of a parallax judgment, was also shown to be critical in locating the otherwise non-art or ant-aesthetic objects as art.

Minimal art, like all art, was understood as an address to place or site, however, the site of address – the phenomenological conditions of experience – were questioned as an explanation complete in itself, for the importance of Minimal art. Rather, the art site or structure was argued to be the actual target or site of such gestures. It was further argued that this site is in fact the general site or structure of art. It was concluded that a 'minimal difference' between the literal material object and the same thing occupying a place as art was the most cogent explanation for the acceptance of such gestures as art. Minimal art ultimately takes place as art through the abandonment of modernist painting which paradoxically permanently accords a place to painting as a dialectical part of the literal Minimal art object. Painting as a specific medium in the dialectical conflict between modernist painting and the literal object of Minimal art does not end painting as a viable medium, but rather opens up the structural place occupied by painting as a specific medium to painting as a general place in the art structure; a place later occupied by Wall Painting.

The chapter on Minimal art laid the foundations for chapter 4 where the thesis grouped together three related fields of artistic enquiry: Installation art, Site-Specific art and Land art, or what the thesis referred to as Outside art. All three categories of art as site where understood as developments and expansions of the notion of site or place as an art structure. Each of these three categories has come to occupy a place

in the site of art in general, or what the thesis has understood as an art structure. As such, each of these specific appeals to the notion of art as site, in fact occupy but a place within the general site of art, the art structure.   It was argued that the notion of site is not specific to site-specific art but a structural condition that emerges with the withdrawal from representational realism in the latter half of the 19th Century in Europe and especially France. The three later developments of site as encountered first in Minimal art, and in particular, the three categories of site mentioned above, where shown to be a belated recognition of the earlier structural development of site represented by the presence of autonomy and the emergence of the historical avant-garde.

Installation art as site, was understood as an address to the conditions of exhibition, in particular, the architectural details of a given gallery site. It was argued that the general intention of artists included under the banner of Installation art was to draw attention to these spatial details to bring into view the literal conditions of exhibition ignored by modernist painting. However it was argued that the attention to the literal conditions of exhibition through the architectural details of a particular gallery involved nothing more than the increasing focus of artistic attention to the general structural place of site. Site-Specific art was shown to be an extension of the basic project of Installation art to include other ignored aspects of exhibition, primarily the politics of exhibition. More specifically, issues such as gender, race, post-colonial politics, and the politicised funding of large Museums and art spaces. However, like Installation art, it too was considered nothing more than an extension of the attention to site presented by Installation art; an attention to site that had its

origins in the withdrawal from representational realism and its employment of one-point perspective.

Outside art was understood to be structurally connected to the two examples of site-oriented art mentioned above, but was treated to a degree as separate in so far as Outside art also involved a re-introduction of the historical avant-garde's attempt to escape the art-institutional structure and enter life through a return to nature – the site from which art initially withdrew. However, whereas the historical avant-garde conducted their "war" on convention and autonomy from inside the gallery system through exhibition of predominantly anti-art and ant-aesthetic objects, the Outside artists attempted to literally escape the art institution by working outside the art gallery itself in the external environment. It was argued that the seminal artist contributing to Outside art, Robert Smithson, understood correctly from the thesis's point of view, that the outside is dialectically dependent on the inside as much as the inside depends for its meaning as art on the outside or life. Smithson's concepts of 'site' and 'non-site' were central to explaining the position taken in the chapter. These concepts demonstrated how the dialectic between inside and outside operates and how a parallax view divides or allows the viewer to see the One as Two.

Chapter 5 dealt with the place of Wall Painting in the art structure. It explained how the wall gained attention as a potential site for painting throughout the later period of modernist painting through the experiments of curators and suggestions of artists such as Jackson Pollock, and experiments of French artists such as Yves Kline, Arman and others. However, the central argument was that through a series of removals from within painting a gap opened up in the structure or 'wall of language' whereby the wall became available for consideration as a new site for

painting. The combined attention to the wall and the removal of art from the wall and its move into the three-dimensional space formally occupied by sculpture, left an empty place in the linguistic wall or art structure, and this empty place was soon occupied by what the thesis referred to as Wall Painting. It was argued that the use of paint as medium was not, after the end of modernist painting, the way in which something could be viewed as painting but rather the place the proffered object was to occupy in the art structure that lent it a place as painting.

The rejection of paint as a specific medium made structural sense in relation to Wall Painting, it was argued, as *not* modernist painting. This, it was argued, was the reason for referring to the 'genre' as Wall Painting rather than 'wall drawing' or 'installation painting'. Wall Painting, having emerged from within painting and as a response to the structural removal of modernist painting from art history, was structurally located in the thesis as a 'genre' of painting itself. To support this position the chapter first introduced the historical context and then examined two of the 'founding' members of Wall Painting, Sol LeWitt and Blinky Palermo, before giving a detailed discussion of Wall Painting in relation to the central concept of parallax. The seminal artist discussed in this context was Felice Varini. It was demonstrated that Varini's Wall Paintings divide between a wall and a painting; or the ordinary, literal, senseless marks, and a geometric form or pattern; between the formless and form, art and life. The concept of anamorphosis or the distortion of realist perspective was discussed in the context of parallax theory. It was concluded that the perspective of the viewer when understood parallactically, divides the one object into two: a series of meaningless marks, and those marks seen as art through a parallax view.

