PRESS RELEASE

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REGARDING SUPPORT LANGUAGES AND THE POSSIBILITY OF SELF VALIDATION

NB

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III.

INCLUDING:
CLEMENT GREENBERG IS A CONCEPTUAL ARTIST
and
FLATNESS AND SHAPE-ISM.[2]

‘Aaaah… yeah well we’re all full of shit!’ *Greenberg on Jackson Pollock*. T.J. Clark interviews Clement Greenberg. Open University TV progamme (1994)

1. Introduction: Night of the Living Dead.

The intentionality prerequisite to this text is to use Clement Greenberg’s description of flatness as an AQUA-SHAPE-MODEL-CRYSTAL to think through the relationship between art criticism and the artwork. Or more (or less) specifically the question: what do words *do* to (art) objects? In a contemporary sense, this might relate to the recently characterised ‘crisis in criticism,’ for example, see *October* (Spring 2002), *Frieze* (August 2006) and *ArtDeath* (January 2007). Or in broader art-historico-philosophical environs to the distinctions drawn between the visual and the linguistic, words and things, form and content – as Foucault puts it: ‘…the oldest oppositions of our alphabetic civilization: to show and to name; to shape and to say; to reproduce and to articulate; to imitate and to signify; to look and to read.’[3] The intention here is not to re-re-re-reanimate the *Living Dead* form/content debate and/or contemporary corpses of the aesthetico-beauty and/or critico-antagonism debacle-argument. Rather semi-regardless of Greenberg’s contemporary BADGUYand/orOLDFOGEY status, I will argue that the glistening aporetic dimension of his writing presents the possibility of a conceptual JUICE-TOOL with which to produce ALTERNATIVE PROBLEMS to the aforementioned binary departmentalisation. I will ALSO track these ideas in response to a conversation, which occurred recently, between the ART THEORISTS/PHILOSOPHERS Peter Osborne and Eric Alliez.

The above-type of standardised pseudo-opposition is evident in the hackneyed binarisation often linked to [for instance] the opposition of an Adornean-critical-model premised upon ideas of negation, dialectics, deferral and/or [perhaps] lack, against a Deleuzian-anti-critical-affirmatory-or/perhaps-aesthetic-model, based on ideas of affect, the untimely (as-the-anti-dialectical) and the event. In line with this philosophical DOOMBO-cartooning, Deleuze is pictured as laughing and Adorno (obviously) looking mournful [Figs 1 and 2]. It should however be made clear that these crudely obtruded positionalities conform to the way in which they are usually presented in artworld contexts by *YOU, ME, US,* and so this is not a bad starting point. This is the REALITY of the artworld-shit-ghetto-situation. This was pointed out by Peter Osborne [see above] when he suggested that within the sphere of Anglo-American art theory, Deleuze’s ideas of affect and particularly his notion of forces is/are inevitably and irretrievably (though perhaps incorrectly) connecto-fucked to the idea of a restoration of traditional aesthetics (because of the way this is constituted through an opposition to concept in Deleuze’s thought). He claims this allows people to not have to talk about criticality. And has been used as a retro-legitimation of a period of anti-intellectualism in, for example, British art since the early nineties. He is probably referring here to yBa the ANTICHRISTOFCRITICALART and extendo-continues on to talk about a relegitimization of conventional ‘existential notions of the artist, which are obviously also *not* unconnected to the booming market in contemporary art.’[4] This is similar to OCTOBERITE criticisms of a ‘…pop-libertarian neo-liberal aesthetic very attuned to the market.’[5] Or for instance, as Julian Stallabrass has it, the shift away from a *golden age of criticality* which supposedly occurred at some unspecified point in the 1960/70s where art was seen: ‘…as an integral part of an intellectual culture which also involved politics, philosophy, music, literature and the

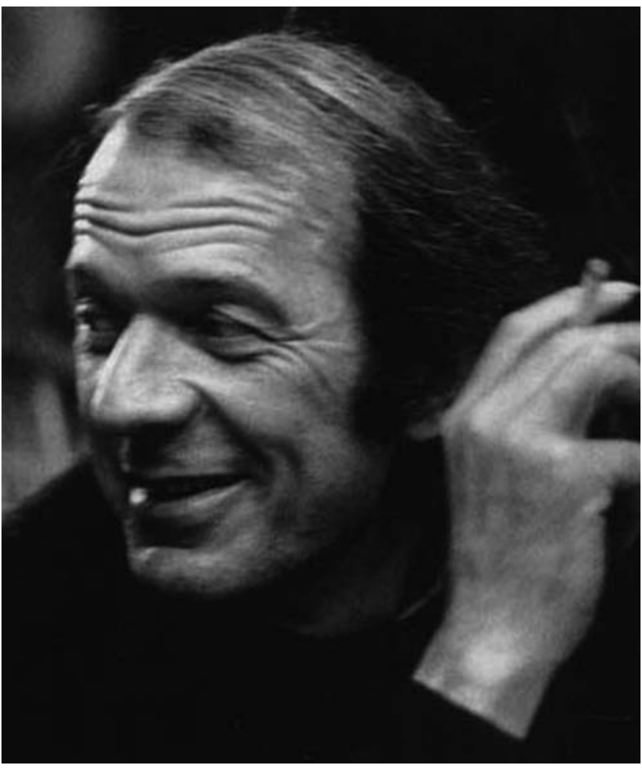

Fig 1: Gilles Deleuze

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[1] Telegram cable (as artwork) sent by the artist Christine Kozlov to Kynaston McShine, curator of *Information* (1970). The negation of representational information as its own source of representation.

[2] Robert Garnett suggested the term *Shapeism* via Tony Hancock and Giles Deleuze.

[3] Michel Foucault, *This Is Not a Pipe* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983): 21.

[4] Peter Osborne. From transcription of the conversation: Peter Osbourne and Eric Alliez. Kingston University, 2008.

[5] Hal Foster referring to Dave Hickey, in George Baker et al, ‘Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism’ in *October*, Vol. 100, MIT Press (Spring 2002): 204.

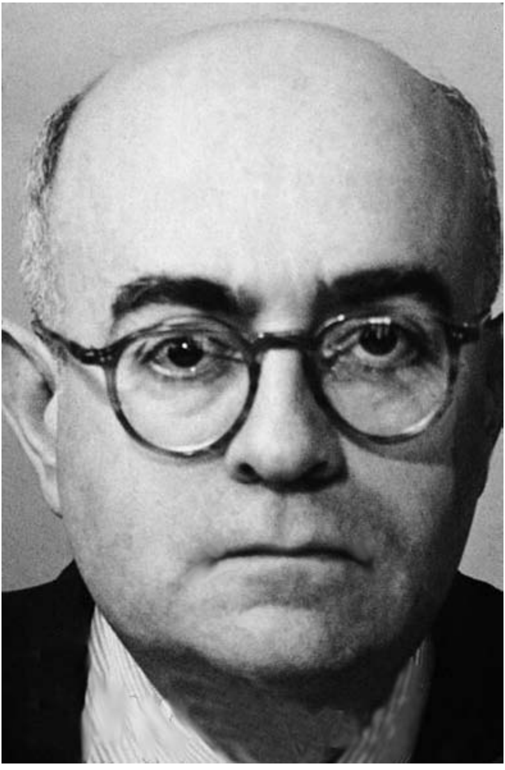

Fig 2: Theodor W. Adorno

sciences, to one that sees it as a lifestyle issue, a complement to interesting furnishings and floor coverings…'[6] Alliez juxta-theorises by suggesting that 'the aesthetic does not belong to the Deleuzian vocabulary,' and that rather he (Alliez) is concerned with 'forces rather than forms … forces against forms … as a type of anti-formalism'.[7] But I will return to this BELOW. HA. HA.

