VOICES OFF: REFLECTIONS ON CONCEPTUAL ART

Art & Language

We write as the representatives of an artistic practice that has been counted a major contributor to the Conceptual art movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and that has persisted in continuous though varied operation to the present day. Our purpose in writing is to argue for an independent view of the stuff and character of that movement and of its legacy. This will require that we devote some space at the outset, and from time to time thereafter, to critical consideration of what has come to be accepted as the authoritative account of the art of our generation, and of the crisis of modernism from which it is supposed to have emerged.

I

In the world of academic art history and art criticism, considerable industry has been devoted in recent years to establishing the terms of the postmodern settlement. In all competing accounts the Conceptual art movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s plays a crucial part, though there are considerable differences in the ways in which that movement is defined and about the role it is accorded in the succession. In its widest popular usage the term Conceptual art serves well beyond the historical confines of the movement in question to designate a continuing current of art that is generic, in the sense of owing little or nothing to the material traditions of painting or sculpture. In its slightly more restricted artworld sense, and indeed in the world of artists, Conceptual art has been waved as a banner proclaiming various *rappels à l'ordre* and purifications, and as a headline for career moves of one sort or another. In academic narratives, however, Conceptual art tends to be defined by reference to the crisis of modernism in the 1960s and in terms of specific relations of difference to high modernist abstract art. Driven by an over-developed sense of the necessity of the succession, the account of this crisis and of the relations in question has been largely conventionalised. It has also acquired a marked teleological aspect.

Among the assumptions characteristic of this account are that the notion of the Dematerialisation of Art is of some descriptive and explanatory relevance;[1] that Minimalism was not a kind of modernism; that, relative to Conceptual art, a greater

virtue resides in an art of institutional critique; and that the post-Duchampian object represents a rich resource of semiological possibilities. When these assumptions are taken in sequence, the conclusion to which they conduce is that the significance of Conceptual art's critique of modernism is to a large extent exhausted by its re-inauguration of some relatively overt political content and by its reinvestment in the Duchampian generic. This critique is understood as addressed to modernist notions of autonomy - its sundering of art from history and truth and of avant-garde practice from social practice – and to the sexist, elitist and imperialistic interests served by the untenable claims to disinterest that are made in modernist theory and criticism.

There was clear justice to the charge that the modernist institutions had become socially and politically hegemonic and dissuasive. It does not follow, however, that the modernist project was bereft of virtue, that all modernist aesthetic judgements were wrong or malign, or that all modernist art was complicit in sexism, elitism and imperialism. While there were many modernist artists who were by no means immune to such negative charges, many of them sustained political commitments more radical than those vaunted routinely by the liberals of the soi-disant postmodern academy. That these artists did not embody the possibility of social change in their work – at least not without difficulty and without somewhat allusive argument – does not make them guilty of all the sins of the epoch. It is nevertheless widely assumed of the modernist project as a whole that it was an institution necessarily overthrown in the course of the succession.

A dominant academic account of Conceptual art is now associated with the American journal *October,* an account given considerable weight by its representation in the recently published art-historical study *Art since 1900,* by Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin D. Buchloh, A seemingly unmessy orthodoxy narrates a succession, from the crisis of modernism through Minimalism, that entails a bifurcation into two modes of Conceptual art: an 'institutional critique' that is approved, and a kind of apostate modernism that is not. In its aspect as institutional critique, Conceptual art could have no relation but a stark negativity toward that which it succeeded – and in particular toward modernism's institutional and political imbrication; on the other hand what remains of Conceptual art is characterised as lacking that critical negativity, as effectively complicit in the sins of modernism, and as devoid of virtue. Buchloh, for

instance, describes Art & Language's 'self-criticality' as 'late-modernist' and remarks that 'Clement Greenberg's American-type formalism had kept English artists (up to and including members of the Art & Language group) in its spell for an astonishingly long time.' In Buchloh's terms this is to put Art & Language beyond the Pale.

We accept the bifurcation up to a point. While we agree that there is a form of Conceptual art that procures its meaning and identity largely from the fact that it enjoys quasi-canonical status as institutional critique, we argue that there is another form that is capable of producing institutional critique inter alia, but whose relation with modernism and with Minimalism is more complex, less mechanical, less literal and less sentimental. This latter form is not culturally exhausted by the claim that it produces institutional critique. It is necessary to express our acceptance in this oddly conditional form because, as we shall see, the expression of institutional critique goes to very few useful differentae.

We shall deal with the account of the succession in terms that question its teleological critique of modernism and of its exhaustion. Our approach will be to try to characterise Conceptual art's development from the detail of our own experience as artists (and etc.), and through discussion of the typical valuations of the prevailing academic account – and particularly those that concern the art of institutional critique. It is by looking at the outset through the lens of this account that we hope to see better into the other spheres in which Conceptual art resonates.

II

The voice that carries any challenge to the truth of the assertion that institutional critique was the most substantial practice to emanate from the Minimalist and Conceptual critique of modernism is now a voice off. Indeed, it is a voice off that is likely to be talked over by the actors at centre stage of institutional critique. The centre-stage performance, however, depends on some strange arguments and ruses. Appearing slightly down-stage from the main academic performers is a group of representative artists: Marcel Duchamp, Dan Graham, Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Daniel Buren and Michael Asher.

In Rosalind Krauss's account, the particular significance of the Duchampian readymade is that it 'allowed him to leap past old aesthetic questions of craft, medium, and taste ("is it good or bad painting or sculpture?") to new questions that were potentially ontological ("what is art?"), epistemological ("how do we know it?"), and institutional ("who determines it?")."[2] Subsequently, Duchamp's *Etant Donnés,* installed in Philadelphia,'by lodging itself at the heart of the museum... was able to pour its logic along the very fault lines of the aesthetic system, making its framing conditions appear in startling clarity only to make them "strange".' Krauss continues, 'The "institutional critique" that will now focus on the museum as its site will range from Marcel Broodthaers's work in Belgium to Daniel Buren's in Paris to Michael Asher's and Hans Haacke's in the US.'[3] Foucault's historical critique of knowledge presides as a philosophical guiding spirit. 'Foucault's strategic acknowledgment of the unacknowledged frame of the university, his unmasking of its political imbrication, was soon adopted by artists who wished to unmask the interests at work in the institutional frames of the art world. Called "institutional critique", this revelatory strategy informed the work of Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke and many others.'[4]

