Constructivism to Minimal Art: from Revolution via Evolution

Peter Gubbins

pete.gubbins@nottingham.ac.uk

pete.gubbins@outlook.com

Student number 4224115

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Abstract

Modern art owes a debt to Constructivism. In particular, Minimal art owes a debt to Russian Constructivism. In something akin to the suspension of Lenin's embalmed body, Constructivism has been suspended since its demise. In this thesis I propose that the short-lived phenomenon of Russian Constructivism was revisited and further explored with the Minimal art moment in the West. Minimal artists in the United States were influenced by the works of the Constructivists, but due to the cold war this influence was suppressed. Constructivism in its original form ceased before the ideas and ideological urges of the Russian Constructivists were fulfilled. This form of art, that had a strong connection with a utopian social ideal, by 1932 was replaced by the officially decreed art of the Stalin era; Socialist Realism. The Constructivist moment did not lead into an artistic cul-de-sac because of the death of Lenin in 1924. The Constructivists have had an influence far beyond the years in which they first flourished and I intend to show that Constructivism has been unfairly misrepresented. From my research there is no question that Minimal art in the United States used Constructivist ideas. But the correlation between Minimal art and Constructivism was obscured by cold war politics, by many of the texts which have discussed Constructivism since, as well as by unconvincing curatorial decisions. This situation has led to an unacceptable degree of misrepresentation of the influence that Constructivism has had on Minimal art. Russian and Soviet Constructivism, rather than being seen as a cultural dead-end, should be viewed as a means by which the freedom to follow a non-representational path for abstract art was secured. Constructivism's influence on Minimal art has been undervalued. This thesis aims to settle the debt.

Acknowledgements

My inspiration to study the humanities came from two exceptional people: my former tutor Dr Pamela Bracewell-Homer and my late wife Debbie. Since beginning my postgraduate studies I have been supported and encouraged by my daughter Emma and my wife Lynne; this project would have been impossible without their love and consideration.

Several people from my first year at secondary school deserve my thanks. Joe Rollinson, Brenda Sage, Trevor Macey, John Bood, Ray Johns and the artist, designer and potter Fred Barrett all gave a shy Black Country lad encouragement when it was most needed.

I am grateful to Paul Wood of The Open University and Dr Margarita Tupitsyn, who were both involved with *The Great Utopia* exhibition. Thanks also to: Ivan Samarine, a former employee of Sotheby's, Dr Graham Whitham of The University of Kent, Professor John E. Bowlt of The University of Southern California, Professor Bruce Glaser of Norwalk Community College, CT, Daniel Buren, Lucy R. Lippard, Professor Caroline A. Jones of MIT, Professor Hal Foster of Princeton University and Kenneth Snelson. I also thank the members of staff at The University of Nottingham Library, the numerous organisations in the United Kingdom and abroad that have assisted me with my research, as well as the photographer Richard Pare. Special thanks also go to my friend, the artist, John Lacey, both for the interest he has shown in this project in the past and for his earlier proof-reading of my work. (I hasten to add that any errors that may remain are wholly mine.) I thank The University of Bristol for the limited funding received in 2011 and 2012, and Dr Mike O'Mahony. I also appreciate the modest amount I secured from the Windle Charitable Trust in 2013.

This thesis has been completed thanks to the flexibility and expertise of my supervisor, Dr Mark Rawlinson, and the valuable feedback received from Dr Alistair Rider and Dr Lucy Bradnock.

Author's declarations

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text this is my own work. Work done in collaboration with or with the assistance of others is indicated as such. The views expressed in this thesis are mine.

The right of Peter Gubbins to be identified as the author of this work is hereby asserted by him in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the United Kingdom's Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

Referencing scheme

The styles for academic apparatus in use in this thesis are extracted from the following sources:

MHRA. 2013. MHRA Style Guide: A Handbook for Authors and Editors, 3rd edition (London: Modern Humanities Research Association), in particular the use of the Author-Date system (section 11.4, pp. 77-78)

AAH. 2014. Style Sheet (London: Association of Art Historians) < <http://aah.org.uk/media/docs/Art%20History_Style%20Sheet_May%202014.pdf> [accessed 30 June 2014]

For capitalisation, hyphenation, punctuation and stylistic conventions the following resources have been used:

Oxford University Press. 2005. New Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

University of Chicago Press. 2010. The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press)

Where recommendations differ, the resource listed earliest has been used.

Transcription and labelling of contributors

In my full transcription of the audio from the WBAI radio broadcast – which appears in Appendix B, page 226 onwards – and the reproductions in this thesis from my transcription, the labelling of the contributors is accomplished by the use of their initials only. This decision was made for reasons of clarity. Since in Glaser (1966) contributor's surnames were in title case emboldened (Glaser's emboldening removed in this thesis) and in Glaser (1968) surnames in upper case were used. Whereas in Meyer (2000) all of the contributor's names were italicised in title case and contributions from the artists alone were emboldened (Meyer's emboldening removed in this thesis). To clarify, the names of contributors in reproductions in this thesis (using Frank Stella's name as an example) are formatted as follows:

Source	Typeface and format used
Glaser (1966)	Stella
Glaser (1968)	STELLA
Meyer (2000)	*Stella*
My transcript	FS

Transliteration scheme

With the exception of accepted common usage, representation of Russian words in this thesis has been arrived at by the use of the Library of Congress system. Russian Romanisation table (18 June 2012 version) available from <http://loc.gov/catdir/cpso/romanization/russian.pdf> [accessed 30 July 2012].

English and American spellings

In my transcription of the audio (as detailed above) I have elected to use American spellings throughout. In the chapters of this thesis American spellings are used in order to reflect the reference to the above-mentioned audio transcript and where American spellings are used in the originals of the cited texts.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

> A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be.
>
> —Donald Judd, *Specific Objects* [1]

> The concept of cultural politics is not founded on a notion of the cultural producer as a 'free' agent. […] The political consciousness of, and the possibilities of aesthetic innovation for, the artist are constructed in the social historical process.
>
> —Janet Wolff, *The Social Production of Art* [2]

Modern art owes a debt to Constructivism. Specifically, Minimal art owes a debt to Russian Constructivism. In this thesis I will posit that the short-lived phenomenon of Russian and Soviet Constructivism was revisited and further explored with the Minimal art moment in the West. I am not suggesting that Minimal artists had a burning desire to promote socialist ideals, but they were influenced by the works of the Constructivists and due to the cold war this influence was downplayed or denied. And this is especially evident in the case of the critic Clement Greenberg who, in the 1950s and 1960s, promoted art created in the United States in order to shift the focus of artistic endeavour from Europe to the United States generally, and more specifically to the city of New York.

Constructivism, with its combination of aesthetics and politics – an art with a social aspect and one which exhibited structure, design elements and which carried a

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[1] Judd (1965: 184).
[2] Wolff (1981: 94).

message – in its original form ceased to be practiced before the ideas and ideological urges of the Russian Constructivists were fulfilled. The eventual failure to promote the Constructivists' causes – the collective, the support of the Bolsheviks and art that avoided bourgeois affectations – was a result of Stalin's rise to power prior to, and following, the death of Lenin in January 1924. By April 1932 all groups of artists were ordered to be disbanded, and in August 1934 the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers[3] created a definition of Socialist Realism for artists and writers to adhere to.[4] Such a drastic state control of cultural output inevitably led to changes in artistic practices. In forsaking their earlier art, Vladimir Tatlin created his *Letatlin* and worked on theatre and costume designs, whereas Aleksandr Rodchenko moved away from painting and produced photography, photo-montage and typographical works. As did Gustav Klutsis, before his untimely death in prison. Others, like Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, decided to leave the Soviet Union.

Constructivism, a form of art that had a strong connection with a utopian social ideal, by 1932 was replaced by the officially decreed art of the Stalin era; Socialist Realism.[5] Ultimately the Soviet State failed to create a Marxist dictatorship of the proletariat (perceived as a necessary stepping-stone towards a classless communist state), and because of this failure it is often assumed that Russian Constructivism also failed. But this situation, as will be shown in this thesis, is a function of the cold war that developed following World War II. The Constructivist moment does not lead to a dead-end because of the death of Lenin in 1924. It is true that as a result of Stalin's rise to power, and due to the subsequent edicts promoting Socialist Realism, Constructivist artists that remained in the Soviet Union were forced to alter their approach. Certainly these events supressed and changed the types of art created by the Constructivists, but

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[3] Often referred to as the Soviet Writers' Congress.

[4] As Wolfgang Holz summarised, 'art had to be socially relevant to the mass viewer from the Party's point of view, as well as understandable and instructive ideologically'. Holz (1993: 73).

[5] Less strictly adhered to only after Stalin's death in 1953.

Russian and Soviet Constructivism does not need to be regarded as something akin to the body of Lenin. The Constructivists have had an influence far beyond the years in which they first flourished. It is my intention in this thesis to show that Constructivism has been misrepresented and its influence undervalued.

The labelling of artistic practices has often proven to be problematic, both in the categorisation of art works and in the categorisation of artists. The attendant ''isms' that have been allocated to artistic practices in an effort to ease their art historical classification can tend towards the misleading or the ambiguous. Aleksei Gan in his 1922 treatise *Constructivism* attempted to codify the practice by the use of the three terms, 'Tectonics, *Faktura* and Construction'.[6] Tectonics, as Gan writes, is 'organically smelted and forged from the qualities of communism itself, on the one hand, and from the purposeful use of industrial material, on the other'.[7] For him, Faktura is 'the processing of the material as a whole, and not just the treatment of its surface'.[8] And he goes on to say that 'Faktura signifies a recollection of the fact itself, the factual substance of this or another specific body or material'.[9] As for Construction, Gan reports this as being the 'unifying function of constructivism' and that 'construction reveals the process of structuring itself'.[10] But these three terms and his lengthy expansion of each in his text (only the salient details are included above), still leave the categorisation of artists practicing Constructivism (or not) open to interpretation. To this end, the difficulties surrounding the definition of Constructivism are discussed in more detail later.

Like the art of the Constructivists, Minimal art was an artistic practice which regularly denied conventional curatorial practices, such as sculpture atop floor-based plinths and artworks on canvas conventionally hung on gallery walls. Moreover, Minimal artists were striving to get away from the American art that preceded their works:

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[6] Gan (1922: 56). Gan's italics.
[7] Gan (1922: 61). Gan's emboldening removed.
[8] Gan (1922: 62). Gan's emboldening removed.
[9] Gan (1922: 62). Gan's emboldening removed.
[10] Gan (1922: 62). Gan's emboldening removed.

Abstract Expressionism. As Donald Judd wrote, in 1965, in his typical matter-of-fact style:

> The main thing wrong with painting is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall. A rectangle is a shape itself; it is obviously the whole shape; it determines and limits whatever is on or inside of it.[11]

Following World War II – as Max Kozloff (writing in 1973) initially explored – a cultural shift in the United States resulted in challenges to the earlier Europe-centric nature of art.[12] The theory (as promoted by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (MoMA) and by Alfred H. Barr Jr in particular[13]) was that United States' artists were working in a free environment and yet the Soviets had their art practices dictated to them by the state. If the promotion of American art resulted in the United States becoming world-renowned for modern art too, then so much the better. As Kozloff has explained:

> If this country was unrivalled in industrial capacity and military might, it must follow that we had a culture of our own too. One ought not, therefore, be surprised to see the fading away during the late '50s of the official conviction that modern art, however incomprehensible, was subversive.[14]

Modern art was beginning to be seen differently and for expediency Abstract Expressionism was used to make a political point in the cold war. It remains something of a surprise that modern art of the 1950s and 1960s was promoted by the CIA (the United States' Central Intelligence Agency), although their funding was always indirectly supplied via other organisations with links to wealthy benefactors. By contrast, families such as the Rockefellers had clear links with MoMA, as both Eva Cockcroft and Frances

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[11] Judd (1965: 181-82).