The distinction between Osborne and Alliez's position is also drawn in another way – in relation to ideas of rupture and/or continuity. Osborne argues for Duchamp and rupture, Alliez for Matisse and continuity-of/as-difference. To take these in turn. Osborne proposes the idea of a break in the ontology of art in the 1960s 'which is artistic as well as political.' A move to *post-mediumality* [Krauss[8]], or *art-in-general* [De Duve[9]] where 'medium is no longer an ontological category.' Arguing that if, taking into account that most theories of contemporary art seem to claim the art of the 1960s as involving a rupto-break with the aesthetic definition of the artwork, that there is a sense in which Conceptual Art, as the most extreme form of anti-aesthetic, is 'most clearly able to PUMP-FUCK this ontological break.' And therefore contemporary art is 'constituitively post-conceptual.'[10] It can be expando-proposed (and Osborne has done this) that the reason why Conceptual Art received a critical revival from the early 1980s onwards is because it seems a more workable way of accounting for post-1960s art than the philosophically problematic discourses of postmodernism.[11] This is not to say that the term *conceptual*, or more specifically *post-conceptual* is not problematic itself – used journalistically as a dumb-arse catch-all for any artwork that is *not-painting* or *not-sculpture.* Or adopts a variety of *non-traditional* forms.[12] Or is supposed to be about IDEAZZZZ. *In oppositio* Alliez argues for continuity-as-difference: 'Not the oriented history of the same (developing its identity) but the processuality of becoming-other (alteration).'[13] An escape from purely 'formal artistic finality' that is 'painting brought back to its essence in the optic of pure opticality/planeness'[14] à la Greenberg. This argument involves an investment in 'the impossible figure of Matisse in a kind of contemporary mode'[15] as a vitalist thinker – engaged in a form of 'constructivist vitalism' (as Osborne puts it).[16] Or as Alliez writes 'the processuality of a vital energetics which replaces an aesthetics of forms, composed – fixed – in the closed space (of Art).'[17] In both cases, either rupture or continuuuuuuuity, it seems Greenbergian formalism is a focal point or fulcrum. Either as something conceptual art reacts against. Or as something to be retro-historically displaced to allow for *Matisse-and-continuity*. These are complex (and treacherous) discursive spaces, twisting with cliché and bureaucracy, played off against the complex web of evaluations and counter-re-re-retro-evaluations, both in terms of Greenberg's ideas, conceptual art practice (since its critical revival in the 1980/90s) and the semi-perverse recuperation of Matisse.

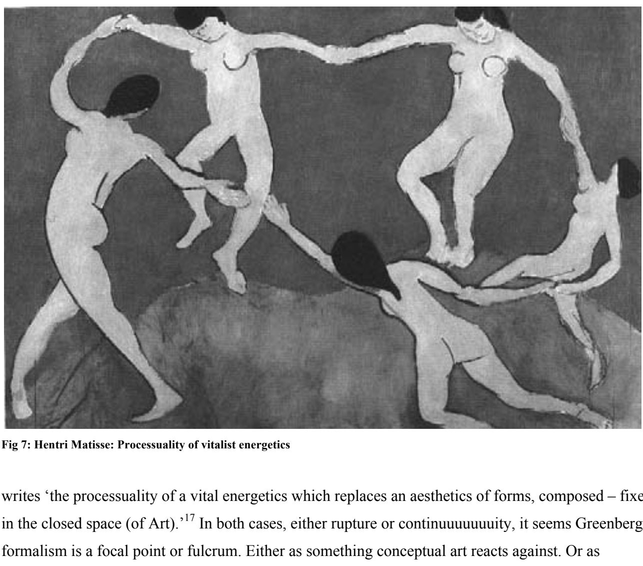

Fig 7: Hentri Matisse: Processuality of vitalist energetics

2. Living Dead II. Greenberg's theories of Modernist Painting

Exemplary par excellence, both Alliez and Osbourne imply that Greenberg conceives of his idea of art as a finality. An end point – even if Greenberg argues the opposite.[18] The fiiiiiiiiiiinal reduction or retreat in a series SLIP-GROOVING through Greenberg's career. First a retreat from society in his 'Avant Garde and Kitsch' (1939) essay – from the 'vicarious experience and faked sensations'[19] of kitscho-culturo-as-propagando-mind-death roughly coordinating with Adornian/Frankfurt school

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[6] Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite. British Art in the 1990s* (London: Verso, 1999): 271.

[7] Alliez, see footnote 4.

[8] Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999)

[9] Thierry de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp* (Massachusetts/London: MIT Press, 1997)

[10] Osborne, From transcription of conversation. Kingston University, 2008.

[11] See Peter Osborne, 'Art Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Criticism, Art History and Contemporary Art' in *Art History*, Vol 27. No. 4. September 2004: 651–670; 663. The application of the concept of postmodernism to the Arts is brief and unconvincing (roughly the first half of the 1980s). For an account of the problematics of the term postmodernism see: Jean-Francois Lyotard, 'Note on the Meaning of Post-' (1985) in *Postmodernism: A Reader,* ed. by Thomas Docherty (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993): 47–50.

[12] For instance this is a tendency Charles Harrison blames on 'journalistic art writing of 1990s'. Charles Harrison, 'Conceptual Art.' In *A Companion to Art Theory*, ed. by Paul Smith and Carolyn Wilde (London: Blackwell, 2002): 320.

[13] Eric Alliez and Jean-Claude Bonne, 'Matisse and the Becoming-Life of Art', in Rodger Frey and Alexander Ruch (eds.) *Polygraph* 18, 2006: 113.

[14] Ibid: 111.

[15] Alliez, see footnote 4.

[16] Osborne, see footnote 4.

[17] Alliez and Jean-Claude Bonne, op. cit.: 113.

[18] For instance in a 1978 postscript to Modernist Painting he writes how he was 'trying to account for how most of the best art of the last hundred-odd years came about […] but not how it had to come about, still less how the best art still has to come about.' Clement Greenberg 'Modernist Painting' (1960) in *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays and Criticism: Modernism with a Vengeance. 1957–1969* (Vol. 4) ed. by John O'Brien (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): 93–4.

conceptions of the culture industry and MASS-PROLE-DECEPTION. Then a retreat from subject

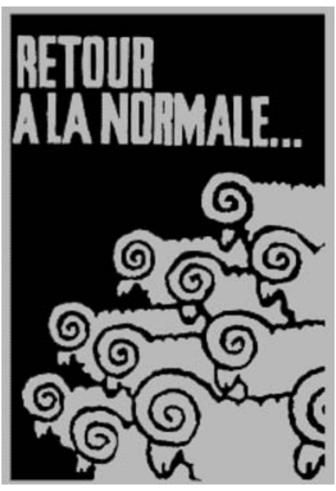

Fig 8: You're all fucking sheep

matter, described as early as 'Towards a Newer Laocoon' (1940). And finally to reducto-abstraction-flatness in his writings in the 1950/60s. Greenberg describes this trajectory (in 1960) as an intensification of the 'self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant' involving a reduction to what is 'unique and irreducible.' Where each art should be rendered 'pure,' and in this *purity-as-self-definition* 'find the guarantee of its standards of quality as well as of its independence.' This is the now familiar idea of 'medium specificity,' and the reduction of painting to the 'ineluctable flatness of the canvas'[20] involving the attempt to avoid associations with *FALSE*, ILLUSIONISTIC, THREE-

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19. Clement Greenberg, 'Avant Garde and Kitsch', in *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989): 10.
20. Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' (1960): 86–7.