Of Broodthaers, Buchloh writes, 'His intention was to expose as empty Conceptualism's claim to having established a truly democratic, egalitarian art form that had transcended the object, its forms of distribution, and its institutional frame, instead denouncing all such claims as typical avant-garde myth and self-mystification, and opposing them by making persistent reference back to the continuing (if not increased) validity of all those methods Conceptualism claimed to have left behind.'[5] What we have here is an apparent antithesis between the 'realistic' art of institutional critique and an idealistic, self-mythologising Conceptual art. In Buchloh's account there is – as one might expect - a kind of Conceptual art that is virtuous in so far as it is inflected by institutional critique. For example, Dan Graham's *Homes for America* of 1967 is celebrated as 'one of the key moments of Conceptual art', when 'Modernism's (and Conceptualism's) supposedly radical quest for empirical and critical self-reflexivity is turned in on itself and onto the frames of presentation and distribution... Graham integrates [the] dimension of distribution into the conception of the work itself. The artist's model of self-reflexivity dialectically shifts from tautology to discursive and institutional critique.'[6]

Similarly 'Haacke's work...shifts attention from the critical analysis of the work's immanent structures of meaning to the external frames of institutions. Thus Haacke repositions Conceptual art in a new critical relation to the socioeconomic conditions determining access and availability of aesthetic experience, a practice later identified as "institutional critique".'[7] The correct lineage is established through Duchamp and Fluxus. According to Buchloh, the latter 'initiated many key aspects of Conceptual art, such as the insistence on viewer participation, the turn towards the linguistic performative, and the beginnings of institutional critique.'[8]

This is the Conceptual art that bathes in the light. The Conceptual art consigned to the dark by the *October* writers inherited modernism's tendency to self-reflexivity and 'tautology', and yet, as 'exposed' by Broodthaers, 'assumed that it had itself been able to transcend the frames within which modernism is institutionalized.'[9]

III

We make two contentions in respect of this recital. Our primary argument is that the characterisation of Conceptual art that is in the dark is in some important instances false. That is to say, the Conceptual art in question is not in fact monolithic and the criticisms do not apply across the board, irrespective of whether or not institutional critique is a supportable genre. Our second contention is that the arguments in favour of institutional critique that we have reproduced are badly made, inconsistent, and dependent upon the would-be redemptive and in fact largely sentimental insertion of social content into certain kinds of (post-)Minimal art. Supplementary to these contentions, we argue that the price the *Octobrists* pay for the bifurcation they make is that it blinds them to the real conditions that vitiate the work that they see as virtuous, and leaves them with an anachronistic nostalgia for a battle long over in a conflict that nevertheless continues. As a consequence of this they are also made unaware of the potential for institutional critique that resides less self-importantly in the practice of the Conceptual art they reject.

It may be noted from the above representative quotations that the claims made by the *October* authors on behalf of institutional critique have a consistent rhetorical form: they depend upon the generation of putative antitheses. Artists they favour have usually gone beyond or transcended or outdone others from whom favour is withheld. These

latter have committed sins, heresies or other failures that are usually modernistic but are rarely otherwise described in any substantial particulars. They are transcendental sins, attributed so that the favoured may be given virtue.

In the case of Dan Graham, as we have seen, the virtue of his work resides in its shifting of the agenda of Conceptual art from 'tautology' to institutional critique. (The association of Conceptual Art with tautology picks out a slogan of Joseph Kosuth's – though he is not named. In fact it often seems as though *October's* sense of Conceptual-art-in-the-dark is almost exclusively predicated on the Kosuth of 'Art after Philosophy',[10] though the consequences of this predication are felt by others – including ourselves. While we do not pretend that we were never associated with Kosuth, it would be a serious misrepresentation to suggest that we and he ever spoke with one voice.) In the case of Broodthaers, it is through his exposure of the 'false egalitarianism' of Conceptual art and his inhabiting of 'those structures that would have to be called supplements – the page of the catalogue, the site of the poster, the framing device of the institution... – that [he] denies the continuing validity of an aesthetic of centrality, of substantiality.' By this means Broodthaers 'denies the commodity status of the work of art, for the supplement can never itself acquire value.'[11] These are the means by which, according to Krauss, he performs 'the kind of challenge to institutional frames that poststructuralists such as Foucault were then theorizing.'[12]

We address these two examples as typical of the form and substance of the *October* authors' arguments. It may be noted that Graham's *Homes for America* was not an entirely unprecedented work. It is not at all unlike Robert Smithson's 'Quasi-infinities and the Waning of Space' or Bochner's and Smithson's 'Domain of the Great Bear,' both of 1966 – at least in being a series of variously captioned photographs. The subtitle of this architectural-cum-social critique was 'The Early 20th Century Possessable House to the Quasi-Discrete Cell of '66'. The work was described by Smithson with a curious simile: 'Like some of the other artists, Graham can "read" the language of buildings... the "block houses" of the post-war suburbs communicate their "dead land areas" or "sites" in the manner of a linguistic permutation.'[13] In fact, compared with Smithson's 'collage essays,' Graham's *Homes for America* first appeared as such as a relatively straightforward photo-essay and factual critique of California-style tract housing. It was published in a magazine and distributed accordingly.[14] This is what

Buchloh means, perhaps, by his claim that it 'integrates the dimension of distribution into the conception of the work itself.' The work was always intended to be in a magazine and not on an art-gallery wall. However, Buchloh's claim that 'self-reflexivity is turned in on itself' is barely intelligible. He is not much concerned here with the essay-and-picture content of Graham's work, but with the circumstances of its distribution. And it is in these that the dialectical shift is to be found.

Homes for America is a strange work to load with the making of the shift, if shift it is. Graham had been or was a poet. Throughout the 1960s, poetry magazines and other artsy and literary journals had published all manner of poem/graphics combinations, prints and embellished pages, which the readers were invited to consider as first-order works of art. Insofar as these were not 'reproductions' but works, the dimension of distribution was integrated into the 'conception of the work itself.' Furthermore, insofar as they were producing texts, most Conceptual artists were obliged to consider the 'frame' of their distribution, in the very ordinary sense that their words and graphic stuff might naturally belong in a publication. There were indeed many who saw the supposedly anti-elitist possibilities in this – pretenders to a subversive refusal to be co-opted by the gallery. So far, so sort-of good: Graham qua Conceptual artist made early use of magazines to exhibit and distribute some of his work. It is nevertheless hard to understand how this turns 'Modernism's (and Conceptualism's) supposedly radical quest for empirical and critical self-reflexivity...in on itself.'