[12] Kozloff (1973).

[13] For example, in Barr's *What is Modern Painting?* Barr (1943), published in various forms over forty years, as Patricia Hills has reported. Hills (2010).

[14] Kozloff (1973: 49).

Stonor Saunders have explained.[15] Cockcroft in her text, citing Russell Lynes, included the following exposition:

> the purpose of MOMA's [*sic*] international programme was overtly political: 'to let it be known especially in Europe that America was not the cultural backwater that the Russians, during that tense period called "the cold war", were trying to demonstrate that it was.'[16]

My proposal that Minimal art referred back to and used Constructivist ideas is explored in chapters four and five of this thesis, where I show that there is a correlation between Minimal art and Constructivism. This connection of the neo-avant-garde with the avant-garde was obscured both by cold war politics prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s and by texts discussing Constructivism since. This situation has led to an unacceptable misrepresentation of Constructivism's influence on Minimal art.

One Minimal art text is examined in detail in chapter six of this thesis, where difficulties are raised over the authenticity of texts that have become seminal examples of art history. This thesis contains a detailed analysis of how a 1964 radio interview[17] passed through several text-based iterations following its original recording. In 1966 *ARTnews* published the edited interview[18] and this was subsequently reproduced in 1968 in Gregory Battcock's collection of texts *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*.[19] The *ARTnews* and Battcock versions of the interview have become canonical texts, despite the wholesale changes from the original recording that have been wrought. Further problems were created when the *ARTnews* and Battcock texts were re-engineered in 2000 by James Meyer, resulting in a composite interview[20] that bears little resemblance to the 1964 recording. Once again chapter six deals with issues of misrepresentation. Meyer's 2000

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[15] Cockcroft (1974), Saunders (1995) and Saunders (2013).
[16] Cockcroft (1974: 84).
[17] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964).
[18] Glaser (1966).
[19] Glaser (1968) in Battcock (1968).
[20] Meyer (2000: 197-201).

book itself has become a canonical work on the subject of Minimal art. However, his decision to manipulate the original source (the details of which are exposed in chapter six of this thesis) is of questionable benefit, and any citation of this interview as reproduced in Meyer's book should be treated with great care. This example, which contains an apparent denial of the influence of Constructivism on Minimal artists, leaves one to consider the use of such texts in the field. The audio is more authentic and more immediate than any of the subsequent sources that have been cited for years on the subject with very little questioning. Again this is an example of misrepresentation and acts as a reminder of how published sources are often taken as authentic and immutable. This thesis contains the first full and accurate transcript of the interview in an effort to reclaim the originality of the radio broadcast.

The Western view of Russian and Soviet Constructivism has been influenced by a collection of works assembled by the Muscovite, born of Greek parents, George Costakis. An examination of the life of Costakis and the collection amassed in Moscow between 1947 and 1977 is contained in chapter three. This examination offers an insight into the Soviet state and the art market during the periods of control under Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev. The collection was divided up to allow Costakis's safe departure from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1978. The section of his collection that he took abroad with him (now held by the State Museum of Contemporary Art (SMCA), Thessaloniki, Greece) is a valuable resource containing renowned examples of the art of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde; the remainder of his collection being retained by the Soviet state museums.[21] Costakis died in 1990 and subsequently much of his 'exported' collection was bought by the Greek state in 2000. The West's understanding of Russian and Soviet Constructivism in the latter half of the twentieth century has regularly been through the use of visual examples from the Costakis collection.

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[21] The majority were claimed by The State Tretyakov Gallery.

Although the Costakis collection has become something of a touchstone for Constructivism, the collection has tended to become misrepresented not least because of the life and times of the man himself. The use of the Costakis collection is explored further in two brief sections which include discussions of exhibitions that drew heavily on the Costakis collection: *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-garde, 1915-1932* and *Building the Revolution: Soviet Art and Architecture 1915–1935*.

The Great Utopia, on show at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, NY from 25 September 1992 to 3 January 1993, followed the break-up of the Soviet Union (which was dissolved in December 1991). This was a chance for Russian and Soviet avant-garde art held by former Soviet galleries to be displayed in the West. The show borrowed many works from former USSR institutions (as well as a selection from the Costakis collection, which at this time was being stored in Germany), but the size and ambition of the show (with 739 works catalogued [22]) overloaded visitors to such an enormous exhibition.

Building the Revolution was exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London from 29 October 2011 to 22 January 2012. All of the avant-garde works displayed were selected from the Costakis collection (now held by the SMCA). The Constructivist artworks were displayed alongside large-scale colour photographs of Russian and Soviet Constructivist architecture taken between 1993 and 2010 by the British photographer Richard Pare. In the same exhibition space, archive material and photographs from the Shchusev State Museum of Architecture in Moscow, ranging in date from 1922 to 1936, were also displayed.

These two exhibitions are examined in this thesis to explore the power and influence of curatorship, to offer a number of points of apparent misrepresentation, as well as to highlight issues encountered as institutions become more focussed on gaining sponsorship for, and amassing income from, their exhibitions. The Costakis collection

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[22] From my analysis of the show's catalogue.

was used by *The Great Utopia* and *Building the Revolution,* but, as will be explained, for differing reasons the works from the collection were subsumed into the exhibitions that contained them.

Western discussions of Constructivism since its demise in the 1930s, for instance in the texts of Barr and Camilla Gray,[23] focussed on the idea that Constructivism was situated at the end of an art historical cul-de-sac. More recently in texts by Christina Lodder, Victor Margolin, Maria Gough, Christina Kiaer and Brandon Taylor[24] there has been much discussion surrounding the 'composition versus construction' debate that some Constructivists were party to in 1920 and 1921 (and this debate will be discussed later). However, Constructivist art is not languishing at a dead-end, on a path – created by Barr and embraced by others since – that had its origins in the Cubism of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Nor should the main concern be about composition compared to construction.[25] One dominant characteristic of Constructivist art is its avoidance of naturalistic forms. Constructivism should be celebrated as the first twentieth-century art practice that was authentically abstract, with few references back to nature. In celebrating modernity and the machine aesthetic, Constructivist artists shunned the representation of nature, and this was openly embraced by Minimal artists in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s too. As for the other main feature of the works of Constructivism – the open engagement with politics through art – for Minimal artists this was to be avoided.

Rather than a cultural dead-end, Russian and Soviet Constructivism should be seen as a means by which the freedom to follow a non-representational path for abstract art was secured. In the twentieth century – because of the political conditions that followed World War II, the cultural clampdown invoked by Stalin and the reactions to

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[23] Barr (1936) and Gray (1962).

[24] Lodder (1983: 83-88), Margolin (1997: 14-15), Gough (2005: 21-59), Kiaer (2005: 155) and Taylor (2014: 44-47). See 'Literature Review' section, page 26 onwards, for discussion.

[25] Although Minimal artists were concerned with this issue; as explored later in this thesis.

these and other events [26] – there was an escalation of the fear of communist power in the West. Coupled with these (real or perceived) fears a further sense of nervousness was engendered in the American population following the murder of President Kennedy in November 1963. Furthermore, as an analysis of *Building the Revolution* in chapter three of this thesis will reveal, Western scholars and curators have had an influence on the way in which Constructivism continues to be presented. As introduced here, the Western assessment and portrayal of Russian and Soviet Constructivism has led to an imbalance in its representation. This imbalance is as a result of the cold war, but publications and curatorial decisions have also had a bearing on the presentation of Constructivism in the West. There are similarities between the art of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists and the art of Minimal artists in the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s. Discussion of the Constructivists without acknowledging their influence on the art created by Minimal artists effectively suspends the moment of the Constructivists, Lenin-like, mummified since the early part of the twentieth century. This thesis will free the Constructivists from their Western-imposed bindings. Constructivism's influence on Minimal art has been undervalued. This thesis aims to settle the debt.

[26] Events such as the Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948, McCarthyism in the 1950s, the failed 'Bay of Pigs' attempt to invade Cuba by the United States in April 1961, the Soviet determination (later rescinded) to site nuclear missiles on Cuban soil that came in October 1962, the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the continuing war in Vietnam (from which the United States eventually withdrew in 1975) and the intensification of the 'space race'.

The definition of Constructivism

I think of Constructivism as a form of art with a combination of aesthetics and politics, an art with a social aspect and one which exhibits structure, design elements and carries a function (and that function might be cerebral or physical).

Examination of a definition of Constructivism is a good place to begin, because I intend to discern similarities between Constructivism and Minimal art, and a definition would assist in this comparison. However, for Constructivism this becomes problematic. Constructivism, or more specifically the output of the works by the Constructivists, is not something that can easily and succinctly be defined. More often than not (referring to the Russian and Soviet Constructivists) it is left to be described by the years between 1915 and 1932, by its proponents, or by the results of their labours, rather than by the features by which their works might be attributed to Constructivism (or indeed not attributed to Constructivism). Taking Vladimir Tatlin, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Liubov Popova, El Lissitzky and Aleksei Gan as the Constructivists whose work is, albeit sometimes tentatively, based on political and utilitarian urges, the problem of definition is compounded by the many and varied forms of expression that their works embrace. As well as reliefs and sculptures, paintings, collages and montages were created. Theatre sets and costumes were produced too, as well as designs for fabrics. Some Constructivists were also engaged with typographical works, furniture, kiosks and room designs.[27] With such a wide ranging series of practices, it is not surprising that a definition that encompasses all of these outputs is difficult to come by.

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[27] For examples of this variety of works see: Tatlin's *Corner Counter-Relief* of 1915 (in Appendix A, Figure 1, page 200), Rodchenko's painting *Construction no. 127 (Two Circles)* of 1920 (Figure 2, page 200), Lissitzky's poster *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* of 1919 (Figure 3, page 200), Popova's *Textile Design* of *c*.1924 (Figure 4, page 200) and her painting, *Spatial Force Construction*, of 1921 (Figure 5, page 201), Stepanova's *Designs for Sports Clothing* of 1923 (Figure 6, page 201) and Gan's booklet design of 1923

Struggling with a definition of Constructivism, in 1962,[28] while crossing the Atlantic Ocean heading for Europe,[29] the artist George Rickey wrote a letter to his friend and fellow artist Ad Reinhardt. He explained that he wanted to converse with Reinhardt about his forthcoming book.[30] In seeking his friend's opinions Rickey wrote:

May 28

Dear Ad:

I had hoped to come & have a session with you in N.Y. about "Constructivism". I am involved in a book dealing with contemporary aspects of this and am compiling a list which I wanted to show you & get your comment on – also a definition of C.ism which I find elusive, though everybody is allusive as hell. There is hardly an artist using a straight line to whom the word has not been applied and I'm looking for something a bit more strict.

