Where do we go from here? Towards theatre.

—John Cage, "Experimental Music" (1957)

Much of the best work being produced today seems to fall between media.

—Dick Higgins, "Intermedia" (1966)

What lies between the arts is theatre.

—Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967)

It's never easy to put one's finger on change. The pages of the calendar have a tendency to slip from one's grip, the certainty of one date contradicted by another. Places are similarly buttery, escaping the grasp of inevitability or melting under the heat of scrutiny. Vocabulary, on the other hand, proves a more reliable indicator of shifts in thinking. Identifying the *moment* of transition from Greenberg's modernism to whatever came next (let's use the term "postmodernism," for now, hoping to justify and refine it as we proceed) may be best achieved through an attention to terms. The use of the word "theatre"—first in the positive sense intended by Cage in 1957, and later in the negative sense intended by Michael Fried in 1967—points as vigorously and as surely as any other sign to a decade of revision. This chapter's three-headed epigram is meant to convey that movement, with Dick Higgins's term "intermedia" stitching together Cage's optimism and Fried's fear of the in-between. In many ways, "intermedia" is synonymous with, or exemplary of, what Fried called "theatre."

Clement Greenberg's monarchical aesthetics reigned for some two decades. His conception of what would constitute modern art

came to seem so natural as to be accepted more as commandment than idea. As always, this naturalism ends up looking suspect. There's nothing so obvious that it's obvious. On closer inspection, Greenberg's modernism turns out to be less monolithic and, to its credit, less consistent than its decades of conveyance would have us believe. I say "to its credit" because the inconsistencies of Greenberg's writings are evidence of his honest engagement with the intricacies, subtleties, and problems of the art of his time. Although he aspired to be persuasive and was not above bullying others to succeed, he appears not to have bullied himself very much. It is easy to identify whole branches of Greenberg's critical project that arise out of his dissatisfaction with the available answers (his own included) to new or gnawing questions.

Perhaps the most persuasive—and, ultimately, the most problematic—of Greenberg's conceptions was the necessary specificity of modernist painting, sculpture, and, by implication, each of the distinct fields of artistic practice: music, dance, film, poetry, and fiction. By his reckoning,

> a modernist work of art must try, in principle, to avoid dependence upon any order of experience not given in the most essentially construed nature of its medium. . . . The arts are to achieve concreteness, "purity," by acting solely in terms of their separate and irreducible selves.[1]

Greenberg's argument for specificity is not, contrary to the most common accounting of his aesthetics, confined to painting.

Greenberg actually makes rather grand claims for sculpture in 1948: "I now see sculpture's chance to attain an even wider range of expression than painting."[2] This is significant for our concerns in that sculpture—as theorized, for instance, by Rosalind Krauss as an

1. Clement Greenberg, "The New Sculpture," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon, 1961), 139.
2. Ibid., 141.

"expanded field"—defines the parameters of gallery practice over the past sixty years to a greater extent than does painting. Greenberg was right about sculpture, but not for the reasons he had in mind. It was Fried, Greenberg's disciple, who in 1967 would more accurately diagnose the inherent qualities granting sculpture something like a competitive advantage.[3] Fried was an incredibly astute diagnostician, indexing all the symptoms, behaviors, and implications associated with the new sculpture, circa 1967. The problem is that what Fried thought he identified as the disease, others—notably Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Krauss (betraying her Greenbergian upbringing)—recognized as the cure. This group, joined by scores of their contemporaries and followed by a subsequent generation, proved ascendant. The modernist art Fried sought to defend—an art first singled out, named, and theorized by Greenberg—had run up against its limit. In retrospect, it seems inevitable, simply a matter of time, that Greenbergian modernism would hit the wall of "literalism," as Fried called it. Modernist art's limit was built into its constitution.

Later in 1967, Greenberg deals specifically with monochrome canvases. He first mentions the 1951 paintings of Rollin Crampton, and then Robert Rauschenberg's 1953 all-white and all-black paintings, noting that from the first to the second, "What was so challenging . . . had become almost overnight another taming convention."[4] The aesthetic leap represented by a blank canvas (implied, if not fully engaged, by the monochrome) is something that Greenberg was never willing to acknowledge. Thierry de Duve dances around it without ever landing squarely on it or its implications. The blank canvas is not just the last step in the journey away from pictorial illusionism. It actually is the abandonment of the problem of both illusionism *and*

3. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
4. Quoted in Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, October Books (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 223; originally in Clement Greenberg's "Recentness of Sculpture" (1967), repr. in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

the preoccupation with pictorialism. The blank canvas works in the register of Duchampian non-retinality. Greenberg could not abide it, precisely because it toys with the line between the retinal and the non-retinal. The fact that it *also* functions historically, logically, and aesthetically as the last step in the journey away from pictorial illusionism reveals something crucial: the history of art that licensed Greenbergian modernism always contained, within its very premises, the urge to move beyond visuality to the concerns of what would come to be known as conceptualism.

Modern art, it turns out, was never about the specificity of media: that was merely a symptom. Modern art was actually about abdication of both illusionism *and* pictorialism. That it proceeded through pictorial stages on its journey is a purely historical necessity. As de Duve observes: "All works . . . need to be linked to their specific history in order to be plausible candidates for aesthetic appreciation."[5] Art, like everything else, must move in calibrated steps in order to maintain its identifiability. Although Duchamp and his contemporaries were all responding to the same aesthetic problems, Duchamp's answers were decidedly different from theirs. It would take nearly half a century before the interrupted circuit he initiated would make contact on the other side. Passing through this circuit is the early twentieth-century rejection of single perspective, the subjective, and the static object. Duchamp's circuit bypasses the cul-de-sac of abstract expressionism, which mistook this rejection as a formal issue, solved via flatness, materiality, and media specificity. Duchamp siphoned off the power of modernism's original combustions, energizing first Jasper Johns and later, more securely and more incontrovertibly, the conceptual artists of the 1960s and '70s.