DIMENSIONAL SPACE through the abandonment of 'the representation of the kind of space that recognisable objects can inhabit'. With the proviso-contradiction that abstract art does still present a 'kind of illusion' that suggests a third dimension, but that this 'analogous illusion' can be travelled through 'literally or figuratively only with the eye.'[21] This could be a kind of 'formal artistic finality'[22] as Alliez suggests. A finality as IDEALO-FORMALISM. As a retreat from reality, to political conservatism. A gradual move away from the Trotsky-esque sympathies of his early writing, and a reduction to less and less narrative (Owens).[23] The final end-end-point of a succession of reductions and retreats which are in turn underwritten by a reducto-purificatio of the viewer-rendered-'objective.'[24] So that aesthetic judgements are to be based on 'qualitive principles,' as opposed to the 'purely subjective.' As 'immediate, intuitive, undeliberate and involuntary,'[25] as Greenberg says '…a masterpiece as a dog can be grasped in the split second. An instantaneous look, and you can see how good a Titian is, when he's good.'[26] Coordinating with the reducto-producto of the artwork as non-theoretical and 'individual' – the artist 'does not make art as a demonstration.'[27] These are temporal and formal restricto-reductions of the experience of art to an 'at-onceness,' where, like a sudden revelation, the viewer is 'summoned and gathered into one point in the continuum of duration.'[28] (In)famously Michael Fried ultra-extends this reducto-logic as a rearguard defence-crit of Minimalism's *theatricality*[29] – derived in part from his reading of Merleau-Ponty[30] – and arguing for '*presentness'* as an experience wherein the temporality of the object becomes the temporality of the subject. A kind of painting-as-'instantaneousness'[31] (as anti-theatre) 'given' immediately without narrative or representation in a *sheer presentation* where the viewer is gathered at one point and temporo-fucked from his or her *literal*-social and historical context. As Merleau-Ponty writes: '…we are free to recognise the strange mode of existence enjoyed by the object behind our back.'[32] This is a state of

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21. Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' (1960): 86–7.
22. See footnote 16.
23. Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism' in *October* No. 12. (Spring/Summer 1980): 67–86.
24. Clement Greenberg, 'Seminar II' in *Art International*, Vol. 18 No. 6 (Summer 1974): 73.
25. Greenberg, 'Complaints of an Art Critic' (1967), first published in *Artforum*, October 1967: 38–39. Here quoted from Greenberg *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–69*: 265.
26. Public debate with Clement Greenberg, The University of Ottawa, March 30, 1987, in Thierry de Duve, *Clement Greenberg. Between The Lines*, (Paris: Éditions Dis Voir): 123.
27. Greenberg, *Modernist Painting*, 92.
28. Clement Greenberg, The Case for Abstract Art, in *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays and Criticism: Modernism with a Vengeance. 1957–1969* (Vol. 4) ed. by John O'Brien (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): 81.
29. See: Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood' in *Artforum*. Vol. 5 No. 10 (Summer 1967): 12–23.
30. Minimalists such as Judd and Morris also used phenomenological theory to defend their position, in relation to the idea of an embodied perception: the idea of the 'thereness' of things. The idea was not to show that something *is* (identifying it) but to show its thing-ness (that it exists).
31. Fried, Op. Cit.: 22.
32. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003): 29.

Fig 4: Clement Greenberg

'grace' – or as many have argued a kind of bourgeois mysticism/anti-intellectual aesthetics as [aristocratic] transcendence – a non-intellectual wow-ness requiring the correct education-as-cultural-capital. 'We are all literalists most of our lives. Presentness is grace.'[33] And all this validated through a reducto-historico-sensus-communus composed of 'the verdicts of those who care most about art and pay it the most attention' (obviously).[34] As a convergence in/and of objectivity of judgement. Describing an art historical trajectory moving (without a break in tradition) via the European lineage of Cezanne, Kandinsky, Picasso and so on, towards 'abstract' two-dimensionality and flatness in the form of American abstract painting – NO RUPTURE – a self-fulfilling (nationalistic) auto-prophesy of the

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33. Fried, Op. Cit.: 23.
34. Clement Greenberg, 'Complaints of an Art Critic' (1967) in his *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–69*: 265.

cultural pre-eminence of USA-BRAND aesthetic-and-sensuous-immediacy (in the 1950 and 60s) as a staging of American virtues of freedom and individuality, pitched against the supposedly robotic servility of communism.[35] …THE END.

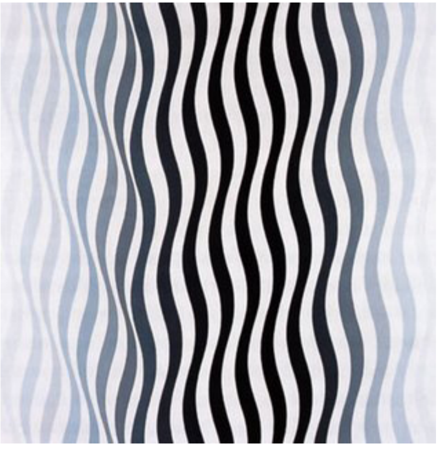

Fig 4: Clement Greenberg

3. …THE END. Dawn of the Dead

It is useful and convenient (and productive) to think of all this as a blockage, BUNG-CAP-CUL-DE-SAC-MUVVA_FUKKKKA_RAAAAS CLAAT-STOP-POINT to allow for the supposedly epochal confrontation between Greenbergian formalism and the various reactions to these theories. In this version of events, pitched against culture, history, fashion and (for instance) the post-Reinhardt reassessment of Duchamp's ideas of the readymade in the 1960s, Greenbergian formalism proves a fertile seedbed/killing-field for reaction, opposition and reacto-claim. Partly it can be seen as a question of style or fashion or history, which is not unconnected from questions of ideology, theory and practice. Where the stagings of Greenberg's ideas prove problematic to the sensibilities and theoreticalities of

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35. See Frances Stonor-Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 1999); and Francis Frascina, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (London: Routledge, 1985)

the 1960s/70s. Where their perceived formal and procedural reticence cut against the spirit of the age – a period of cultural exuberance, including 'political' engagement (Viet Nam, Equal Rights, World War I, Women's movement, Paris '68) and the explosion of youth/popular/consumer/drug/counter culture. In this context Greenberg's ideas appear EXTRA-WASHED-UP-BOMBED-OUT – authoritarian and aristocratic – the acting out of dead ideas hardened into a dogma. And in contrast conceptualism can be seen as 'the intellectual side of the communal life style which gripped the imagination of thousands of the Woodstock generation' conceptual artists 'as aesthetic drop-outs, as mind-trippers on heady structural linguistics [giving the finger] to the traditionally minded Formalists […]'[36] Prior to this in the early 1960s there was Pop art's re-inclusion of the *impurities* of popular kitsch culture and Minimalist art's presentation of a sited vision, embodied socially and culturally in the world: '…a double breakdown of the Modernist axioms that stress formal reticence on the part of the art object and naturalise the spectator as inviolate 'aesthete.'[37] Crucially, Minimalist artworks emphasized the fact that the artwork is dependent upon, and created by, the structures and languages of the institution which stage the artwork *as art.* This seems, for instance, to be prefigured by the successful contextualisation (or staging) of an industrially produced urinal as an artwork. In Osborne's argument, conceptual art develops these insights to stage a radical anti-aesthetic POST MEDIUMALITY as a rupto-reaction contra-Greenberg, in extension from the negation of the visual experience and medium specificity of art: the 'anachronistic daubing of woven fabric with colored mud, the chipping apart of rocks and the sticking together of pipes.'[38] And/or parodying it. A move away from: 'the established conception of "art" in its modern European sense as *sensuous particularity* or *aesthetic* […]' to a mode of artistic production determined 'by a philosophical form.'[39] Lucy Lippard famously wrote in 1968 that during the 1960s 'the anti-intellectual, emotional/intuitive processes of art-making characteristic of the last two decades have begun to give way to an ultra-conceptual art that emphasizes the thinking process almost exclusively.'[40] Language-based conceptual ULTRA-ULTRA-ART art may therefore be understood 'as an attempt both to restore and to radicalise the original anti-aesthetic impulse of the

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36. Ross Neher, 'Bathysiderodromophobia' in *The Fox* 3 (1976): 108.