I'm going to get Edie[31] to mail you a list & would be grateful if you would mark C or non-C, with comment if you have any, and also if you would add nominations & your definition.

Seuphor has agreed to do an historical essay for the book & I may find him as loose as the others.[32]

I'd forgotten how marvellously isolated a ship is & how peaceful. This is a slow boat but I have the feeling it is going to reach land too soon.

I'll rush around Germany for a month, spend a week in Paris, open my show in

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(Figure 7, page 201). It could also be argued that the photographic work of Rodchenko also came under the auspices of Constructivism, as did some forms of architecture.

[28] Although the letter does not carry the year, it can be dated to 1962 because Rickey mentions his exhibition which opened in Berlin on 2 July. *Rickey Kinetische Skulpturen* was held at the Galerie Springer in West Berlin, on display 2 July to 6 August 1962. Previously on display as *George Rickey Kinetic Sculpture* at the Kraushaar Gallery, New York, NY, 4 October to 28 October 1961. Galerie Springer (1962). Therefore, it is reasonable to state that the letter is dated 28 May 1962.

[29] Rickey was on board the SS *Hanseatic.* The ship sailed between New York, NY and Germany (via Ireland, Britain and France) in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Cudahy (2010: 277).

[30] The book, *Constructivism: Origins and Evolution*, was first published in 1967. Rickey (1995).

[31] Edie was Rickey's wife.

[32] Michel Seuphor, a pseudonym of Fernand Berckelaers, Belgian painter, born 1901, died 1999. Whitford Fine Art (2014).

> Berlin July 2 & come home for the summer, when I'll hope to see you.
>
> Best to you and Rita
>
> Yours
>
> George
>
> P.S. Ulfert seems to have won a reprieve from Louisville.[33]
>
> P.P.S. After reading a bit of Seuphor & connecting my vision with a dig into Gabo early & late & some reflection, I am concluding that the nature of the image is the key and I am putting you on my list.[34]

Rickey goes as far as including Reinhardt on his 'list' of Constructivists; such is his apparent difficultly when grappling with the definition.[35] Rickey's book might have assisted in the investigation into what is deemed to be Constructivist art, but unfortunately the difficulties that Rickey offered in his letter to Reinhardt were also reflected on in the preface to his 1967 book.[36] He records that Constructivism is:

> one of those words which become technical terms without ever having being defined. It was carefully skirted by Tatlin's compatriot, Naum Gabo, who always used the more generic term "constructive" for his art instead of "constructivist." Tatlin's word had

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[33] Ulfert Wilkie, an artist and academic, born 1907, died 1987. Between 1948 and 1964 he was employed by The University of Louisville, KY, and was involved in a court case relating to an injury sustained in the grounds of the establishment, caused by his own dog. He was refused compensation. However, by 1962, according to Rickey's postscript, Louisville relented. See Leagle Inc. (2014), Wilke Arts (2014) and Payne Fine Arts (2014) for details.

[34] The letter was written on the ship's paper with the heading 'TS "HANSEATIC"'. Letter from Archives of American Art (2014a) items 1 and 2 (recto and verso), Box 2, Folder 9. Rickey's underlining. See Appendix A, Figure 8, page 202 and Figure 9, page 202 for images. All footnotes within this transcript are mine.

[35] Unsurprisingly, Rickey does not include his 'list' in his book. However, in his preface he stated that, for him, '"constructivist" will refer to the work of a group of Russians between 1913 and 1922, which include Tatlin, Malevich, Rodchenko, El Lissitzky, Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner, and briefly, Wassily Kandinsky. […]. It will refer also to the Dutch art which resembled that of the Russians but did not derive from it, to the ensuing painting and sculpture in Europe and America […].' Rickey (1995: viii).

[36] Rickey (1995: vii-viii).

> topical political overtones in 1920 which it was to lose, however, when exported to the rest of the world.[37]

This statement hints at the content of Rickey's book. With his emphasis on Gabo he concentrates more on Constructivism as perceived by émigrés to the West rather than that practiced in Russia and the Soviet Union. He went on to say that:

> The word evidently filled a vacuum in the art vocabulary of the period and, still undefined, went into vague but common use in the twenties. It was loosely applied to not only the Russians' work but to any objects *built* rather than cast or carved, to any designs in two or three dimensions reminiscent of Euclid (either because they were flat and rectilinear or because they were made with straight edge and compass as Euclid's constructions were), or to the spare vertical-horizontal painting and sculpture of the new Dutch group, led by Piet Mondrian, called "De Stijl."[38]

Although this attempt at the definition of Constructivism by the use of the phrases 'objects built' and 'reminiscent of Euclid' is useful, it still leaves doubts about the definition. Especially when considering the way in which 'objects built' might correlate to two dimensional works. Also Rickey's linking of Constructivism to de Stijl now appears dated, particularly since Piet Mondrian regularly used the term 'neo-plasticism' in 1920 in his *Le Néo-plasticisme: Principe général de l'équivalence plastique* (translated into English in 1937) when referring to his own work.[39] Even in the 1960s works by the de Stijl group were commonly referred to as examples of 'neo-plasticism'.[40] Rickey restated this link between de Stijl and Constructivism when he wrote:

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[37] Rickey (1995: vii). However, Gabo's Constructivism was of the 'International' variety. (See below and chapter two of this thesis.)

[38] Rickey (1995: vii). Rickey's italics.

[39] Henkels (2014a). The term was also used by the Cercle et Carré group in their journal of 1930. Henkels (2014b). Interestingly, Michel Seuphor (see also reference 32, on page 11 of this thesis) was a founding member of the Cercle et Carré group. Henkels (2014b).

[40] For example, as used several times by Bruce Glaser and Donald Judd in Pacifica Radio Archives (1964), Glaser (1966) and Glaser (1968).

> By the 1960s Constructivist ideas had been evolving for more than 40 years – from the space structures of Gabo and the vertical-horizontal grids of Mondrian to the use of light, chance, movement, repetition, optical phenomena, and spectator participation in objects which were not claimed to be art.[41]

Despite using the term 'neo-plasticism' later on the same page, he maintains that Mondrian's work is based on Constructivist ideas.[42] The idea that Mondrian's work is related to that of the Constructivists is troublesome. Mondrian was concerned with ideas of beauty, harmony and balance with his rectilinear grids. Certainly his work involved straight lines and blocks of colour, but his output was poles apart from that of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists. As Rickey wrote in 1962, 'There is hardly an artist using a straight line to whom the word has not been applied and I'm looking for something a bit more strict'.[43] Furthermore, in talking of texts prior to the publication of his book, Rickey foregrounds his intention to sidestep any definition, when he explains that:

> Though the characteristics of Constructivism are discussed in detail, no attempt has been made to establish a "constructivist" orthodoxy against which an artist could be tested for inclusion. What is "constructivist" is better revealed by works of art than by words.[44]

And this situation has also been repeated in many texts that have been produced since. There is often a keenness to discuss the 'composition versus construction' debate, including the use of examples (by writers such as Lodder, Margolin, Gough, Kiaer and Taylor),[45] but as for a definition of Constructivism itself this has continued to be

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[41] Rickey (1995: 89).

[42] Rickey (1995: 89).

[43] See reference 34, on page 12 of this thesis.

[44] Rickey (1995: viii).

[45] Lodder (1983: 83-88), Margolin (1997: 14-15), Gough (2005: 21-59), Kiaer (2005: 155) and Taylor (2014: 44-47). See 'Literature Review' section, page 26 onwards, for discussion.

problematic. Rickey continues by waxing lyrically in his preface over the virtues of Naum Gabo. He explains that in his book:

> The sole survivor of the first generation of Constructivists, Naum Gabo the clearest, deepest and most revolutionary thinker of the movement, is dwelt on at length.[46]

Rickey's reverence towards Gabo is understandable for several reasons. The limited exposure to Constructivism at the time of Rickey's book resulted in a restricted knowledge of the work of the Constructivists that remained in Russia (and subsequently the Soviet Union). Also Rickey had a good personal relationship with Gabo and, because of this connection, much of Rickey's information is coloured by his contact with Gabo. The form of Gabo's reception in the West will be discussed later in this thesis. But for now Gabo's particular form of Constructivism, regularly referred to as 'International Constructivism', has to be highlighted as being untypical of the Constructivism that was instigated and practiced in Russia and the Soviet Union between the years 1915 and 1932, by radical artists such as Aleksandr Rodchenko and Vladimir Tatlin.

Rodchenko himself offered several definitions of Constructivism, one of which he used in his treatise *The Line* of 1921, where he asserted that:

> Constructivism is a system by which a thing is executed with an appropriate use of materials, with a previously set goal. Each system demands its own materials and its specific usage, each system will be a discovery or an improvement.[47]

Here Rodchenko concentrates on the idea of the material, as well as the enigmatic 'previously set goal'. Another of his attempts at the definition exists, in what Aleksandr Lavrentiev refers to as an 'automonograph',[48] by Rodchenko's use of many examples of his own work. But this amounts to a classification of his artworks by categories. The

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[46] Rickey (1995: ix-x). I disagree with Rickey's veneration of Gabo, see below and chapter two of this thesis for details.

[47] Reproduced in Lavrentiev (2005: 114).

[48] Lavrentiev (2005: 123 and 137 n. 89).

lengthy title of the text, written between 1917 and 1921, *A laboratory passage through the art of painting and constructive spatial forms toward the industrial initiative of constructivism*, forewarns the reader of the thrust of the piece. Rodchenko begins with his discussion of painting by using textual extracts from his own agitational posters [49] and then moves on to talk of 'linear-constructive constructions on a plane' and 'architectural projects'.[50] The first few of these examples are created by the use of paint and crayon on two-dimensional supports, such as *Construction Number 106 (on Black)* of 1920 (see Appendix A, Figure 10, page 203) and his 1921 work *Construction Number 17* (see Figure 11, page 203). Later he mentions 'spatial constructions' and he completes the missive by using specific works from the OBMOKhU (Obshchestvo molodykh khudozhnikov [Society of Young Artists]) exhibition of 1921 (an installation photograph of which is shown in Appendix A, Figure 12, page 203).[51] Rodchenko gives many examples of his work (and, by inference, examples of Constructivism) and he includes such sentences as, 'The contemporary constructive element is positive in every respect. In construction, industry, mathematics, politics. Absence of aesthetics and art'.[52] Despite his efforts he makes use of technical descriptions of the artistic techniques that he has used to create the effects, rather than attempting to accurately define what is, or is not, Constructivist art. For Rodchenko, a defining factor for a work to be deemed Constructivist was essentially related to the technique used to create that same work. Later in this thesis a different definition of Constructivism will be discussed, written by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in 1990.[53] Buchloh's definition concentrates on the social and political urges of the Constructivists and offers us a wider definition based on these urges to make a better society via political change. But this is not so useful in our search for a definition of the works themselves. As for a

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[49] Lavrentiev (2005: 137 n. 90).
[50] Lavrentiev (2005: 123 and 124).
[51] Lavrentiev (2005: 128-30).
[52] Lavrentiev (2005: 124).
[53] Buchloh (1990a: 93).

definition of the outputs of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists, as Rickey bemoaned to Reinhardt, 'There is hardly an artist using a straight line to whom the word has not been applied [...]'.[54] Certainly the straight line does figure in the work of many Constructivists, but there are several works in which the straight line is absent. For example, in the circular or elliptical hanging spatial constructions by Rodchenko, like his *Spatial Construction No 12, Oval in Oval*, of 1920-1921 (see Appendix A, Figure 13, page 203), and in some of his white-on-black paintings of intersecting circles, such as *Construction No. 127 (Two Circles)* of 1920 (see Figure 2, page 200). The line – straight or otherwise – is certainly a key component of each, but as for his conventionally produced paintings on canvas which depict circles; these could never be deemed to have been 'built'. The cast-iron definition of Constructivism remains elusive.