The circuit connecting Duchamp to Joseph Kosuth, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, and others allows us to see that the original pressures exerted by the artistic movements of the early twentieth century

5. de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, 223.

sought to move beyond the specificity pinpointed by Greenberg into an expanded/expansive artistic practice unbeholden to media-historical constraints; untethered by material demands, unrestricted by the frame, perspective, and planarity of the pictorial. Kosuth, speaking of the conceptual practices of the midsixties, explicitly claimed that "art is conceptual and not experiential."[6] In other words, the *work* of the work of art happens, not in the materials, not at the site of the object, not at the locus of encounter, but in an elsewhere/elsewhen engagement with ideas, conventions, and preconceptions—with the modes of art-as-art, which is the same as with modes-as-modes. This is what Kosuth indicates when, starting in 1966, he subtitles all his work "art as idea as idea."[7] This, it appears, is what modernism always wanted: to direct the art experience away from the phenomenal encounter. Greenbergianism, fixated as it is with the material demands of media and experience, turns out to be a red herring.

This leaves us with the problem of what to do with the art and ideas that fall between the two stools: between Greenberg's modernist art and the conceptual art that, beginning in the late 1960s, completes Duchamp's circuit. This is the art to which Michael Fried responded in "Art and Objecthood," art that is most commonly grouped under the umbrella of minimalism but is also known, variously, as "ABC art," "primary structures," by Judd's appellation "specific objects," and by Fried's critical term "literalist art." Nested in Fried's idea of literalism is the notion that minimalist sculptures simply are: what you see is what you get. Judd does not disagree; his use of the term "specific" for his objects implies much the same thing: that this object standing before you (which is a different suggestion than "you are standing before it") does not point elsewhere to another thing, another experience, another emotion. This object *is*, plain and simple. Yet we know that nothing is so plain that it's plain. Nothing's so simple that it's simple.

6. Joseph Kosuth, as quoted in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973; repr., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 114.
7. Ibid.

Nevertheless, de Duve ignores such skepticism. In discussing Judd's relationship to Greenberg's modernism, to the specificity of a medium, de Duve states simply, "The experience of such objects is phenomenal, says Greenberg, and Judd agrees."[8] But Greenberg declares:

> Minimal Art remains too much a feat of ideation, and not enough anything else. Its idea remains an idea, something deduced instead of felt and discovered. The geometrical and modular simplicity may announce and signify the artistically furthest-out, but the fact that the signals are understood for what they want to mean betrays them artistically.[9]

Perhaps even more telling is a footnote that Greenberg includes at the end of this passage:

> Darby Bannard, writing in *Artforum* of December, 1966, has already said it: "As with Pop and Op, the 'meaning' of a Minimal work exists outside of the work itself. It is a part of the nature of these works to act as *triggers* for thought and emotion preexisting in the viewer. . . . It may be fair to say that these styles have been nourished by the ubiquitous question: 'But what does it mean?'"[10]

Both Greenberg's "Recentness of Sculpture" and Fried's "Art and Objecthood" appeared in 1967. They indicate a substantive difference in the two critics' receptions of minimalism. Greenberg, contrary to de Duve's claims, doesn't accept the merely phenomenal nature of a minimal sculpture. For him, these works are not phenomenal enough. They are not perceptible enough, not available and evident in the here

8. de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, 232.
9. Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," in *Minimal Art*, 183–84.
10. Ibid., 184 n1.

and now upon which a phenomenological reception would depend. Rather, they indicate the space and time of deduction, a space and time always receding into displacement and deferral. Such works are not simply or merely present, as Judd suggests. Their ontology is a product of "what they want to mean."

All this is not to suggest that de Duve's reading of Greenberg is thoroughly unfounded. Immediately following the above quotation from "The Recentness of Sculpture," Greenberg goes on trying to dismiss minimalism as being overly apparent, immediately available, without "aesthetic surprise."[11] But his argument is constantly haunted by echoes of his acknowledgment of minimalism's status as idea. Fried's reception of minimalist sculpture is more willing to recognize its essential phenomenality. It is this recognition that causes Fried so much indigestion. In accepting Fried and Judd's point of agreement (as we shall see, they disagreed wholeheartedly on the implications of such phenomenality), de Duve defines the minimalist break as a move from a responsibility to the specific materials and modes of a medium (e.g., flatness in painting), to art-in-general, a practice that partakes neither of the traditions of painting nor of sculpture. This, for de Duve, is the locus of rupture. Remaining skeptical of claims for the thing that simply is thus means that we cannot—*should* not—take Fried and Judd at their word. Nothing is "merely phenomenal." Refuting these claims of phenomenality pushes the rupture to an earlier moment, a more fundamental understanding of minimalism's relation to modernism. The break occurs before any claim of phenomenality and is instigated by the untenable nature of any such claim.

Music has always functioned according to Greenbergian precepts. As a practice, music is positively obsessed with its media specificity. Only music includes, as part of its discursive vocabulary, a term for the foreign matter threatening always to infect it: "the extramusical." Even

11. Ibid., 184.

at the height of modernism, painters did not have a name for extrapainterly elements; filmmakers do not worry about the extracinematic. But in music as an academic, artistic, and performance discipline, there is a perceived need to identify—often to eliminate—aspects of production, reception, or discussion that are not specifically manifest in material form. The intramusical (simply referred to, in music parlance, as "music") is captured either in the inscription of notation, or in specifically quantifiable, audible phenomena. Only what avails itself of the assignment of specific musical values (i.e., pitch [and pitch relations], meter, tempo, dynamics, instrumental voicing) is proclaimed internal to the proper concerns of music. All else is extramusical.