We might say that Graham's subject-matter was somehow current in the liberal culture of New York. For Buchloh, however, the power of institutional critique is not invested in the (rather mild) architectural critique, but rather in the reflexive doubling of Conceptual art's dialectical model that is associated with the work's presence in a magazine. Are we to assume that this turning-in on itself is more than a mere 'doubling' of the supposedly radical quest? Or are we to understand this 'dialectical shift' as a sort of double negative? The self-reflexive art work – art that is 'about art' - is now art that is about art-that-is-about-art. And it is so in virtue of its being distributed in a form that implicitly criticises or disimbricates the gallery- and support-structures of modernism.

It is hard to see how the double 'aboutness' that seems to be ascribed to the work distinguishes it from a minor modernist 'artwork' that has been bound into a magazine,

or, for that matter, from certain sorts of multiple. Smithson had previously produced magazine 'collage essays' without necessarily dignifying them as art. (It should also be pointed out that the photographs from *Homes for America* have over the years undergone various technical upraisings. They are now fine photography and subject to an altogether different dialectical regime.) What we have seen is a false antithesis: Conceptual art is transformed in having its 'quest' for 'self-reflexivity turned in on itself.' In fact, a doubling of 'aboutness' characterises most Conceptual art. The false antithesis goes, of course, to a false dialectic. The capacity for institutional critique is ascribed to *Homes for America* and denied to other forms of Conceptual art. It seems that institutional critique is not here a property that distinguishes one work from another, but an axiological term that signals approval. The mechanism by which the approval is gained appears to be a practical one – such as might one day be subject to Foucauldian study.

In order to come to Buchloh's 'conclusion' we are obliged to begin with a set of premises that are posited a priori. The chief among them is that Graham's is a radical institution-critical practice; the second is that modernism's and Conceptual art's quest for self-reflexivity was often a misguided concern with the ordering of form, or with something worse called 'tautology'. If we accept the first premise, we are also accepting a dimension of distribution over which Buchloh and Graham themselves preside. That Graham's career profile has for one reason or another been identified by Buchloh as 'radical' is good enough for the dialectic to follow. If we accept the second premise we are traducing modernism to some extent and definitely traducing almost all Conceptual art. If we reject the premises, then Buchloh's claim is empty.

Regarding Broodthaers's supposedly Foucauldian institutional critique, the orthodox account is not without difficulty. Foucault shows the singularity and contingency and thus evitability of aspects of modern social being that are often presented as universal or necessary or inescapable. His notion that philosophy can be (or should be) critical history involves analysis of the conditions of the possibility of particular thought systems. He is not, however, concerned with their *epistemic* status, nor does he accept a-priori conditions of knowledge. He argues, rather, that certain statements function as knowledge at certain times and within certain conditions. His historical studies are supposed to assist the criticism of systems of thought and the practices that are

informed by them. But in order to render this assistance, he seeks to reveal certain historical conjunctures that supply the a-priori conditions, as it were, for certain systems of thought to be treated as knowledge.

What Broodthaers supplies – in the form of a late-Surrealist assemblage – is a 'what if?' as alternative to the institutional norm. But only through some attenuated analogy in the mind of a particularly suggestible curator could this be thought to embody an aspect of Foucauldian interrogative. And that is on a very good day. Krauss supplements the fraudulent drama of Broodthaers's Foucauldism with a remark that has him surpass the critical power of Duchamp. 'If Duchamp had wanted to expose the museum as conventional, Broodthaers is now displaying it as simulacral.'[15] It is indeed the case that Duchamp 'exposes' the museum as 'conventional' in the sense that the significance of his work is told against a background of aesthetic normativity – that is to say, a normativity real or imagined is required by Duchamp's gesture and a fortiori required for it to be successful. In Broodthaers's case, however, Krauss's conditional is shown to be vacuous. While we see in Broodthaers's work a whacky simulacrum of a museum exhibit, the gestural content relative to the museum is irreducibly Duchampian. The relation of 'surpassing' and the antithesis that that implies are the mere illusions of a pushy rhetoric.

Buchloh endorses Broodthaers's 'intention' (sic) to expose the emptiness of Conceptualism's emancipatory claims. In the course of a few years in the 1960s many claims of this nature had indeed been made - most of them by journalists and Conceptual-art entrepreneurs whose distributional fantasies had gone to their heads without any help from Walter Benjamin. These claims were largely refuted in practice or in words by the artists – by any artists worth bothering with, at least. While the cheaply made booklet and other allographical forms burgeoned, so far as Art & Language was concerned these were either ways to change the normative relations between artist and artist and artist and critic, or were forms that might be phenomenologically investigated. Insofar as Broodthaers actually did denounce any avant-garde myths, he was denouncing a fabrication on the part of Conceptual-art hangers-on or, more likely, a necessary fiction of his own devising.

The vagueness and imprecision of Buchloh's encomium makes a difficulty for his account of Broodthaers's challenge to the institution and to Conceptual art. He places great weight, for example, on the artist's 'denial' both of an aesthetic of centrality and substantiality and of the commodity status of the work of art. Was this 'denial' something Buchloh extracted from Broodthaers's *professional* self-description - from his perhaps professionally melancholic personality - or is it somehow compelled by his work? In pursuit of an answer to this question we might cast an eye on a sample of that work and on the circumstances of its installation. Some Art & Language work was included in 'Documenta X' of 1997. An extensive component of Broodthaers's much celebrated *Museum of Eagles* – the 'Section Publicité' of 1972 - was installed at the same Kunstmesse, where it had originally been seen twenty-five years previously. Space is restricted at these events and the sight of one work may tend to overlap the anxious territory of another. Broodthaers's work was originally installed close to some work by the Archigram group from their *Instant City* project of 1969. The directors may have thought that there would be an interesting resonance. In the event Archigram's work tended to show the Broodthaers to a certain disadvantage. The artist's widow and daughter were soon in tearful action. A sort of stand-off ensued, until a solution was brokered by the Marian Goodman Gallery – which was offering the work for sale at around a million dollars. It seems that this work had achieved a high degree of centrality, substantiality and commodity status. Indeed, Broodthaers's picturesque, consumable and often posthumous work had already achieved blue-chip status by the time of 'Documenta 7' in 1982.

In addressing the arguments made on behalf of an art of institutional critique we have been less immediately concerned with the work of the artists concerned than with the terms of its canonisation, depending as these do on a politically naïve understanding of the succession to modernism and on the characterisation of Conceptual art through a number of false antitheses. We now return to the moment of Conceptual art's emergence during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and to consideration of the high-modernist and Minimalist art that immediately preceded it.