The general intention of the thesis has been fourfold. Firstly to argue that the break with representational realism in the mid-to-late 19th century involved a shift in the attention art pays to site and a relocation of the site of art toward a network of differentially related objects referred to in the thesis as an art structure. That shift included an adjustment away from the assumption of representational realism, that reality is a stable, epistemologically knowable referent toward which painting aims through the techniques of perspective and the development of tradition; and toward a conception of art an autonomous site, isolated from life. Secondly, the thesis argued that this autonomous site was not simply isolated from life in a substantial or positive sense, but rather structurally isolated.

It was further argued that this shift in perspective should be understood as a shift to a conception of site as a structural network of often conflicting and contradictory attempts to occupy a place in the art structure. Thirdly, the relationship between art and life, the inside and the outside, the high and the low etc, are not substantially different things or locations but rather structurally different things or the one thing seen in parallax. Finally this parallax view replaces the perspectival view that compares the representation with the referent presumed to be in-itself the real world, or reality independent of the subject's activity. The withdrawal was understood however, not as merely subjective, nor objective, but rather a mediation between subject and object that had its origins in the Idealism of G.W.F. Hegel. As such the parallax judgment of the subject accords with the real state of the object as an object of art, an object of art constituted as the sum of either positive or negative judgments.

The above conclusions reached by the thesis open up for further research, the question of the author's place in the art structure. A structuralist argument would traditionally preclude the need of an author. However, the absent author still suggests a place. The thesis raised the question of authorship in passing but a complete treatment of the subject is suggested by the conclusions drawn by the thesis. This is the case because the problem of the author's role in the creation of art was raised historically in the context of structuralism and post-structuralism. Given this historical fact, a structural theory of art such as that undertaken by the thesis, should have a position on the place of the author within that structure. However, a complete treatment of the problem of authorship was beyond the scope of the thesis because the thesis was primarily interested in the relationship between art and life and how objects become objects of art through judgment.

However, it was in the context of structuralist theory that the 'death of the author' was said to inaugurate the 'birth of the reader'.[553] Given this, the thesis will conclude with a suggestion for further research in this area within the context of the conclusions reached by the thesis. For the French structuralist, Roland Barthes, the 'Author-God', considered the creator or originator of a text (or work of art), should be replaced with the idea of 'writing as that neutral, composite, oblique space, where every subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing.'[554] Barthes repudiates the identity and origin of both

[553] R, Barthes, The Death of the Author, *Image, Music, Text*, London, Fontana Press, 1977, pp. 142-148.
[554] Barthes, p. 142.

author and text. He argues for the 'necessity [of] substitute[ing] language itself for the person' or author; and that it is 'language which speaks not the author'.[555]

But if what the thesis argues is to be defended from a structural point of view, the position held by Barthes must be addressed. Barthes himself offers a possible solution toward which further study might be directed. He makes the obvious point given the context of his discussion, that 'the author is absent'.[556] Indeed it is the author's absence in structuralist theory that is the key to the solution that might be pursued. Throughout the thesis the notion of absence, emptiness and withdrawal have been explored in a number of contexts within the concept of an art structure as understood by the thesis. The example of the crime novel will serve as an example of how an absent author, or the 'one who did it' so to speak, can be located structurally as the author or 'origin' of the work of art. The plot of a crime novel, if it is to fulfil the structure of a genre understood to be a crime novel, must have a number of places created in the structure to be occupied by the various characters and situations that occur during the unfolding narrative. You need a crime to be committed. You need one or more victims of that crime. You need a location for the crime. You need a detective or some other figure to investigate the crime, and you need a perpetrator or 'author' of the crime. With no perpetrator, there can be no crime.

In the context of art, understood structurally, the author, while not present as such, still occupies in his/her absence, a structural place as 'the one who did it'. The absent or missing perpetrator is still necessary to the structure of the novel in the same way that the author or artist is necessary to the structure of art. When we are

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[555] Barthes, p. 143.
[556] Barthes, p. 145.

presented with a purposeful object, one that appears to aspire to the condition of art, we necessarily assume an author or artist who 'did it', even when the work was executed by others or was the product of a collaborative effort. When a 'viewer' experiences any such objects the absence of a single author who actually undertakes the work does not remove the need for such a structural place to be occupied. The development of the above preliminary thoughts would be an area deserving further theoretical exploration. Because, as Kant already recognised, the purposive work must 'look like nature', as if it was a natural production, rather than the work of an author, while never concealing the fact that the proffered object was always art.

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