To an extent that Greenberg might have envied, music has—since at least the advent of notation—existed as effects quantified as "values" (in both senses of the word). The institutions of Western music (including notation, instrumentation, concert protocol, the consolidation of music's theoretical methods) have captured music in and as a numerical sign system: a system in which phenomena are signified as values of pitch (A 440), harmony (thirds, fifths, octaves), duration (whole notes, half-note rests, dotted quarter notes), and rhythmic organization (3/4, 4/4, 6/8). This valuation of musical effects represents (e)valuation of certain effects, of certain musical elements, over others. The impact of the trio of musical events of 1948 (Pierre Schaeffer, John Cage, and Muddy Waters) was to "devalue" music (again in both senses of the word), returning to the encounter of effects and affects. This is not to imply that, as of 1948, music cannot be captured semiotically—quite the contrary. It simply indicates that the quantitative approach (which, in the process of precisely identifying certain musical phenomena, allows others to escape) would prove to be unsympathetic to new musical forms, including "musique concrète," indeterminacy, and rock and roll. As an alternative, a qualitative, discursive form of musical analysis suggests itself. Unfortunately, few within the institutional music world have proven open to such a suggestion.

Greenberg's modernism was not devised as an explicit application of traditional musical values to painting and sculpture. But by the

time of Greenberg's ascendance, music had held a privileged position in the pantheon of the arts since at least 1873, when Walter Pater had famously declared that all the arts aspire to the condition of music. In a formulation that anticipates Greenberg, Pater writes, "In all other [nonmusical] works of art it is possible to distinguish the matter from the form, and the understanding can always make this distinction, yet it is the constant effort of art to obliterate it."[12] Painting and poetry were thought, first and foremost, to envy music's purely internal referentiality, its disinclination (if not its very inability) to indicate referents outside itself. Music had no obligation to point to the world and, as a result, did not find itself beholden to that world. Music alone could fold its form into its materials, and its materials into its form, rendering them not just indistinguishable but also identical. In "Art and Objecthood," Michael Fried pointedly reverses the formula, declaring:

> It is above all to the condition of painting and sculpture—the condition, that is, of existing in, indeed of secreting or constituting, a continuous and perpetual *present*—that the other contemporary modernist arts, most notably poetry and music, aspire.[13]

One now reads this as a performative bit of wishful thinking; an attempt to make it so simply by declaring it so. But in its hopefulness is a succinct definition of what, in Fried's view, is peculiar to painting and sculpture, what makes them (in 1967) ascendant practices: it is their *presentness*, their ability to freeze and hold a particular moment and to extend it infinitely forward and backward in time. Painting and sculpture, Fried claims, assert the dominance of the now over the past and the present. In an abstract painting, for example, the now of each painterly gesture hangs, ever present, as a constitutive feature of the work and of any experience of the work. It is precisely this sense

12. Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione," in *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: MacMillan, 1912), 135.
13. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 146.

of the phenomenological now and its implication of indisputable self-identicalness that Jacques Derrida would famously deconstruct in his *Speech and Phenomena*, published, incidentally, in 1967, the same year as Fried's essay.

We will return in some detail to Derrida's critique of phenomenology, but for now let's focus on Fried's declaration, intended to establish a bulwark against the incursions of minimalism, as put forward in Donald Judd's essay "Specific Objects," published in *Arts Yearbook* in 1965, and in Robert Morris's two-part "Notes on Sculpture" published in *Artforum* in 1966 and 1967. What were the minimalists doing and saying that made Fried so uneasy? Morris's ideas about sculpture establish a specific theoretical and practical rationale for minimalism's expanded situation. In the process, and somewhat inadvertently, Morris indicates and justifies—one could argue he *invents*—a form of artistic practice that finds its most natural material origins in the sonic.

In "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," Morris advocates what he calls the "public mode" of sculpture. Largely a product of scale, the public mode creates a distance between the subject and the object. "A larger object includes more of the space around itself than does a smaller one."[14] The greater distance required of a larger object "structures the . . . public mode [and] it is just this distance between object and subject that creates a more extended situation, for physical participation becomes necessary."[15] It is precisely this aspect of Morris's program that Fried objects to and characterizes as "theatrical." The theatrical is what at least acknowledges, or at worst (in Fried's view) is activated by, the presence of the viewer. Modernist painting and sculpture resolutely refuse such a relationship. And theatricality, for Fried, poses the single greatest threat to the art he and Greenberg championed. "Theatricality," he wrote, is "at war today, not simply with

14. Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 13.
15. Ibid.

modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such."[16] Fried finds this war raging on various fronts: theater itself resists its own theatricality in Brecht and Artaud; cinema evades the theatrical without directly confronting it (rendering it, in Fried's judgment, "not a *modernist* art");[17] and, most crucially, modernist painting (e.g., Jules Olitski and Morris Louis) and sculpture (David Smith and Anthony Caro) engage theatricality head-on.