IV

The *in flagrante* case for the exhaustion of modernism concerns the loss of critical potential in the modernist painted surface. The problem with the surfaces in question

was that they imposed no descriptive task upon the viewer that was not already rehearsed in a litany. That a litany was indeed what was involved seemed to be confirmed by the physical circumstances – the galleries - under which the representative works were normally encountered, designed as these appeared to be both to emphasize and to protect those surfaces in all their rarefaction and vulnerability. In 1963 Greenberg wrote of the paintings of Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski that their colour and formal properties 'are there, first and foremost, for the sake of feeling, and as vehicles of feeling.'[16] To the sceptical viewer, however, what the paintings appeared to express was no more nor less than the prescriptive power of the critical claim. It was as though the precepts that had schooled the construction of the surface functioned also to school the experience of the viewer.

Greenberg had concluded, 'If these paintings fail as vehicles and expressions of feeling, they fail entirely.'[17] It was a theoretical condition of probity in modernist criticism that there could be no merit in aesthetic success where no risk of failure was run. But the failure at issue was always conceived of as risked by the individual artist and work, never as a possibility within the system as a whole. It is by now conventional wisdom, however, that by the early 1960s the entire Greenbergian dialectic had run into Frank Stella and the blank canvas.[18] The dialectic was fast running out of negative energy, and the discourse had been confined to a set of protocols and minor disagreements within a narrow field that was policed by the cognoscenti. The dialectical drama within the discourse of high modernism had increasingly to be staged, and became in that sense increasingly inauthentic. Those who consumed the best stuff did so in a way that did not preclude them from celebrating the worst of work that also obeyed the rules. The litany remained capable of explaining why good was good, but it did not admit of explanation as to why its terms of approbation could be applied to bad painting with the same success. Not only had it become a prisoner of corporatist agencies, the Weltanschauung of these agencies had infected the operation of modernism's internal dialectic.

While there is an exceptional fraction of high-modernist work that pre-eminently rewards attention – that is to say is possessed both of a considerable aesthetic power, to which its virtuality is necessary, and of a largely lucid and relevant critical discourse – the social life of both the art and the discourse had become decadent. We might then

say that even when the litany of virtue seemed to be worth going through because the painting or sculpture amounted to something more than the dry rehearsal, the kitsch of the attendant social milieu acted as a repellent. In Greenberg's terms, however, to suggest that there was a *social* price to be paid for assenting to aesthetic success was to commit a vulgar foul. The possibility of critical discourse was thus confined: either one repeated the formula or one was driven 'outside' into a second-order discourse.

As the occasion of a kind of methodological failure, the moment of exhaustion of high modernism has been widely observed and theorised. It has been less often considered as a kind of social degeneration. Minimalism provided an important resource in this respect. While its typical objects did not cash out experientially in the way that a painting by Louis or Noland did, they at one and the same moment constituted a sufficient asymptote of modernist formality and yet remained at sufficient distance from modernist orthodoxy to invite conversation about just what kinds of object they were. They 'showed' the case they were making, as it were. In particular, what Minimalism made explicit were the circumstantial considerations that modernism had ignored or attempted to hide; those factors that constituted the physical, institutional and social framing of the art object – and of its accompanying litany. Minimalism thus saw itself as a constructive opposition, its own deliberations being critically addressed to high modernism on terms that were soundly rebuffed by Greenberg and Fried, but that high modernism itself had cause to have entertained. Minimalism also made clear its connections to such 'unprivileged' aspects of the culture as vernacular architecture and beltway industry, manifesting a certain pride in particular kinds of technical know-how, and a critical class-consciousness vis-à-vis antic European sensibility for the precious, the hand-made and the 'relational.'

It should be acknowledged that to speak of Minimalism in general is more or less to misrepresent it. There are relevant distinctions to be made between the respective works of Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin and Robert Smithson that turn on significant technical and material details. What we can say is that in talking about Minimalism we do not mean exclusively to invoke a sense of 'Primary Structures', but rather to refer to a congeries of practices united by a sense of the need to raise questions that modernism had dismissed as irrelevant or illicit. Smithson was distinctive among those who asked why so small a part of human contrivance was to be

quantified and interpreted as art. 'It's not the gallery that matters but the art', says the Modernist. 'What if the art is a bit of the gallery removed?' says the Minimalist. The very situatedness of Minimal art – its rendering explicit of its dependence on physical context – compellingly inaugurated some form of institutional critique. It didn't actually require *Homes for America* to turn the trick.

It would be false, however, to suggest that the technical aesthetics of Minimalism were exhausted by its role in creating the conditions of institutional critique. Such soi-disant radicalism would have been of little concern to Dan Flavin, for example. The generic character of the industrial lighting products from which he fashioned his work makes their technical description or specification in some sense equivalent to an allographic work – a score or stage direction relative to which the actual lights were a form of exemplification, as might be the case with a specific performance or a particular action by an actor. The production of the work entails no technical complexity beyond its putative description or specification. In 1967 Sol LeWitt wrote, 'When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair.'[19] The types of Minimal object that such statements conjure up are the partial archetypes of certain forms of Conceptual art, among them Lawrence Weiner's *Statements* of 1968, some of Robert Barry's work, and Art & Language's *Air Show* of 1967 - at least so far as concerns its unreflective first moves.[20]

In this respect, a certain Minimalist route to Conceptual art seems secure – obvious even. What emerges as relatively insecure - and perhaps less obvious - is the pathway to Conceptual art from high modernism. One possible reason for this is the fact that there were many – ourselves variously included – who were at the time genuinely bemused by the refusal of the modernist critics to assimilate any of the discourse of Minimalism. That the essays of Robert Morris and the general chat of Minimalism were dogmatically placed outside the bastion erected by Greenberg and Michael Fried suggested that some other way had to be found to colonise the walls.

The thought that gave rise to this last realisation had a relatively complex and ambiguous structure. The position of the modernists seemed to be simultaneously well-founded and absurd. Notwithstanding the dogmatism of their defence of painting – and

consequent defence of a certain bounded virtuality that occupied the vertical surface of the wall – it did seem more-or-less successful, at least as a defence of the non-literal. For instance, it was clear that Fried's 'Art and Objecthood' was a pretty robust defence of the wall against the literal objects – including a special class of literal objects that were a bit like or a lot like paintings.[21] On the other hand Minimalism did seem to propose a genuinely critical and constructive challenge to modernist orthodoxy. For example, "How do you make a 'Noland' that is not spatial - in Judd's sense - but literally flat?" is a question that might be thought of as logically motivated by modernism's own reductivism, and that therefore serves to render that reductivism practically explicit. However, while the dialectical power of Minimalism's critique thus seemed undeniable, that critique nevertheless depended on ignorance or misapprehension of those substantial arguments according to which literal flatness runs into difficulty as a tendency continuous with early modernist painting.