37. John Roberts, 'Conceptual Art and Imageless Truth,' in Michael Corris, *Conceptual Art*: 308.

38. Victor Burgin, 'Socialist Formalism,' in *Two Essays on Art and Photography and Semiotics* (London: Robert Self, 1976): 18.

39. Osborne, 'Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy' in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, ed. by Michael Newman and Jon Bird (London: Reaktion Books, 1999): 48. See also Hal Foster's essay 'Who's Afraid Of The Neo Avant Garde?' in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996). His arguments are pitched against Peter Burger's criticism of the post-war avant-garde (in Burger: *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 1974), as repetitious and institutionalized, Foster claims the return of avant-gardism is not mere reenactment, but rather a traumatic form of critical enactment.

40. Lucy Lippard, *Six Years; The dematerialisation of the art object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973/1997): 42.

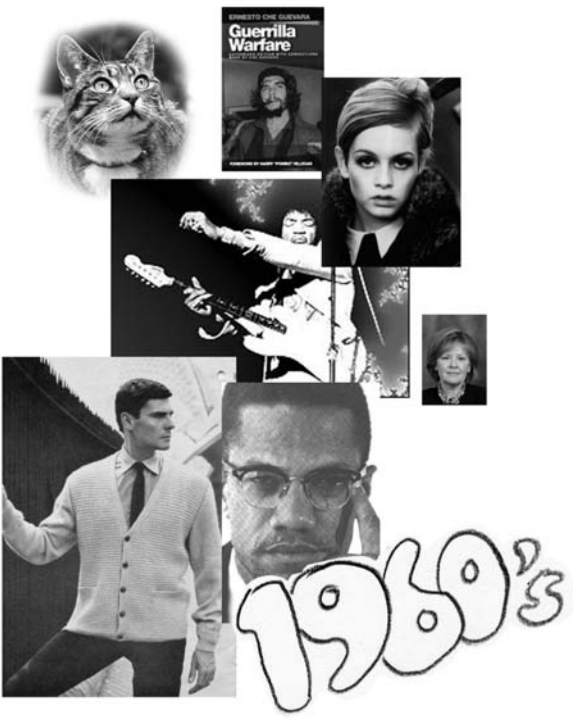

Fig 5: The 1960s

readymade, through the "visual indifference" and ideal conceptual content of language as a "readymade" signifying material.'[41] After a half a century delay the demonic prophesy of the piss-urinal FORCE-ACTIONS the infinite expansion of the art object and the corresponding infinite

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41. Peter Osborne, ed., *Conceptual Art*, Themes and Movements Series (London: Phaidon Press, 2002): 27.

expansion of the art institution. Dematerialisation of the art object and/or the rejecto-slickoff of trado-conventional media in favour of more *critical* forms (and also attempts to extend the social context for creativity) is followed by the *rematerialisation* of the artist and the infinite expansion of the art object as commodity (Buchloh).[42] And the reintegration of these 'critical' forms within the intricate bureaucracies of genre, e.g. anti-form, duration, life-action, demos, collaborations, sound, magazines etc. Followed by the institutional critique of the art institution as a legitimising structure (of the specialness of art, of class structure etc). And then aspects of the *political approach* of Conceptual Art (loosely speaking the cultural politics of the New Left[43]) led to the promotion of 'a startlingly romantic Workerism,'[44] in which the working class and its Historical mission became the ideal repositories of bourgeois faith in the INEVITABLE PROLE-REV-REV. These successes, failures, performances and stances of this cess-pit/nervous breakdown/orgy can be seen to be re-replayed or restaged as trauma within the context of the contemporary art world – in perpetuo. For instance the contemporary recupero-institutio of such, as theories of relationality (Bourriaud)[45] and antagonism (Bishop).[46] Or Andrea Fraser's 'institutions of critique' – where 'with each attempt to evade the limits of institutional determination, to embrace an outside, we expand our frame and bring more of the world into it. But we never escape it.'[47] Because 'we can't get outside of ourselves.'[48] The defunct binaries of visual/conceptual, sensual/intellectual are re-reinforced-reinforced, again and again, and continue to be accommodated curatorially, academically and institutionally as stylised (or *living dead dead dead*) re-re-tropes of KRITIKALITY and ESSFETTIX, stalking the scorched earth wasteland, split between the kritico-intellecto-antago-political pseudo-versus an essssfetico-sensuo-intuito/transcendent **SWAMP-MODEL-WHITE-TRASH-SHIT-TRAVESTY. Amen.**

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[42] Benjamin Buchloh, 'Conceptual Art 1962–69: From the Aesthetics of the Critique of Institutions' in *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 136–43.

[43] Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2002): 76.

[44] Michael Corris. 'Inside a New York Art Gang, Conceptual Art: Selected Documents of Art and Language, New York' in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge Mass and London: MIT Press, 1999): 470–485.

[45] Nicolas Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Presses du Reel, 1998/2002). Relational art is concerned with creating encounters or moments of sociability for nonscripted microtopian social interaction, within the reconfigured *institution-as-oasis/sanctuary*, pitched against a world where 'human relations are no longer directly experienced' but have become blurred in their 'spectacular' representation: 16.

[46] Claire Bishop. 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' in *October* 110, Fall 2004: 51–79. Proposed as an alternative to Bourriaud's version of democracy she proposes the concept of *Antagonism* (democracy as antagonism as proposed in the clapped out ideas of Radical Democracy/Chantal Mouffe) suggesting that a democratic society is one in which relations of conflict are sustained, not erased and therefore in which new political frontiers are constantly being drawn and brought into debate. She suggests, is evident in the activities of the artists Thomas Hirschhorn and Santiago Sierra.

[47] Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique' in *Artforum*, Sept 2005, No. 1: 282.

[48] Ibid. See also Simon Sheikh, 'Notes on Institutional Critique' in *Tranversal Online Journal*, http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0106/sheikh/en, 2006; and James Meyer's essay 'What Happened to Institutional Critique?' (New York: American Fine Arts, 1993)

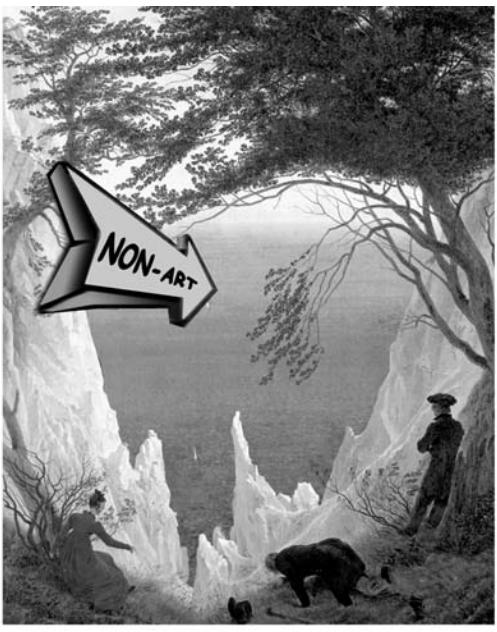

Fig 9: Critical artists observing limits of art institution

4. Return of the Living Dead: Flatness

Soooooooo can Greenberg's flatness be INTERESTINGLY and/or USEFULLY re-inserted within these debates/non-debates. This is NOT to do with whether he is right or wrong in a philosophical or art historico-theoretical sense but rather/whether the specific space, or shape of flatnessing/shaping his texts imagino-create is any use, or can do anything.