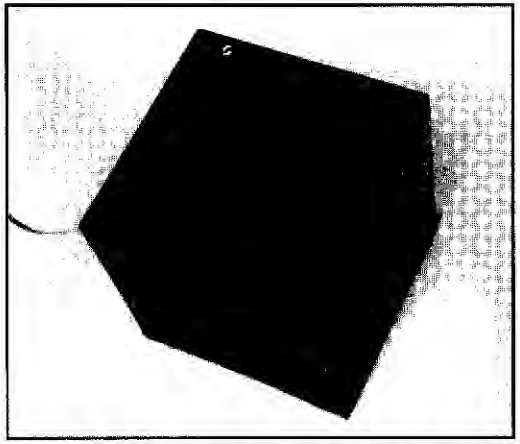
With the benefit of forty years of hindsight, it now seems clear that, if a war did take place in the late 1960s; if that war was between modernist and theatrical forms of art; and if theatricality is a fundamental aspect of the conceptual, performance, body-art, and relational practices that followed—then theatricality carried the day, and then some. But it would be a funny kind of war in which one side knew what was right and the other side thought that "right" ought always to be qualified with scare quotes. The avatars of Greenbergian modernism would fight for what art should be. The minimalists, conceptualists, Fluxists, and so forth started from the premise that art as a category, as an idea, as a practice, was not a knowable origin, a stable activity, or a predictable telos, but rather a site of contestation. Rosalind Krauss begins her essay "Notes on the Index" with these sentences: "Almost everyone is agreed about '70s' art. It is diversified, split, factionalized."[18] This is what passed for consensus in the decade following Fried's war—not simply because no idea or movement was able to subdue the others, but because notions of singularity and correctness no longer seemed applicable. This inconclusiveness was revealed in poststructuralist theories of authorship and differential meaning. Its relevance to lived life seemed suddenly irrefutable in light of the variform world of quickly changing news, fashions, and

16. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 139.
17. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 141, with original emphasis.
18. Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index, Part 1," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985; repr., 2002), 196.

trends: Watergate one day, miniskirts the next, plus détente, discotheques, smiley faces, oil crises, pet rocks, Patty Hearst. Whatever illusions of certainty, universality, and immutability had existed in the 1950s, they had been shaken throughout the '60s. By the seventies they had disintegrated, replaced by an acceptance of the view that culture is a construct, history is a story, values are manufactured, truth is temporary and local.

In "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," Morris advocates what he called "unitary forms," sculptural structures that eschew any internal part-to-part relations. Instead, unitary forms leverage the relationship of viewer to object, object to environment, environment to viewer. Morris is interested in displacing relationships from purely internal and structural concerns to "the expanded situation," in which the space of the work is enlarged to account for the viewer and the circumstances of encounter.[19] In Fried's idiom, the expanded situation is synonymous with theatricality. Fried complained, "Everything [the beholder] observes counts as part of the situation and hence is felt to bear in some way that remains undefined on his experience of the object."[20] The expanded situation represents a new constitution and conduct of the sculptural object, which now must "perform" for, or interact with, the viewer and the environment—both components of the expanded situation. This use of the word "expanded" to mean a broader definition of what constitutes a given practice prefigures similar employment in Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* (1970)[21] and Rosalind Krauss's "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (1978).[22] So in addition to "theater" and the notion of a media space "in-between," we might look to "expanded fields" and "expanded situations" as indications of the transitions afoot.

19. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," 17.
20. Fried, "Art and Objecthood," 144.
21. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970).
22. Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in *Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 277–90.



Robert Morris, *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, 1961. © 2009 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VBK, Vienna. © 2009 Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, New York.

In 1961, the expanded field of sculpture measured nine and three-quarters cubic inches. Robert Morris's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making* expands its "situation" and relationships in time at least as much as it tests them in space. The *Box*, as its name suggests, is a walnut box, nine and three-quarters inches in each dimension. The box contains a small speaker that plays a three-hour audiotape recording of the sounds made as Morris constructed the box. The history of *Box* includes two notable events. It debuted, so to speak, as a kind of musical performance at a concert organized in 1961 by Henry Flynt at Harvard, which also included works by La Monte Young and Richard Maxfield. That same year, *Box* was also the focus of a private audience with John Cage, who came to see it in Morris's apartment and apparently sat through the entire three-hour recording.[23] The expanded situation in which Cage would have found himself would have been one in which he, the spectator, would shuttle back and

23. Branden W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008), dealing extensively with Flynt, Young, Tony Conrad, and their music and art activities of this period.

forth in time, between the time of viewing/listening and the time of making. This is a situation in which "the object is but one of the terms in the newer esthetic."[24]

For Morris, it is important that the viewer be "more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from varying positions and under varying conditions."[25] In the case of *Box*, these varying positions would be positions in time rather than space, moving between conditions of production versus reception. Past and present, making and perceiving, thus become conflated in experience. This situation would seem to parallel Husserl's notion of phenomenological "adumbration," in which an object is perceived from multiple perspectives, yet understood—precisely because of the constancy of certain features—to be one and the same object with a set of essential qualities. However, this parallel is limited by disjunctions between spatial and temporal perspective. In Husserl's adumbration, the subject must change position relative to the object. But in the kind of time-based adumbration initiated by Morris's *Box*, the shift in perspective is a product of the inexorable movement of time. Neither the subject nor the object must act upon an intention; neither must move or shift. With *Box*, Morris discovers that sound recommends itself as an ideal medium for such temporal adumbration. Sound initiates its own nonintentional, perspective-neutral shifts in the relation of subject to object. Because sound is immersive, it inevitably creates an environment that is simultaneously and irredeemably a product of an interaction not just between spectator/auditor and object/sound source, but also includes a third component: situation. The situation is a product of time, context, expectation (protention), and memory (retention).

The series of letters Morris exchanged with John Cage between 1960 and 1963 testify to Morris's explicit interest in Cage's aesthetics.[26] But even without such evidence, it would be easy to connect the dots. As an alternative to Greenbergian specificity, Cage sought to

24. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," 15.
25. Ibid.
26. See Robert Morris, "Letters to John Cage," *October* 81 (Summer 1997): 70–79.

blur boundaries between music, theater, installation, dance, painting, and poetry. Morris's *Box* is both the sound of a sculpture and a sculpture of sound. It is a very early, if not *the* earliest, example of a work existing simultaneously, equally, as sculpture and as sound work.[27] As such, Morris's *Box* also provides the earliest example of how such work might constitute its ontology. *Box* indicates where an expanded sonic practice might locate its values and how it might organize its relationships to and between process and product, the space of production versus the space of reception, and the time of making relative to the time of beholding.