It did seem possible, therefore, that a countervailing critique might be essayed that recognised the mechanical plausibility of modernism's historical reductivism - to which Minimalism and 'dematerialisation' were still largely in thrall - but that nevertheless still sought to preserve some sort of wall-bound virtuality (if only in terms of equivalence). The observation that prompted this critique was that the fault in modernist theory lay in the incommensurability of its commitment to virtuality with a reductivism that inexorably invited literalism. Its pursuit was justified in part by concern lest the intellectual and imaginative space that virtuality had served to keep open be closed down by a logically collapsing argument for literalism before that space had been thoroughly explored.

V

It is a relevant consideration that, although Minimalism may indeed have seemed to represent a return to something like robust reality in face of a modernist surface shrouded in cheap mystery, the technical operations of certain Minimalist artists tended to generate potential textual substitutes for the supposedly literal objects. From these there developed more or less immediately a pair of Conceptual art genres. The first of these was the text-as-readymade. This was a kind of post-Minimalist literal object that in being taken directly from the pages of books and dictionaries was possessed of the properties of a displaced literal object, and in being reproduced or blown-up as a

photostat was instilled with a certain pictoriality - and thus with a certain distance from Minimalism. Such works sustain a kind of ambiguity. They are composed of textual materials, as it were, are of a more-or-less semantic and syntactical form, while at the same time being re-contextualised in the art gallery or museum. Text works of this order vary from the Duchampian exercises of Bernar Venet to the more complex quasi-paintings that are Joseph Kosuth's 'Definitions'. What is to the point here is that the artist's voice is not present in the text in question, which tended to be selected simply for the task of generating an atmosphere of intellectually high birth and purpose.

The typical exemplar of the second post-Minimal genre was a text whose logical form remained closer to that of the Minimalist working-out of physical particulars, and that was thus to some extent 'authored.' The artwork of this second type seemed to offer a critique of the literal object in a different sense, invoking what John Hyman has called 'the insipid thought' that a picture is a bit like a description.[22] The page, as well as the wall-mounted text, is structured to produce effects (meanings) that are categorically distinct from the mere means of its physical realisation. It can only be a literal object when construed as a surface that has been inscribed, or as mere 'text'. And the very fact of a text's relatively weak or mobile sense of medium-specificity (page or wall or?) drove away for a moment the fear that Minimalism was going to reduce the art object to a decorative sub-architectural genre of literal objects.

There are of course degrees to which an attempt to construe the internal structured-ness of the language of a text will thoroughly detach it from a world of literal objects. There are texts (that might or might not be singled out as works of art in themselves) that are the equivalent of speech acts or ostensive behaviour, and that seem to single out and more-or-less to appropriate ordinary objects or parts of the world as works of art (or something like them). One example might be Robert Barry's 'Something very near in place and time but not yet known to me' of 1969, where it is not the printed text but the 'something' in question that is the intended 'art object.'[23] We need to distinguish texts of this second type from those works of art whose physical form consists in the literal presence of such objects, as well as from those texts of the first type that are a marginal subset of the latter.

The problem with the post-Minimal readymades of the first type was that they tended to inherit the unnecessarily crude and sterile ontology that was Minimalism's answer to wall-bound virtuality: the proposition, that is to say, that the literal is a secure category. For all their apparent radicality in the face of high modernism, such enterprises joined a long roster of exotic appropriations to which late-late Surrealists, avant-garde poets, members of Fluxus and Robert Rauschenberg had been adding since at least the early 1950s,[24] albeit in a spirit of insouciance with regard to the authority of Greenbergian theory that the post-Minimalists could never match.

In contrast, what is distinctive about those works of the second type that have the character of quasi-speech-acts is that they oscillate as installed texts between, on the one hand, the occupation of the gallery wall (as quasi-paintings), and, on the other, the objects these texts designate or lay claim to; this claim being made in the relatively simple form of a phrase or declarative sentence or injunction (explicit or implied) that has the effect of saying 'The art object under consideration is (non-art) object O'.

It may have seemed at the time that it would be possible simply to continue nominating to this effect ad infinitum. A non-literal sub-species of the generic art object would thus be formed. In being non-literal it would supply a negative (Minimalist?) value, and in a figurative sense a 'dematerialisation', because of the absence of the object referred to or nominated; and in doing this it would occupy a constructive niche in modernism's negative dialectic (a niche that the work of Lawrence Weiner, for example, might be thought securely to have occupied). However, whether as wallpaper or as publication, such acts of nomination require a very particular act of charity of their readers or viewers – unlike work that represents the larger genus of post-Duchampian objects. The artist makes, in general, the assumption that his gnomic appropriation is somehow transparent to his interlocuters, and that the actual opacity of it can be waved away by the radicality of his gesture. Certain intellectually and socially restrictive consequences follow: a) the artist is likely to be limited to a range of publicly ostensible middle-sized dry goods; b) successive gestures are likely to increase in banality. The combination of these circumstances leads to c): a tendency to abandon the critical virtues of the oscillating textual form in favour of ever-more-Wagnerian graphic displays. Outcome c) drops the artist firmly into the hands of institutional management, which obliterates the work's already faded dialectical history as it reduces that work to a decoratively sub-

architectural genre – installed in neon, on illuminated hoardings, or as painted lettering across the facades of public buildings. In furnishing material for spectacle, the non-discursive appropriating gesture thus completes a vicious circle. As thus conceived and practised, Conceptual art risked a rapidly increasing banality in gestural content and a consequent vulgarisation of technical means.

In the event, so far as Art & Language was concerned, the excitements of the post-Minimal artwork-as-text were exhausted by 1968. On the one hand, in those works in which the text itself came ready-made there seemed not to be enough *work* to keep the producer intellectually awake. In the case of those texts that were presented as quasi-speech-acts, on the other hand, there could be little but an arithmetical progress in the conversation that ensued from the nominating or appropriating gesture. Rather what gave the artwork in linguistic form some projective potential was the realisation that as soon as the appropriative text was *written* (or rather typed), some debate necessarily ensued as to the appropriate or natural condition in which it might be encountered: the page or the wall. If the work colonised the wall it seemed possible that the text could provide some sort of equivalence to or substitute for modernistic virtuality and flatness, while still satisfying the critique of modernism's unsustainable claim to technical (and historical) continuity by reduction. What was of interest, it transpired, was not the tension between the wall-mounted textual artwork and the notional object it picked out. The potential for development was contained in the very oscillation. In other words, the wall-mounted text seemed to preserve a baby of virtuality that Minimalist literalism had been about to throw out with the bath-water.