Instead I return to my initial definition; Constructivism as a form of art with a combination of aesthetics and politics, an art with a social aspect and one which exhibits structure, design elements and carries a function (and that function might be cerebral or physical).[55] This is specific enough to include the politics of the collective and generic enough to embrace the various forms of Constructivist practice.

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[54] See reference 34, on page 12 of this thesis.

[55] Which appears at the start of this section, on page 10.

Minimal art: the terminology

The terms surrounding Minimal art, such as Minimalist and Minimalism, have been contested since the 1960s. Richard Wollheim has often been cited as the person who introduced the art term Minimal.[56] But, Gregory Battcock, in his publication, *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*,[57] is non-committal when he introduced Wollheim's contribution with the sentence 'The author may well have been the first critic to apply the label "Minimal" to recent art.'[58] Wollheim wrote:

> increasingly acceptance has been afforded to a class of objects that, though disparate in many ways – in looks, in intention, in moral impact – have also an identifiable feature or aspect in common. And this might be expressed by saying that they have a minimal-art content [...].[59]

In his essay Wollheim leaned on examples by artists such as Reinhardt, Rauschenberg and Duchamp. By his own admission his main concern was to talk about 'the abiding nature of art',[60] but Wollheim presented his reader with difficulties from the first page. He offered an explanation of the term, yet used examples that were more suited to his exploration of 'the abiding nature of art', but were not so useful to reinforce his application of the term Minimal.

As Edward Strickland has explained, the term Minimal (or its connected terms), had been used well before Wollheim's piece was printed.[61] Strickland refers to several of

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[56] Although Wollheim later spoke of being inspired by a lecture presented by the British art critic Adrian Stokes. Colpitt (1990: 206 n. 14).
[57] Battcock (1968).
[58] Battcock (1968: 387).
[59] Wollheim (1965: 387). Originally published in *Arts Magazine*, January 1965, pp. 26-32.
[60] Wollheim (1965: 387).
[61] Strickland (2000: 18).

Donald Judd's uses of the term. For example Judd, in his review of the 1964 exhibition *Black, White and Gray*, wrote, 'Morris' work implies that everything exists in the same way through existing in the most minimal way, but by clearly being art, purposefully built, useless and unidentifiable'.[62] As a further example of the earlier use of the term, writing of the same 1964 exhibition, Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr opined, 'Much of it seems sparse, pared down to a minimum; much of it is conceptual, idea art as opposed to the retinal or visceral'.[63]

It appears that Battcock's indecisive phrasing was an attempt to prevent anyone else raising objections to his statement. It is certain that the use of the term Minimal (and its related terms, Minimalist and Minimalism) gathered pace in the 1960s, despite other critics using terms such as ABC Art, Primary Structures, Reductive Art and Systemic Art. And it is important to note that the Minimal tag was firmly rejected by the artists themselves – the term Minimalism was solely a critical construct. As well as the nomenclature attributed to the results of the labours of the artists, the number of individuals who were categorised as Minimal artists in the 1960s was far greater than that which we accept today. Presently, few people would argue that people such as Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Agnes Martin, Robert Morris and Anne Truitt could be categorised as being Minimal artists. But things were different in the 1960s. Taking the illustrations scattered through the pages of Battcock's anthology as a basis, this book includes such disparate works as paintings from Ad Reinhardt, huge painted wooden structures by Ronald Bladen, Andre's infamous sand-lime bricks[64] and other floor-based pieces of arranged Masonite by Robert Duran, art produced with the use of fluorescent light fittings by Dan Flavin, sculpture made by bending sheet aluminium by Ellsworth Kelly, the magna and ben-day dots of Roy Lichtenstein, acrylic lacquer on Dacron as used

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[62] Judd (1964: 118). *Black, White and Gray* was on display 9 January to 9 February 1964. Meyer, (2001: 283 n. 1 and n. 12).

[63] Wagstaff (1964: 38).

[64] Although the caption to the photograph describes them as 'Concrete bricks', the work is dated March 1967. Battcock (1968: 408). Therefore, and as Alistair Rider (2015: 13) has explained, at this time these were sand-lime bricks.

by David Novros, as well as many works produced by the use of acrylic on canvas. Just by these examples alone, the use of modern media and/or huge scale by any artist made the attribution of the term Minimal acceptable.

Furthermore, and especially in the early 1960s, artists that were accepted and promoted as being Minimal artists were predominantly male. Assessment of Battcock's 167 illustrations, gives the startling result that 155 of these images were associated with male artists.[65] It is unsurprising, therefore, that female artists were not invited to contribute to the WBAI radio interview recorded in February 1964.[66] Only Donald Judd, Frank Stella and Dan Flavin were questioned by Glaser.

Although Judd did discuss an example of art created by a female artist, when he offered his views on Yayoi Kusama's work in his 'Specific Objects' essay of 1965.[67] Kusama's *Boat Accumulation* of 1962,[68] created by using repeated phallic casts (curiously Judd refers to them as 'strange objects'[69]) assembled within a rowing boat, caused Judd to refer to her being 'interested in obsessive repetition, which is a single interest.'[70] But unfortunately (or maybe intentionally) this ambiguous statement could be read as either praise or condemnation.

In using examples such as the assemblage by Kusama and, by contrast, Claes Oldenburg's 1964 *Switches Sketch*,[71] a sewn vinyl sack in the form of an over-sized double gang light switch partially stuffed with wadding, Judd expanded the idea of what constituted Minimal art. Judd also included what are now considered to be typical Minimal artworks by artists such as Stella and Flavin, but the scope of Judd's other inclusions shows the wide-ranging distribution of the category of Minimal art in 1965.

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[65] From my assessment of Battcock (1968).
[66] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964).
[67] Judd (1965).
[68] See Judd (1965: 187).
[69] Judd (1965: 189).
[70] Judd (1965: 189).
[71] See Judd (1965: 189).

Battcock's 1968 anthology was published whilst the subject of its attention was still active and the terms surrounding Minimal art were still being argued. Talking of the selections that Battcock made, in her introduction to the 1995 reissue of the anthology, Anne Wagner wrote:

> What is remarkable about the book – because of, rather than despite, the circumstances of its production – is precisely how much it reveals about contemporary criticism and practice, and the ways that together they formed the category of minimal art.[72]

Without doubt the anthology was current. Only a part of one contribution dated from 1964 and this amounted to just five pages.[73] Every other piece in the anthology was originally produced between 1965 and 1968.[74] This contemporaneous account of Minimal art has become a canonical reference point. One specific contribution to the anthology, Bruce Glaser's interview with Donald Judd, Frank Stella and Dan Flavin – which first appeared in its written form in *ARTnews* in 1966 – is analysed further in chapter six of this thesis.

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[72] Wagner (1995: 9).

[73] This was E.C. Goossen's *Two Exhibitions* which was related to the years 1964 and 1966. Battcock (1968: 165).

[74] Although, as already discussed, the *ARTnews* interview, Glaser (1966) – reproduced in Battcock (1968) – was based on the earlier WBAI broadcast, Pacifica Radio Archives (1964).

Excluding the Bauhaus

This thesis explores Constructivism and its revisiting with the Minimal art moment. I posit that the works of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists had an influence on Minimal artists in the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s. Undoubtedly Constructivists also influenced the artists of the Bauhaus in the period of its existence (1919 to 1933[75]). (See examples in Appendix A, Figure 14, page 204 and Figure 15, page 204.) *Die Erste Russische Kunstausstellung* (*The First Russian Show*) of 1922, held at the Van Diemen gallery in Berlin, promoted the work of the Russians, and it is likely that the show was seen by some of the artists associated with the Bauhaus.[76] Joost Schmidt's work of 1923 (see Appendix A, Figure 15, page 204) bears a striking resemblance to the cover of the catalogue for *Die Erste Russische Kunstausstellung* as created by El Lissitzky (see Figure 16, page 204). However, my intention in this thesis is to concentrate on the Minimal art moment rather than the chronologically adjacent Bauhaus reception. Although, as I have suggested, the Russian and Soviet Constructivists influenced the artists of the Bauhaus, there are several reasons for my decision to concentrate on the reception of Constructivism as seen in Minimal art practice in the United States.

Naum Gabo left Russia for Berlin in 1922, delivered a series of papers at the Dessau Bauhaus in 1928, became involved with the Abstraction-Création group (between 1932 and 1935) and settled in the United States from 1946.[77] As a result of his passage to the West and his philosophical perspective, his artistic practice resulted in a corruption of the earlier Constructivist ideal. This is evident in Gabo's 'The Constructive Idea in Art'[78]

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[75] 1919 to 1925 in Weimar, 1925 to 1932 in Dessau and 1932 to 1933 in Berlin.

[76] Especially since there was at this time the beginnings of an association building between the Bauhaus and VKhUTEMAS, as Lodder (1992: 206-08) has indicated.

[77] Bann (1974: 4), Lodder (1983: 243), Bauhaus Dessau Foundation (2013) and Tate (2013).

[78] Gabo (1937).

of 1937, and in his letter to Herbert Read of 1942.[79] Later in this thesis there will be further discussions about the mythology associated with Gabo and his influence on the reception of Russian and Soviet art in the West.

As well as the geographical proximity of Germany and Russia (which in 1922 became part of the Soviet Union); in the 1920s these two nations shared a degree of communication in relation to art. Christina Lodder has explained that there was a considerable effort made. By November of 1918 an 'International Office' had been set-up 'within the Department of Fine Arts' which included such luminaries as 'Tatlin and Kandinskii' [*sic*] and this new office had 'commission[ed] the artist Ludwig Bähr when he left Russia in December 1918 to contact German artistic organisations, convey the Russians' greetings and appeal for international unity in the creation of the new artistic culture'.[80] As an example of communication in the other direction, according to Lodder, Walter Gropius, head of the Bauhaus between 1919 and 1928, wrote to the Russians in 1920 pointing out similarities between their aims.[81] Lodder has also written that Hannes Meyer, director of the Bauhaus between 1928 and 1930, proposed 'that a student exchange should be organised between the two institutions'.[82] Lodder went on to explain that 'Meyer accompanied by a small group of students went to work in Moscow'.[83]

There are issues that arise from an ideological point-of-view too. Johannes Itten, who taught at the Bauhaus from 1919, confirmed his theologically-based inspiration when he wrote:

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[79] Bann (1974: 215-20), page 217 and page 219 in particular.

[80] Lodder (1983: 233-34).

[81] Lodder (1983: 291 n. 241).

[82] Lodder (1983: 139). The institutions to which Lodder refers are VKhUTEMAS and the Bauhaus. Although she also says on the same page that 'There is no evidence that this exchange became operational […]', she became more convinced by the time of her later article 'The VKhUTEMAS and the Bauhaus'. Lodder (1992: 206-08).