In the 1960s, with the rise of protoconceptual work, and in the 1970s, as conceptualism stakes its claim to a central position in the gallery arts, these concerns become primary. Morris's *Box* suggests both how the gallery arts and the sonic arts might similarly benefit from a focus on these concerns, and how sound suggests itself as an already dematerialized medium in which issues of time, process, and reception are unavoidably in play. In addition to these concerns, *Box* also opens gallery practice onto concerns previously exclusive to music, such as the relation of the score to the performance, the mediation of a performer/interpreter, and the explicit temporal extension of musical materials. All of these concerns certainly were part of Cage's ongoing interrogations.

Morris's "Blank Form" is a manifesto-as-artwork (or vice versa) from 1961, originally conceived for inclusion in La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low's *An Anthology of Chance Operations Concept Art Anti-Art Indeterminacy Improvisation Meaningless Work Natural*

27. Some would nominate the work of Bernard and François Baschet, who began making their "sculpture *sonores*" in the late 1950s. But their works have more in common with Harry Partch's self-invented musical instruments—certainly unconventional, even sculptural, but primarily designed to produce specific sounds. Jean Tinguely, most commonly considered a sculptor, made his *Mes étoiles—concert pour sept peintures* in 1958, three years before Morris's *Box*. Though this is a sound-producing sculptural object, I argue that it likewise is a machine to make music and therefore does not rely equally and independently on its sonic and its sculptural components.

Disasters Plans of Action Stories Diagrams Music Poetry Essays Dance Construction Mathematics Compositions.[28] Morris, disenchanted with the burgeoning Fluxus movement—with which Young, Mac Low, and consequently *An Anthology* were associated—pulled his contributions from *An Anthology* before its publication.[29] "Blank Form" is a text piece, both a set of instructions for making something and something that has been made. In this sense it functions like the text scores and works being produced by Fluxus-associated artists and others around this same time. Presaging the idea of "situation," voiced six years later in "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," "Blank Form" represents an expansion of the sculptural field.

> So long as the form (in the broadest possible sense: situation) is not reduced beyond perception, so long as it perpetuates and upholds itself as being objects in the subject's field of perception, the subject reacts to it in many particular ways when I call it art. He reacts in other ways when I do not call it art. Art is primarily a situation in which one assumes an attitude of reacting to some of one's awareness as art.[30]

It is apparent that Morris is trying to hang on to two incompatible ideas. First, he insists that form not be "reduced beyond perception," an assertion that, despite its ambiguous phrasing, we take to mean form that remains within the boundaries of perception. This is clarified by the proposal that form "upholds itself as being objects in the subject's field of perception." But then Morris states that art "is primarily a situation in which one assumes an attitude of reacting to some of one's awareness as art." This is hardly a matter of "objects in the subject's field of perception." As we will see, this is an aesthetic ground staked out in accordance with Merleau-Ponty's (and *not* Husserl's) phenomenology, in which the certainty of perception is a foothold from which the subject may construct conventional or differential perspectives, meanings, and worlds. Merleau-Ponty's method informs Morris's ideas about the expanded situation of the circumstances of artistic encounter. "Blank Form" also exhibits some of the same recursivity evident in *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*. Both works are simultaneously the product of a process, the documentation of that process, and a set of instructions for the replication of that process. Both might be seen as an example of what could be called "retrospective composition," in which the act of composition follows the act of performance (which itself is an act of protoreception). In *Box* the "score" for the sound material of the work is only available (constructable) after the performance/production of the box. This conundrum is produced by the intrinsically problematic nature of the idea of a score. The investigation of this problem, initiated by Cage, reveals the implicit a posteriori ontology of the score, which must always follow from some material realization of itself (even if that realization is immaterially located in the mind's ear of the composer). The score as a founding document of *re*-creation has no stable temporal status. It is both precedent and descendent of realization. The score always arrives after the fact, to dictate the fact.

The ostensible, unwritten score for *Box* (something like "Record the sound of building a walnut box and play the recording back from inside the box") is indeterminate relative to the material realization of the project. The score generates unpredictable material results that—taken for artistic sound, or in Cage's expanded sense, for music—seem to demand their own score. In concretizing the specific values

28. La Monte Young and Jackson Mac Low, *An Anthology of Chance Operations Concept Art Anti-Art Indeterminacy Improvisation Meaningless Work Natural Disasters Plans of Action Stories Diagrams Music Poetry Essays Dance Construction Mathematics Compositions* (self-published, 1963; 2nd ed., Munich: Galerie Heiner Friedrich, 1970).

29. Barbara Haskell, *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance, 1958–1964* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, in association with W. W. Norton, 1984), 100.

30. Ibid.

of the resulting sound (pitch, duration, dynamics, placement in time, etc.) a secondary score would negate the fundamental ontology of the piece, which is not a generator of specifically organized sounds but rather a box that contains the sound of its construction. Such a secondary score would actually be revealed as merely a recording, and any performance following such a score would be revealed as an act of mimicry, of "covering"—in the musical sense—the original. Performing a score, on the other hand, is not seen as an act of covering an original, but of reanimating inert matter. Each act of performing a score is seen as a *new*, if second order, act of creation. The unnotated instructions for the construction of the box are also the implicit score for the recorded sounds emanating from the box. By the same token, a set of ears conditioned to the meaning of the sounds of carpentry could conceivably reconstruct the box based on the instructions—the score—provided merely by the recorded sounds of its initial construction. Morris's *Box* makes explicit what Cage's practice implies: the score is never simply an initiation but always also an iteration. This is yet another aspect of the mythic nature of originality deconstructed so thoroughly by Rosalind Krauss.[31] The musical heritage of repertoire is highly unoriginal. Which is to say it is, like all other modes of artistic production, a process of assimilation, reflection, and correction; of response to, and commentary on, the cultural, political, and aesthetic currents of the times and places in which it is produced and received.