VI

It transpired, then, that the risks of increasing banality and vulgarisation might be avoided by recourse to a textual form that began life as an artistically insecure object. This was a text that might indeed begin with some kind of appropriative gesture towards a quasi-readymade, but the gesture in question was quickly subject to interrogation: 'What are we/you talking about here and how are we/you doing it?' As a consequence, the gesture lost its appropriative character and itself took on the aspect of an inquiry. There were other risks to be encountered, however, among them the risk that the putative art object at which the text seemed to want to point would be lost in discursive opacity and erasure (or failure). But these were risks that it seemed the artwork had to take if it

was to recover an agency that had been removed by the culture of the post-Duchampian object – an agency that refused to hang around passively while the art-world and its instrumental operations decided what to say in ratification.

The vicious circle that returns to spectacle was avoided in recognising the potential opacity of the appropriative language and the social life it implies - in seeing that the nominated object is not given transparently in the artists' speech or writings, and that the latter are plugged into a realm of differences that are made by the speech and writing of others. The post-Minimalist object that had been figuratively 'dematerialised' in the virtuality of text was thus brought back to the dialectical reality of social life, and was in that sense subject to a *re*materialisation. In the process 'my work' tended either to be negated by or subsumed into 'the work.'

It would be wrong to assume that the appropriative gesture (or 'declaration') was immediately and explicitly subject to such social and conversational correction and complication. One started off with a fairly conventional sense of the artist's individuality and agency. The text was initially conceived as a means to produce something like a 'way of seeing' at the artist's behest; it was not 'the work' but 'the medium of presentation'. There was the ostension and the 'thing' being ostended: in Art & Language's case, for instance, a description of a column of air and the column of air;[25] in Weiner's a statement such as 'A river spanned'[26] and some river somehow spanned in actuality or in imagination. But it is true that the time of such things was necessarily brief. The more extended and discursive the text, the more inescapably it generated uncertainty concerning the transparency of the ostensive gesture (or 'declaration') itself, and thus inter alia concerning the independence of the object in question; and the more distance it created from those stereotypes of artistic agency – endemic to modernist practice and ideology - in which the artist's gesture is necessarily decisive, whether that gesture results in a readymade or in an eight-foot-high abstract painting. In so far as it made public show of this uncertainty, what might be correctly characterised as a merely reflexive – and in that sense putatively modernistic – dialectic in fact served to expose what was normally hidden. To that extent it embodied a decisive element of social critique.

While Buchloh is almost right to suggest that Art & Language (and Kosuth) understood the readymade in a manner that 'foregrounded intentional declaration over contextualisation',[27] he is thoroughly wrong firstly to assume that what he calls declaration forms a contrasting pair with contextualisation, and secondly to imply that declaration necessarily involves transparency. Transparent or not, a perlocutionary act or 'declaration' implies a social context. If the transparency of the act is put in doubt, then inquiry into the nature of that social context is unavoidably entailed. The social context entails readers – who may also be writers. In Art & Language's case what happened was that the lengthy text-acts acquired readers. To read these works was to put them to practical use. They were not literary texts, but porous, open and discursive things: a new genre – a form that *invited* the reader-as-writer's intervention.

Text and *hors texte* were thus rendered unstable forms, a genre that was constantly menaced with disappearance or absurdity. The distributional mode of these texts was largely toward an erotesis that demands a reply. In so far as it thus presumed a kind of conversational exchange, it was critical of the distributional mode that sought to place an artistic *fait accompli* before a large public at low cost: art through the mail, art on billboards etc. etc. In saying this, however, it should be noted that these were texts (works), printed and circulated in various ways (through our own journal, *Art-Language*, for instance), that were frequently unable to make up their minds regarding the constructive agency of their interlocutors. They were also forms that emerged amidst a host of other more-or-less discursive try-ons, try-outs and emergency conditionals.[28]

Some examples of these transitional forms are to be found in the Art & Language books *Hot-Cold* and *22 Sentences: The French Army,* both from 1967. These are books whose logic is partly formed by the order in which pages are turned. *Hot-Cold* raises a set of questions concerning relational concepts of quality and quantity exemplified by the terms 'Hot, Cold, Warm, Cool.' *22 Sentences: The French Army* examines the possible differentae and identity-conditions of a complex aggregate like the French Army. (It would be, incidentally, a French-speaking army that would contain an avant-garde.) What is noticeable about these two books is that a dwindling vestige of the declaration-to-unassisted-readymade remains. But, as we have said, the ostended 'readymade' stands in danger of incremental banality as 'declaration' succeeds 'declaration'. *Hot-Cold* and *22 Sentences: The French Army* do indeed seem to ostend or

to appropriate certain objects at their margins, but these are objects whose ontologies are complex and fugitive. While Weiner's 'One standard dye marker thrown into the sea'[29] may well be conceivable as a concrete though not-at-all-unassisted 'readymade', the thermodynamic properties – or the qualities - of things (Hot, Cold etc.) are virtually impossible to gather into the fold of the readymade. The French army is similarly an outlandish candidate for membership of that quasi-Duchampian category. Neither 'object' was capable of being appropriated as middle-sized dry good or as a lump of physical geography. No empirically ostensible object remained. Instead, there were processes and conditions in which certain objects might be brought under description.

Of course, 'declaration' and many other overtly ostensive forms had by this point all but disappeared, being replaced by interrogatives, or by ordinary declarative sentences that announced an intention 'to examine' or 'to consider' a certain possibility. What had begun at the edges of the readymade had by now passed through various transformations. The first of these occurred as the 'declaration' or ostending text began to supplant a literal object that was now only to be imagined or entertained as a conjecture. One such conjecture was raised in the editorial introduction to the first issue of *Art-Language*:'Suppose the following hypothesis is advanced: that this editorial, in itself an attempt to evince some outlines as to what "conceptual art" is, is held out as a "conceptual art" work.'[30] At moments such as this, the text began to enter the margins of the Institutional Theory itself – the cultural discourse of some sort of art-world. To begin with it remained as a mere deposit, or gesture.

The second transformation occurred as the text acquired a recursive or discursive property. This property was acquired in virtue of certain often undifferentiated and simultaneous tendencies: 'instrumentalism' ('Different operations define different concepts'); 'essentialism' ('How you do your singling out determines what you single out'); or a certain diffidence regarding the possibility of an *hors texte* ('There is no object that escapes the discursive text; the text will have to suffice'). In other words, as more and more complex or hard-to-describe objects fell within the 'intended' quantificatory range of artistic discourse, so these objects were captured within the forms of that discourse itself.