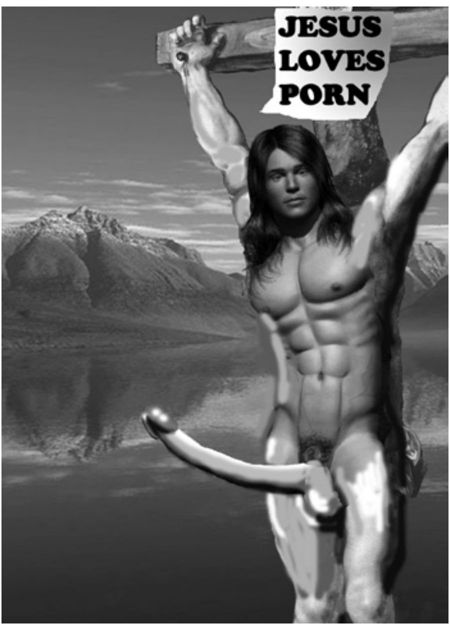

Fig 10: Jesus Loves Porn

Crucially Greenberg's description of flatness preserves and foregrounds the contradiction in his arguments. He argues that 'Modernist painting oriented itself to flatness as it did to nothing else.' But then adds that 'the flatness towards which Modernist painting orients itself can never be an absolute flatness [because] the first mark made on a canvas destroys its literal and utter flatness…' *PUUUURE* flatness is therefore impossible because two-dimensional space is an abstraction.[49] Also key to Greenberg's argument is his seemingly conservative and reactionary insistence on medium specificity. Unlike Fried who elegantly navigates a move to an ideal but sucked-out opticality whereby even in the example of sculpture the juxtaposition of the parts and the syntax of the work creates a tension that goes beyond the objecthood of the material. Greenberg requires a flatness that is still painting.[50] Painting as a non-ideal culturo-historico marker rooted in the awkward detailing of historical specifics. And it was/is in this respect that the readymade proves problematic for him. As De Duve suggests, as a *flatness* the blank canvas is logically the ideal painting but would also signal the destruction of the Greenbergian paradigm (of medium specificity).[51] That is, a blank canvas would fulfill the condition of painting more purely (in Greenberg's terms) than any other conceivable painting but because it would not have a brush stroke it would be unclear whether it could be classified as a painting – or rather just another 'arbitary object.'[52] By keeping painting-as-regulatory-marker at the core of his argument it is clear that this makes his position indefensible art historically and strategically – and so he is left (perhaps correctly so) as THE OLD MAN SHOUTING AT THE WAVES. But what his arguments DO

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[49] The foregrounding of contradiction is in fact a common feature of his writing. For instance, in 'Avant Garde and Kitsch' (1939) he describes how Kitsch culture is debased and pre-digested PORNO-DRIVEL for the erasinated zombie-masses but THEN ALSO claims 'nor is every single item of kitsch altogether worthless. Clement Greenberg, 'Avant Garde and Kitsch' (1939): 11.

DO is use: ‘the first brush mark destroys flatness’ not to deny the possibility of flatness, but to bracket the un-flatness of the brushstroke and re-flatten the flatness conceptually or virtually as a *flatness/non-flatness*. This is not a form of ideality but rather a conceptual/virtual flatness that lies (perfectly/imperfectly) across the surface. Like a conceptual artwork lying on the top of (or below) an actual artwork. Pre-mimic-echoing the shape of Deleuze’s description of an incorporeal-sense that 'frolics' on the surface of occurrences.[53] That does not exist but rather ‘subsist[s] or inhere[s]’ in states of affairs. Associated/expressed as verbs and/or infinitives. In Greenberg’s case as an ‘is flatness-ing’ [as surface effects/events] or surfacing/shaping – never reducible to the state of affairs of either one specific or even an endless series of instances of flatness (surfaceness).[54] A pre-post-erousness[55] but requiring a specific situation of flatness to ACTUO-PERFORM this ‘frontier of sense’[56] between what words express and the attributes of bodies. An [un]correlation between the abstract and empirical which Krauss and de Bois, for instance see as a problem in Greenberg’s writing – that is the mis-

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[50] Although Greenberg theorises opticality: ‘Instead of the illusion of things, we are now offered the illusion of modalities: namely, that matter is incorporeal, weightless, and exists only optically like a mirage,’ his theories keep medium specificity as cultural/historical regulatory principle. A way of thinking about flatness within a tradition – as a result the contradictions split his argument but his ideas are saved from a *(successful)* move to post-medium ideality, as in Fried/Kosuth’s optical/intellectual idealo-formalism.

[51] Thierry de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp* (Massachussets and London: MIT Press, 1997): 249–50.

[52] Clement Greenberg ‘Modernist Painting’ (1960): 90. Jeff Wall and Dan Graham have similar problems with the extra-social-historical dimension of the readymade in their writing in the 1980s. See: Jeff Wall, *Dan Graham’s Kammerspiel* (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1991)

[53] Deleuze’s reading of Stoic theory of the incorporeal nature of sense can be found in Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004): 3–42. This is also tied to Deleuze’s conception of virtual/actual. In *Difference and Repetition* (1968) Deleuze outlines the difference and shift between the two sets of categories: ‘The only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a “realisation.” By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is actualisation.’ There is *only* the real, and every (conceivable and inconceivable) element or relation subsists within it. The notion of possibilities, of possible worlds or events, is reconfigured as *unactualised* worlds or events which are distinguishable at all only insofar as they have real effects in this world (whether in the territories of fiction, dreams and speculation, or in those of butterfly collecting, UFO spotting or quantum physics).

[54] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*: 24. Deleuze uses the example of a tree ‘greening’.

[55] Robert Garnett, ‘Brian Wilson “Smile:” live in London, February 2004’ in *Frozen Tears II*, ed. by John Russell (Birmingham: Article Press, 2004): 473–475.

[56] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*: 24.

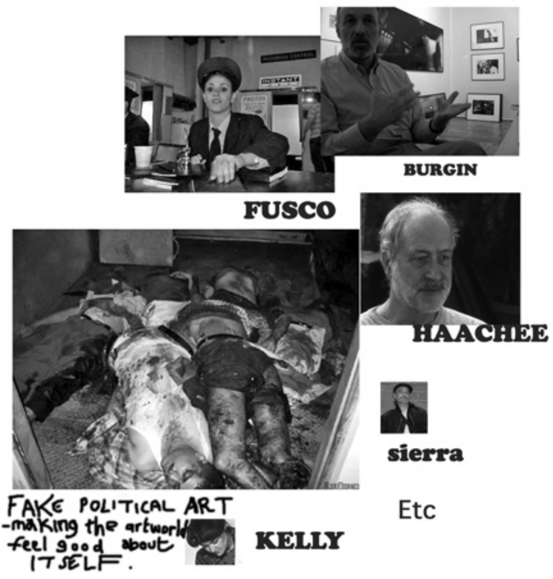
BURGIN
FUSCO
HAACHEE
sierra
Etc
FAKE POLITICAL ART -making the artworld feel good about ITSELF.
KELLY

Fig 10: Jesus Loves Porn

registration of his [abstract] flatness with the actuality the surface of Pollock’s paintings, dumped with a ‘heterogeneity of trash’.[57] But which is, in fact, the power of his text. The place where the fiction of flatness slides. And where the idea of flatness fictions the flatness of the canvas, coordinate/dis-coordinate with the ‘flatness/flatnessing’ of the picture plain which moves in and out, above and below. Greenberg describes this affect when he writes of Cubist collage: ‘The strips, the lettering, the charcoaled lines and the white paper begin to change places in depth with one another, and a process is set up in which every part of the picture takes its turn at occupying every plane whether real or imagined, in it. The imaginary planes are all parallel to one another; their effective connection lies in

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[57] Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994). It can be argued that any attempt to use Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* as a basis for critical discourse will be caught between the transcendental and empirical.