Morris's engagement with this kind of recursivity—with process that doubles back on itself to both constitute, and be constituted by, its product—was not limited to "Blank Form" and *Box*. One of the other word pieces for *An Anthology* (1961) reads:

Make an object to be lost.

31. See Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 151–70.

Put something inside that makes
a noise and give it to a friend
with the instructions:

"To be deposited in the street
with a toss."

This piece, dated the same year as *Box*, shares many of its concerns. Both locate sound in the interior of an object. In both cases, the sound is incidental: neither sound is included exclusively, or even primarily, for its auditory-aesthetic qualities (even Morris was surprised when Cage actually sat down and *listened* to *Box* in its entirety).[32] But "Make an object to be lost" pushes the infinity of its regress beyond the closed loop of process and product, past and present. In existing exclusively as score, without realization, "Make an object to be lost" creates an open, infinite system. It is both and neither process and/or product. In addition to past and present, it most provocatively engages the future: the text calls eternally for realization. A performance of the piece would not exhaust the score; it would still call for another realization and another, ad infinitum. This is another feature of the score. It is never satisfied. Consistent with poststructuralist theories of language beginning to reach English readers around this time, the score forever defers a final, stable realization. In this sense, "Make an object to be lost" falls squarely within the practice of text scores being produced at the time by artists and musicians with whom Morris had both intimate and casual acquaintance.

The meaning and value of such practice has been theorized in various ways. Most famously, perhaps, Lucy Lippard has described

32. Robert Morris, as quoted in Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 117; originally part of an interview with Jack Burnham, November 12, 1975; see Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 395n36.

the result as the "dematerialization of the art object."[33] The move to text-based works was one aspect of what has been described as the move from " 'appearance' to 'conception,' "[34] from "the era of taste [to] the era of meaning,"[35] and from the "specific" to the "generic."[36] The thought common to each of these characterizations—and a thought that can be applied without much resistance to each example of a word piece, text score, or event score—is that such work initiates what has come to be known as Conceptual Art. Whatever resistance might be offered would come from one of two fronts. The first front would propose that all art is conceptual to greater or lesser degrees. And while this is certainly true, the point is that work categorized as Conceptual (with a capital *C*) emphasizes its concepts, *expressly* at the expense of other aesthetic aspects. The second front of resistance is more significant in terms of tracing the historical trajectory of conceptualism's theoretical implications, insisting that Conceptual Art began, in all but name, in the second decade of the twentieth century with Marcel Duchamp's unassisted readymades.

In *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, Branden Joseph's invaluable study of Tony Conrad, Henry Flynt, La Monte Young, Robert Morris, and John Cage form such as the text score is described as "disclosing its essence (whether oppressive or liberatory) as a power effect."[37] Joseph takes issue with claims that dematerialization leads "toward nothingness, transcendence, or liberation (from the gallery space or commodity form)."[38] On the contrary, he believes that such work is a "pure technique of power . . . [leading] toward the operation of discipline

33. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*.
34. Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 13.
35. Arthur C. Danto, "Marcel Duchamp and the End of Taste: A Defense of Contemporary Art," *Tout-Fait: The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal* 1, issue 3 (December 2000), www.toutfait.com/issues/issue_3/News/Danto/danto.html (accessed February 2, 2009).
36. de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, passim; see especially chapter 3, "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint."
37. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 188; in this passage Joseph is specifically discussing text scores of Tony Conrad and Henry Flynt.
38. Ibid.

or control."[39] This reading, indebted to Foucault, is not without validity but only illuminates the work when applied in a limited capacity. In its most basic formulation, the terms "discipline" and "control" are applied as structures (as strictures) of making. Rather than initiating another construct, or producing what Joseph calls a "*representation*" (Joseph's italics), the score "molds the receptive (subjective) situation itself."[40] The score *is* the work; the only thing with which the beholder and the composer/artist both interact. The score, then, brings its own set of capacities and incapacities to bear upon the composer's freedom within the medium. This is the discipline of individual disciplines. And it is a fact (perhaps, one would say, a *material* fact) of even the most dematerialized of disciplines.

In a more expansive application of the terms, text scores impose discipline and control by enacting instantiated power relations. Traditionally in music, the composer directs the actions of performers within a set of generally agreed-upon parameters. Text scores, then, offer an unmediated "circuit" between composer and beholder (surely not the right word in this context, but how shall we name this role?), putting the composer in an empowered position over the beholder without the filtering, interpreting presence of the performer. One implication of Joseph's formulation is that a text score is less like an offering and more like a command. The composer/artist tells the beholder what to do, what to think. Joseph is careful to allow that the text score allows for benevolent dictatorship. Still, the suggestion is that what is created is a hierarchy in which power flows in one direction only. But unlike the codified, institutional context of traditional composed music, text scores do not (or at least in the early 1960s *did* not) come loaded with habituation and ramification. Most recipients of text scores have not been trained and acculturated to accept the instructions of the maestro and to execute them according to a predetermined skill set. The beholder who ignores or contravenes a

39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.

given text-score instruction does not risk losing her or his job. The command is issued from another place and time. There is no issue of face-to-face refusal no risk of public failure.