As the discursivity of the text increased, so the remaining sense of it as 'readymade-by-description-or-ostension' weakened still further. Similarly, as the text ceased to function as a form that usurped the place of painting on the gallery wall, in the manner of one of Kosuth's 'Definitions', so the legacy of the containing frame also diminished. As both effects weakened, so did the power of those formal constraints on the length of the text that characterised the 'definitive' post-Minimal genres of Conceptual art as they were established in New York between 1967 and 1969. It was our experience at this point that the lack of formal constraint on the extent of the text allowed the mechanisms internal to its discursive production to take over. What drove the discourse in practice was not now the need to produce the brief illusions of transparency, but those recursive and dialogical processes by which the discourse itself was pursued and continued. This was a crucial moment in the establishment of what might be described as a new genre. One of the factors that suggested it was a new genre was that the question of whether and how far one could extend a text beyond the length of a label or a poster was not one that occurred in any existing literary genre.

A work from 1969 called *Sunnybank* will serve to illustrate the point. The gist is as follows: 'Consider the possibility of a work of art that is itself only a possibility: a wall that might be built between one back-yard and another. There are no plans for such a wall, it is not necessarily envisaged. What then is the nature of such an object? Its nature is to subsist in our manner of speaking.' Thus driven largely from 'within', there is no a-priori natural limit to the extent of the text, which is now subject to social modes of augmentation and growth and change. The work of art, such as it is – or rather insofar as the question of its status as art arises – now approaches an ontological condition closer to performance than to any pre-textual literal object. This is not to say, of course, that it is literally performance. It is rather to say that it would be impossible to characterise without a sense of the social conditions that are not merely external determinants, but internally constructive principles.

This is what we made out of the definitive genres of Conceptual art. It would be true to say, then, that for the purist this is also when we ceased to produce Conceptual art, and that we had already begun a conversational genre. To the historically orthodox, we have to say that the purist is correct. For us, if Conceptual art was to have a future, then

it was not as Conceptual art, and just as importantly not as the form of institutional critique that has been named as Conceptual art's virtuous and exceptional exemplar.

VII

The narrative that has just been given supplies no positive account of distributive 'democracy,' of 'dematerialisation,' or of any of the other overwrought fantasies of the Conceptual-art entrepreneur. It offers an account that is not so much ignored by Buchloh, Krauss and others, as beyond their empirical, historical and analytical means. It is an account of the production of an unstable object – an object that eventually inaugurates a sense of a new genre, but a genre that embraces a degree of hybridity, and that can finally neither lay claim to material and medium specificity nor decisively rule it out.

If the concept of institutional critique is not to remain pickled in sentiment, it will need to be re-theorised in terms of works that have sufficient intellectual agility and internality to put up a critical resistance to the institution as it mutates and develops. It is in this resistance that we may find some vestige of the autonomy that was lost in the transfiguration of high modernism into expensively framed money, lost again in the trajectory from Minimalist literalism to institutional critique, and lost once more in the postmodern development of Conceptual art into architectural adjunct. The apparent tokenization of the work of art is an institutional effect, not a prohibition on staying awake; nor, for that matter, is it a coercive cultural condition - though (powerful) cultural condition it is.

Consider then, the idea of the work of art as an essay that gives voice – often a ventriloquist's voice and form – to a project. Consider further that this form is a fragment lopped off from a conversation – a performance of sorts that is always under the pain of erasure, conceived as both form and social reality. Finally, consider the possibility that '*"This is the work." "I don't think so",*' is the work.

This is a genre that is readily spattered with material forms. An interrogative and the discussion to which it gives rise may naturally invoke an essay or a heuristic in the form of a picture. Insofar as the outcome is exhibited it may be in the guise of a painting. But this is a painting that is in fact a form cut off from a usually larger whole – in the

manner, perhaps, of a swatch or sample. And the picture may be of more than a thousand words or of none.[31] It will, if we are lucky or judicious, possess an internality or autonomy that it owes to its discursive origin, even as it loses that autonomy to the institution that frames it. It will be, as we have suggested, a performance of sorts. It will indeed be 'a strange quirk in the fate of Conceptual art',[32] but then the form of Conceptual art whence it came was itself strange. We might say even that the mode in which such things as paintings answer to the discourse is one that approaches performance. As much perhaps as the mode of answering that is made by the not-quite rock 'n roll lyric. (We have produced three LPs with the Red Crayola as well as a libretto for an opera.) In painting, we act the part - up to the limit of imposture. There are many possible positions to be occupied – one suspects a Xenoian infinity – between the painter and the actors of the Jackson Pollock Bar, working to a script by Art & Language, who have pretended to be Art & Language engaged in painting - and who, in doing so, have produced a painting of their own. These are positions as capable of embodying a near absence of cultural guile as an iterative and recursive knowingness. Once the genre is bound to its social use as discourse there is little or no artistic identity to be lost – only the displaced tokens and impostures from which contemporary art fashions the episodes that keep capital interested. Two putative artists and a putative art historian sat in a studio writing this.

The name Art & Language represents the artistic work of Michael Baldwin and Mel Ramsden and the literary and theoretical work in which they are joined by Charles Harrison – as it has done since 1976. The name was first adopted in 1968, to refer to a collaborative practice that had developed over the previous two years between Baldwin and Terry Atkinson, in association with David Bainbridge and Harold Hurrell. The journal *Art-Language* was first published in May 1969 and Joseph Kosuth was subsequently invited to act as American editor. In the following year Ramsden and Ian Burn merged their separate collaboration with Art & Language. Harrison became editor of *Art-Language* in 1971. By the mid 1970s some 20 people were associated with the name, divided between England and New York. From that point, however, the genealogical thread of Art & Language's artistic work was taken solely into the hands of Baldwin and Ramsden, with whom Harrison continues to collaborate on projects such as the present essay.

[1] 'The Dematerialization of Art' is the title of an essay by Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, published in *Art International*, Vol.12 no.2, February 1968. It opened with an account of current trends in Minimal and post-Minimal art; 'As more and more work is designed in the studio but executed elsewhere, as the object becomes merely the end product, a number of artists are losing interest in the physical evolution of the work of art. The studio is again becoming a study. Such a trend appears to be provoking a profound dematerialization of art, especially of art as object, and if it continues to prevail, it may

result in the object's becoming wholly obsolete' (p.31). In Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin H.D.Buchloh, *Art since 1900*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2004, Foster writes of the urgency of the question, 'Is there a limit to the materiality of the art work, a zero degree of its visuality?' (p. 534). The concept of dematerialisation was of some marginal theoretical and speculative interest. As a kind of literalisation of Greenbergian modernist reduction finally ending in 'thought forms' and telepathy, it was vacuous, however. As a counter-cultural idea about art that was of political and economic implication by virtue of its lack of commodity status, it was simply laughable.