their common relation to the surface; whenever a form on one plane slants or extends into another it immediately springs forward. The flatness of the surface permeates the illusion, and the illusion itself re-asserts the flatness. The effect is to fuse the illusion with the picture plane without derogation of either in principle.’[58] A FLAAAAAAAAAAA-AAATNESSING which occurs both at the level of sense and at the level of bodies, and does not speak *of* things, but rather speaks at the same time on the level of things and on the level of contents (as Deleuze puts it). BUT NOT JUST SENSE. This also ultra-mimic-echoes-stage-re-rethinks the relationship between the surface/flatness of the artwork and surface/flatness of text: ‘…the relations between the surface of the exhibition of forms and the surface of the inscription of words.’[59] Here flatness might be configured in different ways. As a screen/page from which to read off ‘meaning’ – an *artwork-flatness* comparable with conventional ideas of the text-flatness of a book page, where ‘first-order “critical content”’ can be read ‘off the surfaces of art.’[60] Or as the binary-opposite surface-as-non-stick – too flat for meaning – where words slip off the surface. Perhaps Andy Warhol’s work is an example of this. Or surface as defence against TRAUMA – a blank screen/projection zone = affair with glamour/capitalism, A complex relationship with surface as resistance/critique or immersion/celebration of both. These varieties of flatness are complexly FICTO-RECONFIGURED into a range of experimental and transversal hybro-forms within conceptual art’s so-called ‘linguistic turn.’ In its *ART-SEMANTICS*-VARIETY – as a relatively conventional staging of the idea that *meaning is linguistic* – prefigured, for instance, in the work of Joseph Kosuth, where the supposed ideality of meaning is seen as independent of any particular physical instantiation of that meaning. For instance *One and Three Chairs* (1965), where the idea is that ‘chair’ is an ideal meaning that is equally well signified in linguistic or visual signification: photo-chair, object-chair and word chair – all ways of signifying chair (or ideal ‘chair-ness’). And becomes more explicitly PSEUDO-*POLITICAL* in the work of artists such as Victor Burgin or Mary Kelly where art becomes a kind of cultural studies and as such PRETEND-RECLAIMS politicality as *meaning* (the artwork exists primarily as a vehicle for the content). This is the *meaning-read-off-the-surface-version* (mentioned above). But in other *conceptual* practices such as those of Smithson-Weiner-Darboven-Graham-Art & Language there is an attempt to problematise the relationship between the supposed ideality of meaning

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[58] Clement Greenberg, ‘The Pasted-Paper Revolution’ in *Clement Greenberg. The Collected Essays and Criticism: Modernism with a Vengeance. 1957–1969* (Vol. 4), ed. by John O’Brien (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986): 63.

[59] Jacques Rancierre, *The Future of the Image* (London and New York: Verso, 2007): 79.

[60] Robert Garnett, ‘Brit Pop and Popism’ in *Occupational Hazards*, Naomi Sidefin, Julian Stallabrass, and Duncan McCorquodale, eds. (London: Black Dog Publishing, 1997): 18.

and the materiality of text, or ‘printed matter;’[61] and/or the distinction between looking and reading: ‘looking is not the same as reading unless it is.’[62] An experimentation with the various cultural codings

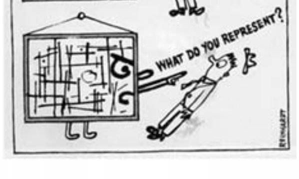
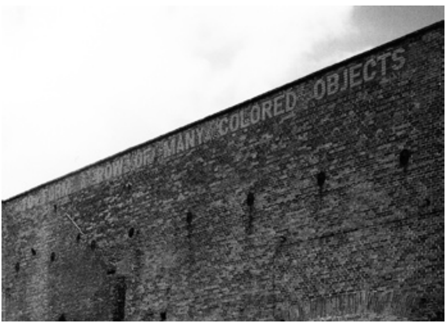

HA HA
WHAT DOES THIS REPRESENT?
WHAT DO YOU REPRESENT?

Fig. 14 . Ad Reinhardt, *'What do you represent?' 1945. Detail from How To Look at A cubist Painting.*

and performanco-actions of language: surfaces-for-looking-at and surfaces-for-reading, or as Terry Atkinson's describes it 'looking-at' objects and 'reading-about' objects.[63] And a recontextualising and deterritorialising of language and text. This coincides chrono-praxistically with (but was shut off from) Foucault's post-structural experiments with the conflation of the visual and the textual, and the hierarchy of theory and practice.[64] For example Weiner's 'Statement' pieces. *MANY COLOURED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLOURED OBJECTS* (1969)**.** As Osborne describes it: '*linguistically determinate*'. There is 'no question of [the works] having an existence as "idea" until they are formulated as statements; and no question of them being "pieces" until these formulations are actualised in some system of communication, in this case writing'.[65] This is therefore not IDEALO-MEANING to be understood as ideal in the manner of Kosuth's PLATO-CHAIRS etc. etc. But also 'MANY COLOURED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLOURED OBJECTS,' suspends the localisation or actualisation of the objects indicated, avoiding specification of a particular (predicted or author-designated) historical instance of *MANY COLOURED OBJECTS PLACED SIDE BY SIDE TO FORM A ROW OF MANY COLOURED OBJECTS.*



Indeed, it is in the sense of Deleuze's conception of virtual/actual that Weiner's language seems to have sculptural existence. *Virtual* as opposed to *possible* sculptures (as an event of sense). As Weiner suggests they could be actualised (depending on the viewer's intentions)[66] but they are no less real or *material* or sculptural in their linguistic or virtual/conceptual form. Second, Art & Language's FRAMEWORKS text involving a description of a series of theoretical, formal, physical, technical, philosophical, art historical shapes, spaces and frameworks which might allow virtually/actually for the singling out, existence, production and experience of an artwork in the form of a volume of air, while at the same time avoiding/withholding the specifics of SIZE, SHAPE or LOCATION. In this piece of writing the shape of the ideas (ideas of scale, philosophical ideas etc) become equivilent to the SHAPE of the artwork.

This is a proposal for a fictioning. For a shape-ing. A shapeism/shapeing which goes back and forward to Greenberg's flatnesses[67]/surfaces/flatnessing or forward/back to Deleuze's Stoic incorporeal sense of language. Or as a kind of performativity/fiction, GROOVETRANSFORMING out of J.L. Austin's saying-is-doing mode where within specific felicitous contexts: naming, marrying and betting[68] – an utterance is not usefully or interestingly 'true' or 'false' but rather is used for 'doing' things, for SAYING-DOING-PERFORMING actions where the utterance *is* the action: 'I name this ship the HMS Stalin'[69] I DO. I DO. I DO. And bringing a state of affairs into existence. Subsequently reformulated by Derrida (for instance in his arguments with Searle),[70] and on through Deleuze and Guattari[71] and Judith Butler[72], to remove the categories of 'felicitous', 'infelicitous', 'parasitic' (through the introduction of the ideas of iterability[73] and the redundancy of language,[74] to suggest ALL language is performative. An illocutional force where language is always a repetition and where the virtual relations of the events of sense constitute the condition of any given speech act. And so to use an example from Deleuze and Guattari, what transforms the accused into the convict[75] is the incorporeal attribute that is the expressed in or of the judge's sentence; again, the expressed cannot be separated from its expression, and neither can the attribute be located in the body of the convict to account for this transformation in sense.[76] Saying-doing him/her into a convict.

A fictioning where fiction EXPRESSES the *force* of language. And so 'political constitutions have a discursive regime identical to that of the constitution of literary structures,'[77] whereby the promise of the political manifesto is not only to declare a series of intentions in the abstract but also to bring about

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61. Robert Smithson, 'Four Conversations Between Dennis Wheeler and Robert Smithson' (1969–1970) in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. by Jack Flam (University of California Press, 1996): 294.