Text scores, as a prime example of conceptualism, do not state facts so much as question them. Every command is followed by a silent, parenthetical "why?" "Whatever else it may be, conceptual art is first and foremost an art of *questions*."[41] Even in text scores written in the imperative, there is an implicit invitation to contravene the authority underwriting the text. Some text scores invite this contravention by suggesting resistance, others by taunting absurdity, others by engaging impossibility, others by allowing for an infinity of interpretations. Peter Osborne makes a distinction between the ideality of concept and the materiality of linguistic form and/or performative realization:

> The unity of the work is rendered ideal by its dispersal across an irreducible plurality of instantiations across different media, including documentary forms; while it is the performance character of the instructed event as "action" that imparts to this ideality a linguistic form.[42]

It would seem equally true to suggest that an ideality emerges from the impossibility of providing or even theorizing a "correct" performative reading of a given score. The conceptual, once it has been let loose in the space of the work, inhabits it, saturating all the material and immaterial aspects of the work. If it is true that all works of art are to some extent conceptual, that extent is largely a product of the application of the term. Thus, a work prized chiefly for nonconceptual attributes can be "détourned" (to reapply a term of the Situationists) by placing it under the conceptual rubric. Sherrie Levine's

41. Osborne, *Conceptual Art*, 14, with original emphasis.
42. Ibid., 22.

rephotographing of classic Walker Evans photographs enacts precisely this transformation.[43]

So, rather than creating a one-way power flow, text scores disperse power in all directions, at all levels of engagement, flowing equally toward and away from all involved. Within the context of engagement with a text score, everyone always has the prerogative to accept, decline, evade, reverse, censure, or satirize the instructions. These are not options typically available to either empowered or disempowered subjects (or institutions). Faced with a text score, the ultimate power-negating alternative is always in play: one may fail to recognize, exercise, or obey the inherent discipline and control. This is never an option in truly hierarchical power structures.

Chapter 6 (below) deals at length with George Brecht's "Incidental Music," which is exemplary of the kind of conceptual, text-based work being produced everywhere and by everyone (or so it seemed) in New York in the early 1960s. Much of this work emanated from the composition class that John Cage taught at the New School for Social Research from 1957 to 1959. His students included, among others, Brecht, Allan Kaprow, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, and Alison Knowles. Cage himself got into the text score act in 1962 with *0' 00"*, which refers back to *4' 33"*, upping the recursive ante. The score for *0' 00"* reads: "In a situation with maximum amplification (no feedback), perform a disciplined action."[44] Cage's initial performance was an act of the kind of retrospective composition exemplified by Morris's *Box* and "Blank Form." Cage wrote out the score by using a pen outfitted with a contact microphone, thereby turning the writing of the score into the performance, or the performance into the writing of the score. In either case, the score is nonexistent until its first performance is realized. In

43. One can trace this idea back to Duchamp's famous example of a "reciprocal readymade": using a Rembrandt as an ironing board. Such an act would certainly be seen (at least post-Duchamp) as an artistic act, allowing the nonconceptual Rembrandt to function conceptually.
44. Cited in Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate*, 405n21; observe the use of the term "situation."

Beyond the Dream Syndicate, Joseph pays great attention to the deluge of text scores meant to problematize the status of the score, the temporal relations of composition to performance, and performance to reception. Among those discussed are Flynt's *The Instructions for This Piece Are on the Other Side of This Sheet* (1961), in which the verso is either blank or displays the same text, and *The Instructions for This Composition Are on the Other Side of This Strip* (also 1961), in which the title is printed on a Möbius strip; Young's *An invisible poem sent to Terry Jennings for him to perform* (1960); Conrad's *The instructions for performing this piece follow* (1961), which is written in a circle so the word *The* is preceded by the word *follow*; Conrad's *This Piece Is Its Name* (1961); and Ken Friedman's *Mandatory Happening* (1966): "You will decide to read or not read this instruction. Having made your decision, the happening is over."[45] In this context we might also consider some of George Brecht's event scores, including *Word Event* (1961), consisting of the word "Exit"; *Saxophone Solo* (1962), simply the word "Trumpet"; or *Event Score* (1966): "Arrange or discover an event. Score and then realize it." Similarly related are many other scores by Fluxus artists, including Dick Higgins, Takehisa Kosugi, Alison Knowles, Nam June Paik, and Yoko Ono.

Whether one thinks of such scores as instructions for, or works of, music, or what I will insist on calling gallery arts, this sort of dematerialized, conceptual practice certainly poses a challenge for Greenbergian modernism. It is curious to recall that what can now be seen as Fried's last-gasp defense of modernist art in "Art and Objecthood" was written not in response to the advent of such metapractices but in response to minimalist sculpture, which now seems, paradoxically, quite sympathetic to a Greenbergian aesthetic. The practices emanating from Cage's New School class (and

45. Ken Friedman, "Mandatory Happening," in *Fluxus Performance Workbook*, ed. Ken Friedman, Owen Smith, and Lauren Sawchyn (Performance Research e-Publication, 2002), 41, www.thing.net/~grist/ld/fluxusworkbook.pdf (accessed February 2, 2009).

thus perhaps best classified simply as "composition") were widely adopted by artists and musicians in and around Fluxus, beginning as early as the late 1950s. Allan Kaprow and George Brecht both attended Cage's class, carpooling into Manhattan together from New Brunswick, New Jersey.[46] Both Kaprow's *Eighteen Happenings in Six Parts* and Brecht's earliest event scores date from 1959.