[2] *Art since 1900,* p.128.

[3] *Ibid,* p.499.

[4] Krauss in *ibid,* p. 548. There is some inconsistency in the various accounts of the initiation of institutional critique that are given in *Art since 1900.* While Krauss represents Foucault's influential 'revelatory strategy' as prompted by the events of 1968, Buchloh associates a shift from Conceptual art to institutional critique with Dan Graham's *Homes for America* of 1966-7.

[5] *Art since 1900*, p. 552.

[6] *Ibid,* p.28.

[7] *Ibid,* p.29.

[8] *Ibid,* p.456.

[9] Buchloh in *ibid,* p.551.

[10] 'Works of art are analytical propositions. That is, if viewed within their context – as art – they provide no information what-so-ever about any matter of fact. A work of art is a tautology in that it is a presentation of the artist's intention, that is, he is saying that that particular work of art *is* art, which means, is a

definition of art. Thus, that it is art is true *a priori.'* Kosuth, 'Art after Philosophy,' *Studio International,* Vol. 178 nos. 915, October 1969, p.136. The apparent aim of Kosuth's essay was to argue for a fully autonomous post-Duchampian 'art condition,' and to serve as manifesto for the avant-garde idea of 'art as idea.' Though parts 2 and 3 were published in subsequent issues of *Studio International,* the theoretical aspect of the essay is restricted to its first part, which has been much reprinted – and much criticised for its philosophical presumptions and arguments.

[11] *Ibid,* p.553.

[12] *Ibid,* p.42.

[13] From 'A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art', *Art International,* Vol.12 no.5, May 1968, quoted in the catalogue, *L'Art conceptuel, une perspective*, Paris: Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1989, p. 155. The original slides that were the intended illustrations for Graham's publication were shown in Robert Smithson's and Nancy Holt's loft in New York, probably in 1967.

[14] Given the problematic aetiology and ontology of *Homes for America,* it is not easy to be sure precisely what it is that Buchloh's claims for its radicality should be tested against. The work began its public life, under the title *Project Transparencies,* as a sequence of some twenty photographic slides for the exhibition 'Projected Art' at Finch College Museum of Art, New York, in December 1966. Graham referred to these in the article for *Arts Magazine,* Vol. 41 no. 3, December 1966-January 1967, that was published under the title 'Homes for America: Early 20th-Century Possessable House to the Quasi-Discrete Cell of '66'. In fact his own photos were cut from the published form of the article, leaving as

black-and-white illustration only an image taken from a real-estate brochure and a photograph of a wooden house by Walker Evans. A revised double-page layout by Graham, illustrated with his own photographs, was printed in various versions from 1970 onwards and was thereafter widely used as exhibition material. (One of these in monochrome is reproduced in *Art since 1900,* p. 28, as '*Homes from America,* 1967, print,' and referred to there by Buchloh as 'Graham's publication of one of his earliest works in the layout and presentational format of an article in the pages of a rather prominent American art magazine.') The artwork for Graham's 'original' layout as he subsequently envisaged it with photographs in full colour is now in the Daled Collection, Brussels. A colour lithograph made from this was published by Nova Scotia College of Art in 1971.

[15] *Art since 1900,* p.215.

[16] *Three New American Painters: Louis, Noland, Olitski,* Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina, Saskatchewan, January-February, 1963; reprinted in O'Brian ed., *Clement Greenberg: the collected essays and criticism,* Vol. 4, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993, p. 153.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] See, for instance, the account given in chapter 4: 'The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas' in Thierry de Duve, *Kant afer Duchamp,* Cambridge Mass., and London: The MIT Press, 1998, pp.199-279.

[19] LeWitt, 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,' *Artforum*, Vol. 5 no. 10, Summer 1967, p.79.

[20] The textual materials that comprised *Air Show* were written by Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin in 1966-67 and were incorporated in the letterpress booklet

Frameworks, published by Art & Language Press, Coventry, in 1968.

[21] First published in *Artforum,* Vol. 5 no. 10, Summer 1967.

[22] Hyman, 'Language and Pictorial Art', in *The Companion to Aesthetics*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1992, p.264.

[23] This was Barry's contribution to the exhibition 'When Attitudes become Form' in its showing at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, in August-September 1969. The 'installation' of the work was effected by means of a printed notice on the wall. At that time Barry was represented by the avant-garde dealer Seth Siegelaub, whose views on the presentation of current art were expressed in a conversation with Charles Harrison, published as 'On exhibitions and the world at large' in *Studio International,* Vol. 178 no. 917, December 1969, pp 202-3: 'Whether the artist chooses to present the work as a book or magazine or through an interview or with sticker labels or on billboards, it is not to be mistaken for the 'art' ('subject matter'?)... If it is made clear that the presentation of the work is not to be confused with the work itself, then there can be no misreadings of it.'

[24] Rauschenberg's contribution to an exhibition of portraits at the Galerie Iris Clert in Paris in 1951 was the telegraphed text:'This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so.'

[25] This conjecture comprised the 'Air Show' section of *Frameworks;* see note 21.

[26] This was Weiner's contribution to the exhibition cited in note 23. It was indicated by a label on the wall, but no river was actually spanned.

[27] Buchloh, 'From the Aesthetics of Adminstration to Institutional Critique (some aspects of Conceptual Art 1962-1969', in *L'Art conceptuel, une perspective*, p.47.

[28] 'This sense of permanent transition and instability brought us to what we called an emergency conditional. The work was theory (or something) just in case it was art, and it was art just in case it was theory. Could we say then, that in its strangeness it resonated with both?' From 'Emergency Conditionals', a paper given by Art& Language to the conference, 'Philosophy and Conceptual Art', Kings College, University of London, June 2004.

[29] From Weiner's *Statements*, published in 1968.

[30] *Art-Language,* Vol. 1 no. 1, May 1969, p.1.

[31] 'A picture is not worth a thousand words, or any other number. Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture.' Donald Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean', in Sheldon Sacks ed., *On Metaphor,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979, p.45. But what if the picture *is* a thousand words?

[32] 'Art & Language Turns to Painting: a Strange Quirk in the Fate of Conceptual Art' is the title of an essay by Rosalind Krauss, published in *Art Press,* hors série no.16, Paris, 1995. Our response was published in abbreviated form as 'Rosalind Krauss: un petard mouillé' in *Art Press,* hors série no. 17, 1996, and in full as 'Northanger Abbey,' in *Art-Language,* New Series no. 2, June 1997.