[83] Lodder (1983: 139).

> are teaching and understanding ever really possible at all? We never rationally fathom the ultimate ground of a thing. Ultimately we are unable to teach or comprehend material, form or movement. We can only perceive perception. Only modesty and great humility before Him, the incomprehensible One, can help us to endure this insight.[84]

Robert Hughes opined that 'the Bauhaus [...] cannot be understood, either as an ideal or a real set-up, outside its framework of mystical Expressionism'.[85] Hughes also wrote that the Bauhaus, especially with the influence of Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, was 'devoted to an ideal of painting that stemmed from German idealist metaphysics'.[86] In 1923 Gropius stated in his 'The Theory and Organisation of the Bauhaus', 'Only work which is the product of inner compulsion can have spiritual meaning'.[87] Kandinsky taught at the Bauhaus between 1922 and 1933. In his article of 1927, titled 'And, some Remarks on Synthetic Art', he acknowledged the similarity of the two schools, VKhUTEMAS (Vysshie gosudarstvennye khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskie masterskie [Higher State Artistic and Technical Workshops]) and the Bauhaus.[88] Kandinsky also wrote about the need for a cross-fertilisation between differing areas of culture.[89] He explained his hierarchy of these cultural areas when he wrote:

> yet another demolished wall is, in principle, the most important: the first occurred in the sphere of art in general (Division III); the second, in the sphere of the spiritual in general (Division II); the third occurs in between two realms that previously had not even the remotest relationship with one another – the realms of matter and spirit (Division I).[90]

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[84] Harrison and Wood (2003: 305).
[85] Hughes (1991: 177).
[86] Hughes (1991: 304).
[87] Harrison and Wood (2003: 309).
[88] Kandinsky (1927: 714-15) and Lindsay and Vergo (1982: 478).
[89] Kandinsky (1927: 715).
[90] Kandinsky (1927: 715).

Later, in replies to a 1929 questionnaire which included questions related to 'a certain revolutionary continuity', Kandinsky talked of a 'pictorial "revolution"' but carefully avoided any mention of the October Revolution of 1917.[91]

As discussed, there was a reception of Constructivism evident in some works by artists associated with the Bauhaus. However, because of the already close relationship between the Soviet Union and Germany (culturally and geographically), and especially because of the transcendental and/or spiritual in evidence within the ethos of the Bauhaus, I have elected to concentrate on the more fulfilling reception of Constructivism as seen in the Minimal art moment in the United States. Examination of this phase in Western modernism avoids the chronological closeness and overlap of the Bauhaus period. Instead it explores the diversity between Russian and Soviet culture and that of the United States. The decision to concentrate on the Minimal art moment in order to explore a reception of Constructivism is not intended to denigrate the works that were created during the Bauhaus years. But the Minimal art moment included a more reactionary reception than that in evidence within the Bauhaus period. And, more importantly, Minimal artists – like the Constructivists – disregarded spiritual and theological concerns.

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[91] Kandinsky (1929: 741-42).

Literature review

Due to limitations of space, this literature review will concentrate on several critical themes culminating by examining the gaps in the literature to date. By its nature this review is not intended to be exhaustive. This review is arranged in several separate sections, since a single chronological approach is less useful for the details under discussion.

To begin with I will discuss the earlier texts related to Constructivism and then move on to the Constructivists' debates on composition and the merits of construction. (The dialogues between Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton of 1962 and 1963 are discussed in detail in chapter four.) Barbara Rose's 1965 essay will then be explored. The early reception of Minimal art is evident in her text, where she offered a muted reception of an art that represented change, and in which she hinted at the link between Minimal art and the art of the earlier twentieth century.

Hal Foster and Benjamin H.D. Buchloh have each tackled the earlier avant-garde and its revisiting in the latter part of the twentieth century; their observations will be discussed here too. This will include an exploration of Foster's discussions related to his three phases of the avant-garde, the historical avant-garde, the neo-avant-garde and a return to the historical avant-garde with a twist that is marked by a degree of self-criticality. I agree with Foster's suggestion that the neo-avant-garde has allowed us to more easily understand the avant-garde in its first inception. Foster decries the dichotomous approach of writers such as Peter Bürger and suggests instead that the historical and neo-avant-gardes are alike. I will also include Buchloh's discovery of differences between two versions of the same Greenberg essay, where in the later piece Greenberg avoids mention of any influence that Constructivism may have had on contemporary American sculpture.

The discussion will then move to examine the myths that have been propagated about the émigrés Naum Gabo and his younger sibling Antoine Pevsner. (These two characters, along with other Russian émigré artists, are discussed further in chapter two.) These Russian-born artists left the Soviet Union and later claimed to have 'invented' Constructivism. Constructivism's impact on the work of Minimal artists, in the writings of James Meyer, Maria Gough and Brandon Taylor will then be examined, culminating in a brief conclusion of this literature review.

Constructivism

It is almost a century since the October Revolution in Russia. The art with which it is forever associated, the Russian avant-garde, has been afforded varying degrees of Western interest in the years since. This interest can be arranged into three main phases, followed by an acceptance that the period in which Russian avant-garde art flourished is vital as part of an understanding of twentieth-century modernism. As part of the first phase, Alfred H. Barr Jr recorded his limited interaction with the works of the avant-garde in his catalogue to the 1936 MoMA exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art*.[92] 1962 saw the second phase of Western interest, with the publication of Camilla Gray's *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863-1922*.[93] Gray was influenced by Barr, but she offered a concentration of new names into the world-view of Western art historians, with her emphasis on artists such as Chagall, Goncharova, Klutsis, Popova, Puni, Rozanova and Udaltsova. The 1980s provided the third phase of interest in the Russian avant-garde. In 1981 the exhibition *Art of the Avant-garde in Russia: Selections from the George Costakis*

[92] Barr (1936: 120-39). The relevant sections are titled 'Abstract painting in Russia' and 'Constructivism'. The MoMA exhibition was on display between 2 March and 19 April 1936.
[93] Gray (1962).

Collection was held at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, NY. This show, which subsequently toured the West between 1982 and 1984,[94] was based on the works, held by George Costakis, that had recently been allowed to be removed from Russia. Also Christina Lodder's 1983 book, *Russian Constructivism*,[95] offered an extensive survey of a subset of the avant-garde that had been largely forgotten. As well as these phases of specific art historical interest, relations between Russia, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and later the Soviet Union, and the West have been influenced by two World Wars and the cold war. The experience of these moments affected the Western perception and interpretation of Russian avant-garde art. And, because of more recent sea changes in political and cultural developments between the former Soviet Union and the West, there has been a better understanding of the Russian avant-garde. We are a long way from Barr's suggestion, in his well-known diagram – carried on the dust jacket of the 1936 exhibition catalogue (see Appendix A, Figure 17, page 204) – that Constructivism and Suprematism were minor stations along the route to the destination of abstraction.[96] Nowadays, the essential moment that existed in Russia between 1910 and 1930 is crucial to the understanding of modernism in a wider sense than that previously offered by the Western art establishment. The moment of revolution in Russia resulted in art practices which carried an underlying thrust of political interest and urgency. These were forms of art that were committed to supporting and advancing the cause of the revolution, and that were striving towards the support of a social utopian

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[94] Initially at New York, NY (16 October 1981 to 3 January 1982) and then travelled to the following cities: Houston, TX (11 March to 9 May 1982) Museum of Fine Arts; Ottawa (8 July to 6 September 1982) National Gallery of Canada; Indianapolis, IN (17 October to 2 December 1982) Indianapolis Museum of Art; Chicago, IL (14 January to 13 March 1983) Museum of Contemporary Art; Stockholm (23 April to 7 August 1983) Moderna Museet; London (17 September to 13 November 1983) Royal Academy of Arts; Munich (18 January to 11 March 1984) Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus; Hanover (23 March to 13 May 1984) Kestner-Gesellschaft and Helsinki (15 June to 28 October 1984) Helsingin Kaupungin Taidemuseo.

[95] Lodder (1983).

[96] Barr's diagram is flawed, not least because it is a result of a manipulation of artistic movements or practices in order to present a rudimentary image of a bull with Constructivism as its jaw. I am grateful to Dr Mark Rawlinson for pointing out that Barr's diagram resembles a bull.

ideal. This historical moment has been taken up by art historians in several phases in the past, and it remains of interest today.

The 'Composition versus Construction' debates

Compositional arrangement was more often than not avoided by the historical avant-garde and by the neo-avant-garde. In 1920 and 1921 the Constructivists engaged in their 'composition versus construction' debate via their discourses and by use of examples of their art.

Vladimir Stenberg's artistic contributions to this debate demonstrated the two extremes. His *Composition* (see Appendix A, Figure 18, page 205) has a vagueness in the way that the depiction of forms fade off the paper on which it is drawn. Stenberg's *Construction* (see Appendix A, Figure 19, page 205) is in dramatic contrast. Here he produced something akin to a draughtsman's inked representation of a 90-degree section of metalwork carrying a curved shape, triangulated with thinner pieces of material welded together to provide cross-bracing. The effect is one of precision as well as a lightness, coupled with strength and rigidity.

Varvara Stepanova's proposals were of a different sort. Her *Example of a Composition* (see Appendix A, Figure 20, page 205) is clearly a stylised head-and-shoulders depiction of a human. Whereas her illustration *Construction* (see Appendix A, Figure 21, page 205) offered a non-representational form which drew from the ideas of Cubist collage practice.

Konstantin Medunetsky's example, *Composition* (see Appendix A, Figure 22, page 206), as well as being imprecise and ambiguous, was effectively secured on its support by the artist's addition of a diagrammatic frame, as if to reinforce the idea that this is art in its 'conventional' sense. His *Construction* (see Appendix A, Figure 23, page 206)

represented a series of wooden components screwed and dowelled together. It contrasts dramatically with his *Composition* drawing. With his *Construction* he displays precision and no ambiguity. Even though it may be tricky to understand exactly what is going on, the viewer is in no doubt that he is attempting something wholly different to that in his *Composition*.

This debate has been latched onto by many writers in the latter decades of the long twentieth century.[97] For instance, Lodder, Margolin, Gough, Kiaer and Taylor all give the debate attention (Gough especially so; with her first chapter titled 'Composition and Construction').[98] And the outcome of this debate is that, for the Constructivists, composition is to be treated as inferior. This debate was (and still is) essential to clarify the importance of construction to this manifestation of non-representational art. But the attention afforded to this debate tends to distract from the other important features of Constructivism.

Avant-garde assessments

Gray suggested that the Russian and Soviet avant-garde were propelled by several urges when, in 1962, she wrote:

> In October 1917 came the Revolution. To the artists this was the signal for the extermination of the hated old order and the introduction of a new one based on industrialization. As Futurists they could not but respond to the appeal of such a régime which announced the advent not only of a communal way of life in which the artist would

[97] The 'long twentieth century' in this thesis (borrowing from Eric Hobsbawm and his 'long nineteenth century') refers to the period between 1900 and the present.

[98] Lodder (1983: 83-88), Margolin (1997: 14-15), Gough (2005: 21-59), Kiaer (2005: 155) and Taylor (2014: 44-47).