62. Robert Smithson, 'Language to be looked at and/or things to be read' (1967), in Smithson, *Collected Writings*: 61.

63. Terry Atkinson, 'Concerning the Article "The Dematerialisation of Art"' (letter to Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, 2 November 1968), extract reprinted in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimpson, *Conceptual Art*: (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2000): 54–55.

64. By the mid 1960s Foucault was well known in France. However translations of his book were not available until *The Order of Things* (1966; translated 1970), *Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969; translated 1972) and *This is Not a Pipe* (1968; translated 1973). Thierry de Duve, however, mentions in *Kant After Duchamp* (384) that Marcel Broodthaers, in the catalogue to his show at the Kunsthalle in Dusseldorf, *The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present* (1972), 'advises the reader in passing to read Michel Foucault's essay *This Is Not A Pipe*.'

65. Osborne, ed., *Conceptual Art*: 31.

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66. This relationship between production and reception is precisely given in his famous 'Statement of Intent' (1969) which was intended to act as a guideline for the operation of his work: 'THE ARTIST MAY CONSTRUCT THE PIECE. THE PIECE MAY BE FABRICATED. THE PIECE NEED NOT BE BUILT. EACH BEING EQUAL AND CONSISTENT WITH THE INTENT OF THE ARTIST, THE DECISION AS TO CONDITION RESTS WITH THE RECEIVER UPON THE OCCASION OF RECEIVERSHIP.'

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67. It might be argued here that Greenberg presented a more useful example (for Conceptual art) of 'Language-as-art' than for instance Fluxus, Minimalism or Sol Lewitt. For example Art & Languages texts seem to be a response (as parody, as criticism) to the complex architecture of Greenberg's ideas. Clement Greenberg is a conceptual artist.

68. See J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, ed. by J.O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962): 5.

69. Ibid.: 116.

70. Ibid., later *systemised* by John R. Searle in his book *Speech Acts: An essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969) and subsequently reformulated by Derrida in his critique of Austin (and Searle's defence of Austin) in *Limited Inc. a b c…* (Paris: Galilé, 1989)

71. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004): 83–122.

72. Judith Butler takes her lead from this point in relation to her own theorising of performativity, whereby cultural ideologies of gender are seen to be marked by what Butler describes as 'repetition' and gender is formed of the stylised repetition of acts. For instance, Butler, *Bodies That Matter. On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (London: Routledge, 1993)

73. See, for instance, Derrida, *Limited Inc. a b c….* See also 'Introduction 0.7' for a brief outline of performativity.

74. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalisam and Schizophrenia* (Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1987): 87.

75. Ibid.: 89.

76. Alain Badiou discusses this effect in relation to the use of the word 'terrorist' in his essay 'Philosophical Considerations of Some Recent Facts' in *Theory & Event*, 6.2 (2002): 1–13.

77. Jacques Derrida, 'This Strange Institution Called Literature' an interview with Derek Attridge, in Attridge, ed., *Acts of Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 1992): 33–75.

the conditions to which it refers, in the same way that a declaration of independence, although essentially a literary construct, aims to inaugurate change. And in the act of inauguration we see again the paradoxical play between the constative and the performative, between what is stated and what is done. Or in a similar sense Foucault writes:

> ‘I am well aware that I have never written anything but fictions. I do not mean to say, however, that truth is therefore absent. It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or manufactures something that does not as yet exist, that is, “fictions” it.’[78]

As a fictioning. Fictioning as illocutional force. As fabulation. As a mobilisation of the power of the false. As the act of simulation-creativity-as-WAGER-PROPHESY ‘What something is (actually) is also its power to become (virtually).’[79] As a ‘fiction-ing’/shaping/ flatnessing/surfacing or the FLATNESS of the idea of flatness, of the performances of flatness/surface, where ‘painting is flat in as much as words change their function with respect to it.’[80] And/or as words/ideas/shapes change their shape in relation to the flatness/non-flatnessing/surfacing. As a DYNAMIC CO-INCIDENCING. And/or AS IS VITAL TO REMEMBER IN ALL THIS as a RADICAL TEMPORALITY. As Adorno writes ‘The aesthetics that is needed today would be the self-consciousness of the truth content of what is radically temporal.’ And he continues: ‘certainly it needs to be shown that the truth content of great aesthetic manifestoes and similar documents has taken the place once held by philosophical aesthetics.’[81] And Mark Harris further expando-interprets this: ‘objective aesthetic truths’ aren’t to be found in the pronouncements of commentators who look for ‘stable criteria with which to judge these fast evolving artworks.’ But rather should be seen to come from ‘the hyperbolic slogans, tossed about by accelerating avant-gardes burning rubber down the twentieth century.’[82] Adorno (as much as Deleuze) seems determined to show that the ‘power, or truth’ of contemporary art could be located in just this kind of ephemerality, surface effects or superficiality. As a SHAPEISM. As a kind of superfiality As Deleuze descripes it, an experimentation with: ‘…what is coming into being, what’s new, what’s taking shape.’[83] A BEING-LOVING-[TRANS]FORM-CREATING FUTURE/PAST DESTINY. A shape strategy. ORGASMING the VIRTUO-MEANING surface of NON-THINGS and writhing with countless millions of bacteria and SUB ATOMIC LIFE FUCKING and BUMMING meaninglessly on the NON-STICK surfaces of ideas. ENDLESS, MEANING-LESS, POINT-LESS SPATIO-TEMPORAL RE-PRODUCTION. Neither continuity nor rupture. But rather the wager/sham/prophesy of SHAPEISM/SHAPING. Fortunately a kind of rupto-continuity. A HILARIOUS-ECSTATIC SHAPING to the surface/flatness by the GREENBERG/POLLOCK/ ABSTRACTION/CONCEPTUAL-ARTWORK/FICTION written out-on twisted up and experimental/flipped over in/on/through/against these flatnessing-shapes. So you could, for instance, also include here additions such as T.J. Clark’s troped-out, metonymically, philosophically-iterated, art-historically stylised extendo-disenergised flatnesses-as-surfaces-of-negation – NEGATION SHAPE – as an absence of audience – as a site of ‘negation and estrangement’[84] whereby the ‘practices of purity’ are equated ‘with practices of negation’ and ‘…modernism is being proposed as bourgeois art in the absence of a bourgeoisie or, more accurately, as aristocratic art in the age when the bourgeoisie abandons its claim to aristocracy.’[85] Or for instance, played out as more-of-the same, more-of-the-same played out as more-of-the same, more-of-the-same in Brian O’Doherty’s description of a kind of SHAPE DEATH involving: ‘ingenious hypotheses on how to squeeze a little extra out of that recalcitrant picture plane, now so dumbly literal it could drive you crazy. The strategy here was simile (pretending), not metaphor (believing): saying the picture plane is ‘like a ____________.’ The blank was filled in by flat things that lie obligingly on the literal surface and fuse with it, e.g., Johns’ Flags, Cy Twombly’s blackboard paintings […] Then there is the ‘“like a window shade,” “like a wall,” “like a sky” area.’[86] But a rupto-continuity that still hangs questo-probo-wager, These surface affects

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[78] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980): 193.

[79] Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002): 98.

[80] Rancierre, *The Future of the Image*: 78.

[81] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 337.

[82] Mark Harris, ‘The Press Release and Alternative Spaces’ in *Who’s Afraid of Red White & Blue? Attitudes to Popular & Mass Culture, Celebrity, Alternative & Critical Practice & Identity Politics in Recent British Art*, ed. by David Burrows (Birmingham: Article Press, 1998): 62–69.

[83] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972–1990* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995): 104.

[84] T.J. Clark, ‘Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art’ in Frascina, Francis, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000): 71–86.

[85] Ibid.: 47–63.

continue to glitter like sun on the ocean or light passing across the face of a film actor.