Furthermore, 1961 was a particularly fecund year for the early production and theorization of such work. As already noted, Morris's *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, "Make an object to be lost," and "Blank Form" all date from that year, as do Brecht's *Incidental Music* and *Paragraphs, Quotations, and Lists* (included in *An Anthology*); Dick Higgins's *Danger Music* pieces; Yoko Ono's earliest instruction paintings (including *Painting for Burial*, *Painting for the Skies*, *Painting to Shake Hands*, and *Painting for a Broken Sewing Machine*); Jackson Mac Low's *Piano Suite for David Tudor and John Cage*; Walter De Maria's *Column with a Ball on Top* (included in *An Anthology*); Ben Vautier's four pieces, *Radio*, *Theft*, *Police*, and *Smile*; and Emmett Williams's *Duet for Performer and Audience*. It is illuminating to recognize that 1961 was also the year in which Henry Flynt coined the term "Concept Art" in an eponymous essay, and the year of publication of the culminating, encompassing aesthetic statements from Greenberg (*Art and Culture*) and Cage (*Silence*).

But again, it is not these text-based artworks to which Fried responded. Instead, it was in what Fried dubbed "literalism"—Donald Judd's "specific objects" and Morris's "unitary forms"—that he identified the theatricality waging war against modernist sculpture and painting. What Fried finds so threatening is literalism's explicit movement out of its own formal specificity. Contrary to Greenbergianism—which, taking its cues from Kantianism, locates the *work* of the work wholly within its constructed elements—the literalist object accepts its role as part of a larger ensemble of experience. This ensemble (the

46. Julia Robinson, *George Brecht Events: A Heterospective* (Cologne: Walter König, 2005), 308.

"situation") certainly includes the object itself, perceived not as an assemblage of internally interrelated parts but as what Morris called a "gestalt."[47] The situation, however, also includes components that Greenberg and Fried excluded from the artwork proper. First among these, in most accounts, is the spectator, or "beholder" (Fried's preferred term). In Fried's view, the beholder was not modernist art's concern. That's not to say that the paintings of Jackson Pollock or the sculptures of David Smith were not meant to be exhibited, but rather that an explicit incorporation of the body and perception of the beholder was not a consideration in the making-for-exhibition of the works. In other words, these paintings and sculptures answered to exigencies of form and process. If a relation were evident in the canvas or the sculpture, it would be the relation of formal ideality to formal reality, or possibly of maker to material (think of Hans Namuth's famous film of Jackson Pollock), not of material to beholder, and certainly not of maker to beholder.

The expanded situation necessarily implicates space in the equation. The solution, so to speak, in which both object and beholder are suspended, is the space they share. This sharing is hardly neutral. The physical parameters (volume, shape, materials) of the space are determined in part by what occupies it. Sensory aspects of the situation are also effected by space: light and shadow impact visual perception; auditory experience is effected by the height of ceilings, the reflectivity of surfaces, and so on. Less quantifiable particulars are also in play. Spatial environments influence psychical experience and encourage or discourage varieties of social interaction. The built environment especially and always embeds its own semiotics of power, history, and economics.

Greenberg's virtual obsession with flatness as the essential concern of modernist painting was, remember, not a disavowal of

47. The term "gestalt" first appears in Morris's writings in "Notes on Sculpture, Part 2," originally published in *Artforum* in 1966 and reprinted in *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 11–21; see, for example, 16.

figuration but an abandonment of spatial illusionism. By the time of Fried's "Art and Objecthood," space was still a concern, but ultimately it was theatricality's consideration of the beholder that posed the greatest risk to modernist formalism. Theatricality is a playing to—or more damningly, a playing *for*—its audience. One might imagine that Fried's objections are based on an Adornian critique of kowtowing to popular tastes or aesthetic mob rule, but Fried never makes this argument. His concern, consistent with Greenbergian-Kantian formalism, would appear to have more to do with how the artwork is constituted than with how it interacts prospectively or retrospectively with the world. Indeed, the debate between Greenberg-Fried on one side, and Judd-Morris on the other, is most commonly read as being played out almost entirely in terms of formalist issues: the modernist view is concerned with the composition of the work as the outcome of the relationships created internally by its constitutive elements; the literalist position is concerned with a larger formal construct that includes the object as one of the constitutive elements implicated in a structural relationship. Modernist art evades "objecthood" (Fried's other bugbear term) by being the active (or enacted) site of internal relations. On the other hand, a specific object or a unitary form courts objecthood. For Fried, this crosses the line from art to mere thing, in the process abdicating aesthetic responsibilities. For Judd, and even more so for Morris, the gestalt of the literalist object allows it to be but one thing in a network of relations, a network with the potential for alteration, change, and movement based on modifications of the dimensions of its constituent relations. So if the spectator changes position in space relative to the object, the situation has shifted. Likewise, if the object is exhibited in two different spaces or times, it will yield two different baseline situations.

This certainly opens the door of Morris's "expanded situation," allowing time into the consideration of the work. Time, in turn, introduces history, which introduces the additionally expanded situation of culture: of sociality, politics, gender, class, and race. At the beginning

of the 1960s, Morris's work (including *Box with the Sound of Its Own Making*, "Blank Form," and his performance collaborations with the Judson Dance Theater) engages with the expanded situation without explicitly referencing the world outside the work. His work was not overtly concerned with politics or sociality. Nevertheless, Morris was actively involved in a number of political issues at the time and clearly saw art in general and his art in particular as having sociopolitical responsibilities. It is difficult to take Morris's appeals to phenomenology as a motivating and explanatory model for his work and square them with his involvement in the "Lebenswelt" (lifeworld) beyond his unitary forms. His theoretical justifications, as for instance expressed in his essays "Some Notes on the Phenomenology of Making: The Search for the Motivated" (1970) and "Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide" (1971), seem more consistent with the work and legacy of Judd. Morris's engagement with phenomenology is far from dogmatic, allowing a broader and more inclusive reading of both phenomenology and his body of work.

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