> be an integrated member of society, but also one which was based on industrialization. 'Let us seize [the world] from the hands of nature and build a new world belonging to [man] himself,' Malevich announced.[99]

Gray provided a definition of the early Russian and Soviet avant-garde that included a need to move on from earlier social and cultural orders as well as the promotion of a communist doctrine. Malevich's call of 1919 resonated with the politics of the time. Especially when considering Lenin's oft-quoted pronouncement in his speech of the following year, urging infrastructure updates, 'Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country, since industry cannot be developed without electrification'.[100] Andrew Higgens, in 1970, commented on Gray's text:

> Two important points emerge from this description [of Gray's]. Firstly the Russian avant-garde were, like very many of the artists of the period, profoundly concerned about the artist's relative isolation from society as a whole and were feeling the need to spread fine art culture beyond its traditional audience of the rich and educated. Secondly, they were essentially part of a Futurist tradition, very much involved in and concerned to express the new world revealed by science, particularly physics, and made realizable by applied science and the techniques of industrialization.[101]

For Higgens, the avant-garde were keen to subvert the pre-existing socially restrictive spread of art, as well as embracing the 'new world'. Although Higgens presented these 'two important points', strangely he ignored the political aspects of Gray's passage, with its inclusion of the quote from Malevich's agitational text. However, Higgens went on to summarise in his article that 'Art is a part of the "deceptive" ideological superstructure which any culture erects, and which may well be its way of ignoring, rather than dealing

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[99] Gray (1962: 215). Gray's brackets. Endnote reference removed. However, the Malevich quote is from 1919, as Gray acknowledges in her endnote (1962: 309 n. 1).

[100] Lenin (1920: 419). Brandon Taylor also uses this, but leaves it unreferenced and writes it as 'Communism equals the Soviets plus the electrification of the country'. Taylor (1991: 156).

[101] Higgens (1970: 164).

with, "objective" reality'.[102] Then Higgens quoted Marx, 'Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks of himself, so we cannot judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness'.[103] This is a critical point for any discussion of history and art history in particular; any examination that is close in time to the event or practice is bound to be coloured by the culture and vagaries of what is, or is not, fashionable at the time. In 1954 Greenberg wrote, 'It may be that we cannot yet see far enough around the art of our own day; that the real and fundamental source of the dissatisfaction we may feel with abstract painting lies in the not uncommon problems offered by a new "language"'.[104] Buchloh also highlighted this issue at the beginning of his 1990 essay on Conceptual art, where he confirmed that the passage of time is required to fully appreciate the nuances of any movement or artistic moment:

> A twenty-year distance separates us from the historical moment of Conceptual Art. It is a distance that both allows and obliges us to contemplate the movement's history in a broader perspective than that of the convictions held during the decade of its emergence and operation [...].[105]

Four years later Foster also addressed this point, writing that:

> the avant-garde work is never historically effective or fully significant in its initial moments. It cannot be because it is traumatic: a hole in the symbolic order of its time that is not prepared for it, that cannot receive it, at least not immediately, at least not without structural change. (This is the other scene of art that critics and historians need to register: not only symbolic disconnections but failures to signify.)[106]

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[102] Higgens (1970: 167). Higgens's quotation marks.
[103] Higgens (1970: 167), citing Marx (1859), from Marx and Engels (1968: 182-83).
[104] Greenberg (1954: 136).
[105] Buchloh (1990b: 105).
[106] Foster (1994: 30).

As well as acknowledging the belatedness of the 1984 English translation of Peter Bürger's 1974 work *Theory of the Avant-garde*,[107] Buchloh, in his disparaging review of Bürger's 'essay' (as Buchloh refers to it[108]), defined avant-garde practice as being:

> a continually renewed struggle over the definition of cultural meaning, the discovery and representation of new audiences, and the development of new strategies to counteract and develop resistance against the tendency of the ideological apparatuses of the culture industry to occupy and to control all practices and all spaces of representation.[109]

Returning to the cultural and political emphasis of the avant-garde, six years later Buchloh presented an explanation of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde artists' urges as their attempts to:

> develop strategies and production procedures that would concretize their aesthetic and political commitments, according to the original implication of the modernist critique: they sought to activate and expand its audience, to abolish the work's cult and exhibition value, to deny its falsely auratic status, and, most importantly, to actually develop new strategies that would gradually anchor aesthetic practice to the social and political reality of the new mass-audiences.[110]

For Buchloh, the Russian and Soviet avant-garde artist was socially and politically aware, acted to subvert the bourgeois idea of art, and attempted to engage the public with more widespread displays of art. This was an art that questioned what art's purpose was and that commented on the art that went before. This cultural shift instigated and maintained by the Russian and Soviet avant-garde around 1910 to 1930 was revisited by the Minimal art moment in the 1960s and 1970s.

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[107] Bürger (1974).
[108] Buchloh (1984: 19).
[109] Buchloh (1984: 21).
[110] Buchloh (1990a: 93).

Change and Minimal art

Reminding his readers of changes embedded within the work of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde, Buchloh wrote that:

> the Constructivist commitment to industrial materials in sculpture originated both from an emphatic Futurist embracing of industrial mass-culture reality and from an anti-aesthetic impulse that insisted on the work's contingency and ephemerality. Opposed to traditional emphasis on sculpture's presumed universal validity and static perpetuity, this new sculpture underlined temporal, functional, and dynamic qualities [...].[111]

Change and adapting to change often creates difficulties. And difficulties surrounding adaptation are also evident in many historical disciplines. Particularly in the twentieth century, art history has seen several shifts in focus dependent on many differing reactions. These reactions include those initiated by the prevailing nature of artists' production, or as a critical engagement with their works and responses as a result of their writings or discussions. As Buchloh recaps, there was a shift in artists' practice in Russia in the 1920s and this kind of change was revisited in the 1960s.

Barbara Rose's 1965 essay 'ABC Art'[112] is used here as an example of a muted reception of an art which represented change, and as a text which hinted at the link between Minimal art and the art of the earlier twentieth century. In her text she used the examples of Malevich and Duchamp as artists that tended to 'reject and exclude from their work many of the most cherished premises of Western art in favor of an art stripped to its bare, irreducible minimum'.[113] And in referring to the works of Minimal artists[114] she wrote:

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[111] Buchloh (1990a: 93).
[112] Rose (1965a).
[113] Rose (1965a: 277).
[114] She explains that she is 'considering' Carl Andre, Robert Morris and Dan Flavin. Rose (1965a: 282).

> The simple denial of content can in itself constitute the content of such a work. That these young artists attempt to supress or withdraw content from their works is undeniable. That they wish to make art that is as bland, neutral, and as redundant as possible also seems clear.[115]

Rose treads a fine line. On occasions she offers her reader a reasonable explanation of the ideas surrounding Minimal art, yet at times she is disparaging and is exasperated with an art that 'resists interpretation'.[116] Rose does refer to the link between the work of Minimal artists and the artists of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde in relation to the use of 'standard units interchangeably', and she writes that 'the reference is back to the Russians – particularly to Rodchenko in Andre's case'.[117] But, somewhat mysteriously, she goes on to offer the notion that 'another element has insinuated itself, preventing any real equations with Constructivist sculpture'.[118] Following her suggestion that Minimal artists like Robert Morris were well-read and aware of 'the cycle of styles', 'levels of meaning', 'influences of movements, and of critical judgements';[119] Rose wrote:

> If the art they make is vacant or vacuous, it is intentionally so. In other words, the apparent simplicity of the artists' work was arrived at through a series of complicated, highly informed decisions, each involving the elimination of whatever was felt to be nonessential.[120]

The art being made could, of course, have been created to legitimately resist meaning. As Adorno wrote, 'The absence of meaning becomes intention, though not always with the same consequence'.[121] But here Rose takes one step away from offering any significant

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[115] Rose (1965a: 281). Foster later wrote of 'failures to signify'. See reference 106 on page 32.
[116] Rose (1965a: 282).
[117] Rose (1965a: 282).
[118] Rose (1965a: 282).
[119] Rose (1965a: 285).
[120] Rose (1965a: 285).
[121] Adorno (1970: 458).

insights that might be associated with the work. She is keen to attempt a discussion of what she sees as the phenomena of Minimal art, but she shies away from any whole-hearted embracing of Minimal art practice. For Adorno this sort of standpoint was one which was indicative of modern art; he wrote:

> Whenever artworks on their way toward concretion polemically eliminate the universal, whether as a genre, a type, an idiom, or a formula, the excluded is maintained in them through its negation; this state of affairs is constitutive of the modern.[122]

And Adorno offered his opinion on a similar situation to that which Rose describes with his statement:

> If the artwork assumes the expression of incomprehensibility and in its name destroys its own internal comprehensibly, the traditional hierarchy of comprehension collapses. Its place is taken by reflection on art's enigmatic character.[123]

Rose provided some interesting insights though, including references to art and politics in the United States, when she wrote:

> On the one hand art as a form of free expression is seen as a weapon in the Cold War, yet on the other there appears no hope for any organic role for art in the life of the country. The artists, scarcely unaware of the provisional nature of their status, are responding in innumerable peculiar ways, some of which I've mentioned. Now, besides making difficult, hostile, awkward, and oversize art, an increasing number of artists seem involved in making monumental art, too large to fit into existing museums. This is quite amusing, as there is no conceivable use in our society as it exists for such work, although it may endure as a monumental *j'accuse* in the case of any future rapprochement.[124]

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[122] Adorno (1970: 463).
[123] Adorno (1970: 458).
[124] Rose (1965a: 294). Rose's italics.

Some of what Rose has written – looking back from our post-postmodernist position – is, to use her phrasing, 'amusing'. Although she goes on to talk of 'subversion of the existing value structure' she qualifies this by adding that 'these acts of subversion are personal rather than social, since it seems to be the person rather than the society that is in danger of extinction at this point'.[125] She also misses the point that much monumental work (and much Minimal art too, like the works of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists) is itself subverting the whole idea of art located in a museum. And this is very much a matter closely related to the social rather than the personal. Rose begins the final paragraphs of her essay by asserting that 'The art I have been talking about is obviously a negative art of denial and renunciation' and she continues by describing the artworks with such words as; 'inertia', 'passivity', 'resistant', 'blank consciousness' and 'detachment'.[126] In suggesting that Minimal art is in some way 'mystical'[127] she wrote that this:

> does seem unusual in America, where our art has always been so levelheaded and purposeful. That all this new art is so low-key, and so often concerned with little more than nuances of differentiation and executed in the *pianissimo* we associate with, for example, Morton Feldman's music, makes it rather out of step with the screeching blaring, spangled carnival of American life.[128]

Here she offers her overtly parochial idea that this 'low-key' art is an art founded outside of America. Rose certainly does not hold back with her biting assessment of Minimal art when she concludes:

> In its oversized, awkward, uncompromising, sometimes brutal directness, and in its refusal to participate, either as entertainment or as whimsical, ingratiating commodity

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[125] Rose (1965a: 294).
[126] Rose (1965a: 296).
[127] Rose (1965a: 296).
[128] Rose (1965a: 296). Rose's italics.

> (being simply too big or too graceless or too empty or too boring to appeal), this new art is surely hard to assimilate with ease. And it is almost as hard to talk about as it is to have around, because of the art that is being made now, it is clearly the most ambivalent and the most elusive.[129]

In this final section of her essay it is interesting to note Rose's use of the word 'graceless'. Michael Fried ended his essay 'Art and Objecthood' of almost two years later with the three words 'Presentness is grace'.[130] Since Rose and Fried were personal friends it is possible that the notion of grace being associated with art may well have been an idea discussed between the two of them.[131] In any case they both certainly offered their readers their similar, unambiguous and disparaging views on Minimal art.