5. CONCLUSION: HA HA HA HA HA

So what is the relationship here between art and philosophy, art and criticism, words and objects in this context? Both Osborne and Alliez concur in their criticism of the philosophical performance of the artists Mike Baldwin and Lawrence Weiner in a screening from the 1960s. For instance, Osborne said this was ‘not bad philosophy, it was no philosophy.’[87] And Osborne is also severe in his criticsm of the philosophical dumbness and naievity of Kosuth’s misuse of the (defunct) philosophical idea of analytical proposition (after A.J. Ayers[88]) in *Art After Philosophy*[89]. Both in the philoso-conversation where according to Osborne Bochner recommended *Truth and Logic* because, ‘it was the only book he [Kosuth] would understand’,[90] and also in his book on Conceptual Art. But what is interesting is that at the same time he claims Kosuth’s stance-taking, as a ‘exclusive or strong Conceptualist,’[91] is vital to the development of his idea of conceptual art (as rupture): ‘in overreacting to the absolutization of the aesthetic in the Modernist ideology of pure visuality – by attempting the complete elimination of the aesthetic from the artistic field [and fulfilling] the classically Hegelian function of exceeding a limit in such a way as to render it visible, thereby reinstituting it as a limit on new grounds.’[92] This is reminiscent of the way, for instance, that Kosuth is [brilliantly] reclaimed/used/frozen out by De Duve in his retrospective *poststructural* analysis of conceptual art’s (or at least Joseph Kosuth’s) attempt to navig-move from the visual to the linguistic through the lens of Anglo-American analyo-structuralo-langue-philosoph ‘to replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone.’[93] But which inadvertently registers a turn of phrase, which shifts us away from the structuralist, analytical paradigm toward the enunciatative paradigm as theorised by Michel Foucault in his *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969). These are examples of the philosophical reclamation of art. The reclaiming of the knowledge that badartbadphilosophy which [co]produced it can’t see or know because it is effectively locked out of the arguments it is using by mistake. What then is the status of this badartbadphilosophy and/or SHAPEISM. Is this just temporary ‘double-coding’ or ‘vanishing mediator,’[94] or inadvertent blundering like the monkey and the typewriter – or a kind of found object - a temporo-flirtation-filiation before a return to the conventionalised autonomies of philosophy and art (‘competing modes of representation’[95]). In this respect Deleuze’s description of artist as producer-of-percepts and philosopher as creator-of-concepts is also surprisingly conventional in shape; for instance his Bacon-as-ventriloquist-dummy as jigging around as some form of MANIAC sensory output creator-of-percepts.

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[86] Brian O’Doherty, *Inside The White Cube. The Ideology of The Gallery Space* (Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1986): 26.

[87] Osborne, see footnote 4.

[88] A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover, 1946)

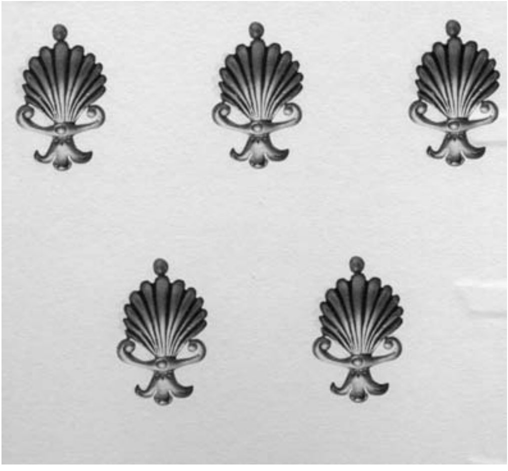
[89] Joseph Kosuth, ‘Art After Philosophy’, originally published in three parts *in Studio International*. Nos. 915–17 (October, November, December, 1969): 134–37, 160–61, 212–13. Cited here from Joseph Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy and After: Collected Writings, 1966–1990* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1993)

[90] Osborne, see footnote 4.

[91] Osborne, ‘Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy’: 48–49.

[92] Ibid.: 65

[93] De Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*: 382.



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[94] Osborne’s argument is that these examples/Kosuth’s use of philosophy exists as an ‘vanishing mediator,’ a Weberian term – a categorical extremism – as Jameson puts it: ‘a catalytic which is crucial agent that permits an exchange of energies between two otherwise mutually exclusive terms… [and] serves a kind of overall bracket or framework within which change takes place and which can be dismantled and removed once its usefulness is over.’ Quoted by Osborne in *Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy*: 65. F. Jameson, ‘The Vanishing Mediator; or Max Weber as Storyteller’ in his *The Ideologies of Theory: Essays 1971–1986. Volume 2: The Syntax of History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988): 25.

[95] Osborne, *Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy*: 50–1.

But could this not ALSO be described in relation to the possibility of NEW NEW NEW forms and the potentialisings of the transforming nature of art and philosophy (resisted academicallyckjkk-endlessly-endlessly)? And to conclude this might be configured in the form of a joke. Humour is, after all, Deleuze suggests ‘the art of the surfaces’.[96] Where the elegance of the shape of structure of the joke is important even if it is non-sense. A joke in the form of the post-Kantian problem of how you might know yourself (self consciousness and the nature of self-knowledge).[97] The problem is/was that you can know yourself in two ways: 1. immediately (bodily, intuitively, ‘pre-reflectively, implicitly), or 2. through reflection (that is, you can conceptualise yourself as a subject among subjects/objects). An opposition’ between subject and object in self-relation’.[98] However you cannot know yourself in both ways at once ie: immediately through reflection or through reflection immediately. The Jena Romantics – Fichte – Holderin – Novalis – Schlegel – thought the work of art solved this problem (of infinite regression and/or viscious circularity) because artworks have a structure such that they are objects which ‘behave’ as subjects (or we behave towards them as if…). The shape-joke is that although the Romantics claimed art solved the problems of philosophy, the revenge of philosophy was that this knowledge could only be retrieved philosophically. HA HA HA. THE FINALFINAL PUNCHLINE however is that the revenge of art is that this philosophical reclamation must be staged as art (which might be SHIT-PHILOSOPHY) – which was was attempted in the 1960s but not pursued. This may or may not work as good/bad art/philosophy/shape-ism but it sounds like a good joke – so it might be.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
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HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

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[96] Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*: 159.

[97] This argument is described by Fred Rush, (via Dieter Heinrich) in ‘Art, Aesthetics and Subjectivity’ in *European Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 15 No. 2 (August 2007): 283–296.

[98] Rush, ‘Art, Aesthetics and Subjectivity’: 285

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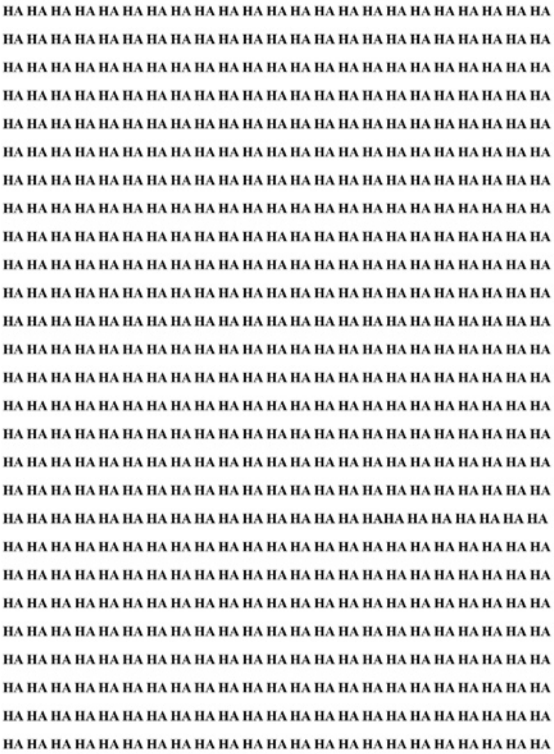
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Fig18 John Russell, Humour is the Art of Surface (after Moorcroft), ink on paper, (2007)