Minimal art and the revisiting of the earlier avant-garde (part 1)

By contrast with the criticism of Barbara Rose, the writings of Hal Foster have included much more overt references to the revisiting of the earlier avant-garde. As Foster himself concurs, the terms 'historical avant-garde' and 'neo-avant-garde' were 'made current' by Peter Bürger.[132] However, Foster was more specific about the avant-garde timeline in his book *The Return of the Real*, where he wrote:

> In postwar art to pose the question of repetition is to pose the question of the neo-avant-garde, a loose grouping of North American and Western European artists of the 1950s and '60s who reprised and revised such avant-garde devices of the 1910s and '20s as

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[129] Rose (1965a: 297).
[130] Fried (1967: 168).
[131] Rose and Frank Stella were married in 1961. Fried was their Best Man.
[132] Foster (1994: 10) and Foster (1996: 8).

> collage and assemblage, the readymade and the grid, monochrome painting and constructed sculpture.[133]

For Foster avant-garde practice stretched over three phases. The historical avant-garde from the end of the nineteenth-century to the 1930s was characterised by challenges to art and its institutions. According to Foster the neo-avant-garde phase lasted until the 1970s, this phase being dominated by artistic practices that consolidated the work of the historical avant-garde by their innovations being embraced by the neo-avant-garde. The later phase from the 1970s to the present[134] being considered to be a return to the historical avant-garde, but with a further twist. This twist being a practice based on the historical avant-garde that becomes self-critical of artistic practice in its reference to the neo-avant-garde. Foster offers two examples of the references used by the neo-avant-garde, 'the readymades of Duchampian dada and the contingent structures of Russian constructivism'[135] and he goes on to explain:

> Thus for North American and Western European artists in the late 1950s and 1960s, dada and constructivism offered two historical alternatives to the modernist model dominant at the time [...]. Since this model was staked on the intrinsic autonomy of modernist painting in particular, [...] discontented artists were drawn to the two movements that sought to exceed this apparent autonomy: to define the institution of art in an epistemological inquiry into its aesthetic categories and/or to destroy it in an anarchistic attack on its formal conventions, as did dada, or to transform it according to the materialistic practices of a revolutionary society, as did Russian constructivism – in any case to reposition art in relation not only to mundane space-time but to social practice.[136]

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[133] Foster (1996: 1). A similar sentence appears in Foster (1994: 5).
[134] At the time of his writing in 1996.
[135] Foster (1996: 4).
[136] Foster (1996: 4-5). A similar passage appears in Foster (1994: 9-10).

Subsequently these terms introduced by Bürger have been used regularly by Foster and other members of the *October* editorial team such as Buchloh. Despite the acceptance of Bürger's terminology his arguments have provoked debate. For instance, Foster, in a scathing comment on what he regarded as the misconceptions offered by Bürger, wrote:

> This conception of history as punctual and final underlies his [Bürger's] narrative of the historical avant-garde as pure origin and the neo-avant-garde as riven repetition. This is bad enough, but things get worse, for to repeat the historical avant-garde, according to Bürger, is to cancel its critique of the institution of autonomous art; more, it is to invert this critique into an affirmation of autonomous art.[137]

And Foster gave an overview of his analysis in putting the following question and comments to his readers:

> *Rather than cancel the project of the historical avant-garde, might the neo-avant-garde comprehend it for the first time?* I say "comprehend," not "complete": the project of the avant-garde is no more concluded in its neo moment than it is enacted in its historical moment. In art, too, creative analysis is *interminable*.[138]

It can be concluded that Foster links the historical avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde directly to the artists' practice in something akin to a philosophical urge, as well as to a social responsibility. The neo-avant-garde have shown the need to explore once more the avant-garde, not as 'riven repetition' to use Foster's phrasing, but in a more consciously self-aware way, and this self-awareness manifests itself in their works. For instance, in art such as Bruce Nauman's photograph *Self-Portrait as a Fountain* of 1967 (see Appendix A, Figure 24, page 206) and in Gerhard Richter's oil painting *Ema* of 1966 (see Figure 25, page 206); both of which refer back to the works of Marcel Duchamp (*Fountain* and *Nude Descending a Staircase*). Adorno has also indicated that the influence of earlier works is inevitable, when he wrote:

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[137] Foster (1994: 13).
[138] Foster (1994: 16). Foster's italics.

> Explanation ineluctably involves the tracing back of the new and the unknown to the known, even if what is best in the work struggles against it. Without such reduction, which violates the works, they could not survive. Their essence, what is uncomprehended in them, requires acts of identification and comprehension; it is thereby falsified as something familiar and odd. To this extent the life of artworks is ultimately contradictory.[139]

And Adorno in his conclusion submits the following philosophical argument; 'If Valéry's thesis is true that the best in the new corresponds to an old need, then the most authentic works are critiques of past works'.[140] Foster, in his text, reinforces this position and barely conceals his irritation at Bürger's approach, when giving his thoughts on the dichotomy of Bürger's contribution:

> I believe historical and neo-avant-gardes are constituted in a similar way, as a continual process of protension and retension, a complex relay of reconstructed past and anticipated future – in short, in a deferred action that throws over any simple scheme of before and after, cause and effect, origin and repetition.[141]

In referring back to the avant-garde, the neo-avant-gardes have enabled us to see the art and artists of the early twentieth-century in a new light. This new light allows us to better understand earlier avant-gardes without the dismissiveness of critics such as Bürger. The Minimal artist Dan Flavin was one such neo-avant-garde artist. Referring back to the work of Vladimir Tatlin, Flavin – with his 'monument' series (discussed in detail later) – reconsidered and celebrated Tatlin's work.

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[139] Adorno (1970: 462).

[140] Adorno (1970: 473), referring to the French philosopher Paul Valéry, born 1871, died 1945. I think this refers to Valéry's single line entry in his notebook; 'What's best in the new is what answers to an old desire'. Valéry (1970: 113).

[141] Foster (1994: 30).

Assessment and reassessment of Constructivism

Benjamin Buchloh highlighted Greenberg's inversion of ideas behind Constructivist sculpture, as espoused in Greenberg's 1961 article 'The New Sculpture'. (A revised version of the 1948 essay of the same name – which itself had also been revised in 1958.) Where Greenberg, in 1958, wrote that 'we are now being offered the illusion of modalities: namely that matter is incorporeal, weightless and exists only optically, like a mirage';[142] Buchloh argued that Greenberg's assessment was:

> an almost violent dematerialization of the complex formal and material dialectic of Constructivist sculpture. This literal disembodiment of sculpture, as we might call it, also implied a complete disembodiment of the viewer's perceptual experience [...].[143]

Buchloh suggested that Greenberg produced this volte-face in order to further his promotion of 'the neo-modernist aesthetic'.[144] He reports that Greenberg also used the term 'opticality' for the first time in this same essay and that this term was picked-up by Fried.[145] In a different 1958 essay, titled 'Byzantine Parallels', Greenberg wrote:

> The tendency of modernist painting has been to turn the conventions of sculptural naturalism inside out, and to create thereby a kind of pictorial space that would invoke no sense other than that of sight. With tactility excluded, shading and perspective disappear. Modernist sculpture itself, recognizing that it is enjoyed visually in the main, has followed painting in the trend toward the exclusively optical [...].[146]

In November 1966 Fried talked of the 'neutralising of the flatness of the picture support by the new, exclusively optical illusionism'[147] which was, for him, especially prevalent in

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[142] Greenberg in 1958, cited in Buchloh (1990a: 103).
[143] Buchloh (1990a: 103).
[144] Buchloh (1990a: 104).
[145] Buchloh (1990a: 104).
[146] Greenberg (1958: 167).
[147] Fried (1966: 79). Fried's italics removed.

the work of artists such as Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Jules Olitski. Fried then went on to cite Greenberg's 1960 'Louis and Noland'[148] critique[149] where Greenberg explained that:

> The more closely color could be identified with its ground, the freer would it be from the interference of tactile associations; the way to achieve this closer identification was by adapting watercolor techniques to oil and using thin paint on an absorbent surface.[150]

And Greenberg wrote that the 'fabric, being soaked in paint rather than merely covered by it, becomes paint in itself, color in itself, like dyed cloth: the threadedness and wovenness are in the color'.[151] In this instance the term 'opticality' had a different meaning to that which might at first thought be attached to the term. For Greenberg and Fried it remained associated with their idea of the work of art as an autonomous object, and was used as a description of a change in the treatment of the picture surface giving a subtle finish offering depth. As Fried wrote:

> The literalness of the picture surface is not denied; but one's experience of that literalness is an experience of the properties of different pigments, of foreign substances applied to the surface of the painting, of the weave of the canvas, above all of color – but not, or not in particular, of the flatness of the support.[152]

For Fried and Greenberg 'opticality' gave the picture the chance of a more nuanced effect than that presented by just a concentration on the picture surface. (An idea that builds on the 'flatness' and 'optical illusion' as espoused by Greenberg in his 1960 essay 'Modernist Painting'.[153]) As Buchloh has indicated 'the concept of "opticality," [...] circulated for at least the next twenty years as a "key term" in the neo-modernist

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[148] Greenberg (1960b).
[149] Fried cites Greenberg. Fried (1966: 79). He details the citation in his endnote. Fried (1966: 97 n. 4).
[150] Greenberg (1960b: 97).
[151] Greenberg (1960b: 97).
[152] Fried (1966: 79).
[153] Greenberg (1960a: 90).

aesthetic'.[154] This use of the label 'opticality', which expanded the autonomous art object by the critical addition of a form of depth, effectively gave a greater degree of longevity to the Greenbergian modernist mantra.

Returning now to Buchloh's analysis of the 1948 version of Greenberg's essay. Buchloh discovered that there was a section which was removed from the 1961 version, where Greenberg described modernist sculpture as being 'as palpable and independent and present as the houses we live in and the furniture we use'.[155] Buchloh argued that Greenberg removed this section in the later publication because it was in direct conflict with the 'discourse of the tragic, the sublime and the transcendental that supported Abstract Expressionism in 1958'.[156] As Buchloh explained, this statement 'could have easily been misread as an ingenious anticipation of Minimal sculpture'.[157] In an endnote Buchloh gave a further instance of Greenberg's excision when he discussed the work of David Smith as an example of Constructivist-influenced sculpture. But, as Buchloh has suggested, Greenberg wanted to remove the reference to Smith and Constructivism 'according to the particular interests and investments of his [Greenberg's] present: the construction of an autonomous and hegemonous local neo-avant-garde'.[158] Buchloh concluded that 'Greenberg's reconstruction of the history of modernism [...] had been thoroughly and successfully institutionalized. In fact, Greenberg's reconstitution had become the *doxa* which, well into the 1960s, was hardly questioned by American and European critics, curators, and audiences'.[159] This overt emphasis on the neo-modernist aesthetic became entrenched and led to the tendency for Greenberg's ideas to approach the hegemonic for much of the late twentieth century.

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[154] Buchloh (1990a: 104).
[155] Greenberg in 1948, cited in Buchloh (1990a: 104).
[156] Buchloh (1990a: 104).
[157] Buchloh (1990a: 105).
[158] Buchloh (1990a: 110 n. 34).
[159] Buchloh (1990a: 105). Buchloh's italics.

The myths created by Gabo and Pevsner – Buchloh's observations

The mythologising of Gabo and Pevsner was something which Buchloh railed against in his 'Cold War Constructivism' essay of 1990 in which Buchloh cited a 1947 article in the *Waterbury Sunday Republican*, where Gabo described himself as the 'founder and leader of the Constructivist school'.[160] Buchloh must have thought that this example was a little too parochial, because he also quoted a passage from a 1948 issue of the *New Yorker*, where the critic Robert Coates wrote, 'since the death, a while ago, of their great co-peer Moholy-Nagy, they [Gabo and Pevsner] just about are the Constructivist movement'.[161] And to avoid any doubt at all, Buchloh then cited a 1956 article from the French journal *L'Oeil* that began, 'The founders of the Constructivist movement, Antoine Pevsner and his brother Naum Gabo, were forced, by the political events, to leave their country'.[162] This statement by the writer Rosalind Bernier in itself is problematic, since there were many of the Constructivists that remained in Soviet Russia including Tatlin and Rodchenko. Buchloh, offering his readers further evidence of the mythology surrounding Gabo and Pevsner, reproduced Pesvner's answer to the interviewer's questioning about other Constructivist artists, where Pevsner replied:

> There were no others. I repeat it again and again: it was only Gabo and myself who invented Constructivism. Tatlin and Rodchenko picked up our ideas, but they falsified them by applying them to a functional art that was subjected to serve practical purposes. By contrast, we have always declared… that we were partisans of pure art, of *l'art pour l'art*.[163]

Pevsner in this interview of 1956, as well as misrepresenting the Russian and Soviet avant-garde – to enhance his and his brother's status in the West – was also promoting a

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[160] Buchloh (1990a: 90).

[161] Buchloh (1990a: 90). Buchloh's brackets.

[162] Buchloh (1990a: 90-91).

[163] Pevsner in 1956, cited in Buchloh (1990a: 91). Buchloh's italics. Although Buchloh (1990a: 108 n. 12) notes that these remarks were a source of annoyance to Gabo.

form of art that was more in keeping with the emergent art of the United States. The brothers were promoting their works as formalist and autonomous pieces of art. Buchloh pointed out that they had to:

> supply the radical aesthetic goods without the political strings originally attached to the Dadaists' and the Constructivists' work [...]. Gabo and Pevsner performed this abstraction by fusing these irreconcilable contradictions in their work, and they were adequately rewarded: soon they would be considered as the first, the *true*, and the *only*, "Russian Constructivist" artists, and their work would actually dominate all art historical accounts and sculptural histories of the 1950s and 1960s.[164]

As Martin Hammer and Christina Lodder have explained,[165] Buchloh's 1990 narrative is flawed in at least one place (the association of El Lissitzky's remarks with Gabo and Pevsner).[166] But despite this issue, Buchloh's 'Cold War Constructivism' is a useful piece of critical writing and the first of its kind, in addressing the way in which Western politics has impacted on the reception of Constructivist art.[167] Importantly, Buchloh confirms that Gabo and Pevsner's ideas were a far cry from those proffered by the Russian and Soviet Constructivists. The notion of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde embracing an autonomous art is completely antithetical to all that the Russian and Soviet Constructivists stood for.

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[164] Buchloh (1990a: 91). Buchloh's italics.

[165] Hammer and Lodder (2000: 97).

[166] See page 57 of this thesis for further details. (Buchloh, on his page 88, also conflates three passages in his translation of his chosen source of Clay (1969a). Buchloh includes one ellipsis rather than the expected two. He also notes (erroneously) that the source was published in Paris and lists an incorrect start page for the article. Buchloh (1990a: 106 n. 5). Also, the primary source for these passages should be Clay (1966: 86). But these issues are minor considering that the cited passages in each source are similar both in content and in language.)

[167] No doubt building on Serge Guilbaut's earlier book, in a similar vein. Guilbaut (1983). Which discussed Abstract Expressionism rather than Constructivism. Especially since Guilbaut edited the collection in which Buchloh's text first appeared. Guilbaut (1990).

Later literature

Prior to the new millennium very little had been written on the connection between Constructivism and Minimal art. In 2000 James Meyer's book (in Phaidon's 'themes and movements' series) *Minimalism* was published.[168] (Meyer's hybrid transcription of the 1964 WBAI radio interview coupled with the 1966 *ARTnews* article as presented in *Minimalism*[169] is discussed in detail in chapter six.) A year later, Meyer released his valuable and comprehensive work *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*[170] which assessed Minimal art with the benefit of a reasonable passage of time. Referring to Greenberg's 1967 essay 'Recentness of Sculpture', Meyer wrote:

> Dissolving the border between painting and sculpture seemed "the far-out thing to do." The modernist history of this operation – the constructivist investigation of the corner and the wall, and the cubist constructions of 1913-14 that precede it – was unknown to Greenberg; he had no vocabulary for understanding literalist practice in formalist terms. The minimalist embrace of "real" space and materials and the tactile experience of a moving spectator he could only perceive in a dadaist light.[171]

In his text – and following a quotation earlier on the same page from the Robert Morris essay 'Notes on Sculpture, Part1'[172] (in which Morris discusses Tatlin and Rodchenko) – Meyer suggested that there was 'a general unawareness of constructivism among New York artists'.[173] Despite his assertion, Meyer used Morris as an example of the influence of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde to reinforce his case against Greenberg:

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[168] Meyer (2000).
[169] Meyer (2000: 197-201).
[170] Meyer (2001).
[171] Meyer (2001: 212-13).
[172] Morris (1966).
[173] Meyer (2001: 156).

> Morris's reference to the Russian avant-garde was an important move, for it elucidated an artistic debt that was only implicit in "ABC Art." Proposing a resumption of the legacy of Tatlin and Rodchenko forty years after the fact announced a transition from the optical model of sculpture of Greenberg and Fried to a literalist art and an embodied perception.[174]

Maria Gough's *The Artist as Producer* of 2005 contains a detailed and engaging look at the 'composition versus construction' debate.[175] Elsewhere in her book, however, some of Gough's assertions surrounding the work of Karl Ioganson and the later works of Kenneth Snelson are questionable. For instance, Gough has suggested that one of Ioganson's works showed evidence of an idea that later was explored by Snelson, especially with her citation of the reproductions created by Viacheslav Koleichuk in 1991.[176] But this assertion is based on the insubstantial evidence of a single grainy photograph of a particular installation view of the OBMOKhU exhibition, and it is doubtful that the precise arrangement can be accurately discerned from this evidence. But Koleichuk's model becomes something of a certainty in Gough's chapter. Snelson, (in his letter to Gough sent well before the book's publication), also had misgivings about the recreation by Koleichuk of what Gough refers to as *Spatial Construction (IX)*. Snelson wrote, 'even I wouldn't have been able to make out from that famous jumbled 1921 exhibition photo that Ioganson's piece (marked number IX) was indeed a three-strut tensegrity structure.'[177] (See chapter four for more on Snelson and tensegrity.)

Many texts in the past (by Greenberg, Judd and Fried for instance) have failed to acknowledge Constructivism's impact on Minimal artists. Evolving from Gough's research for her earlier book came the *October* article 'Frank Stella is a Constructivist'.[178]

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[174] Meyer (2001: 156). Endnote reference removed.
[175] Gough (2005: 21-59).
[176] Gough (2005: 87-93).
[177] Snelson (2003).
[178] Gough (2007).

In this text Gough raises the paradoxical point that Carl Andre, in his dialogues with Hollis Frampton (discussed in detail in this thesis in chapter four), referred to Russian Constructivism but avoided mention of Rodchenko.[179] Gough mentioned Rickey's 1967 book (*Constructivism: Origins and Evolution*[180] – discussed earlier) and his erroneous positioning of Gabo and Pevsner as founders of Constructivism.[181] And she briefly discussed the WBAI radio interview of 1964.[182] (See chapter six for my detailed discussion of this and later related texts.) But the important points for this thesis are the connections that Gough draws between Stella's black paintings, the features of Constructivist sculpture (especially in her use of Rodchenko examples) and the modular features of much of Andre's sculptural output.

More recently, Brandon Taylor's 2014 book, *After Constructivism*, presented a wide-ranging view of the way in which Constructivism (in the multifarious forms that Taylor identifies as such) has moved through the twentieth century.[183] There are a few issues with Taylor's approach. All of his painstaking work is predicated on Cubism as the basis for the majority of the art of the twentieth-century. Arguably this is true, but only up to a point. Taylor's constant referring back to Cubism detracts from the other revolutionary gains that were secured by many other artists in the period. More troublingly, Taylor regularly conflates Constructivism and International Constructivism[184] and creates phrases which appear to give an authenticity to his

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[179] Gough wrote, '[…] Aleksandr Rodchenko, appears nowhere in his published dialogues with Frampton.' Gough (2007: 109). Although she confirmed that 'Andre would certainly acknowledge Rodchenko later, however, and fully.' Gough (2007: 98).

[180] Rickey (1995). Originally published in 1967.

[181] Gough wrote, 'Even as late as 1967, five years after the publication of *The Great Experiment*, the artist George Rickey was able to put the two brothers right and center in his book on the origins and evolution of Constructivism.' Gough (2007: 112).

[182] Gough (2007: 118-19). The 1966 and 1968 manifestations are cited in a footnote. Gough (2007: 118 n. 57).

[183] Taylor (2014).

[184] Taylor (2004: 67 and 103) in particular.

statements,[185] yet these are not so useful for his examination.[186] As for the undeniable link between the Constructivists and their use of materials, Taylor suggests that by the 1960s 'In different ways talk of production-values – the how and why of material and their motives for being used – was becoming important to art'.[187] Since these values are evident in the work of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists, I contend that this happened much earlier. Also, Taylor states that Dan Flavin had been given a copy of Camilla Gray's 1962 book – and that this book had caused him to drop his ambition of becoming a priest – but curiously Taylor leaves these assertions unreferenced.[188] Furthermore, his attribution of Umberto Eco's statement as a 'check-list of important Constructivist ideals'[189] is a step too far. Leaving aside these and other difficulties,[190] Taylor does supply some worthwhile definitions of Constructivism.[191] Its usefulness for this thesis is limited, but this book covers a large amount of material across a wide time span and is certainly thought-provoking. And, as his title suggests, he discusses the links

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[185] As did Buckminster Fuller in the early 1960s. (See reference 63 on page 129 and reference 65 on page 129.).

[186] Phrases such as the '"organic" tendency in Russian Constructivism'. Taylor (2014: 109). (Later he used Matyushin as an example of these organic forms. Taylor (2014: 164). But Matyushin could never be described as a Constructivist.) On the same page Taylor mentions Gabo as a proponent of 'another Constructivism', Taylor (2014: 164), but it is never referred to as 'International'. He also likens the work of Sarah Lucas, in particular her 2000 assemblage *Beyond the Pleasure Principle (Freud)*, to his '"slack" Constructivism'. Taylor (2014: 211). This is another example of one of his manufactured terms.

[187] Taylor (2014: 199).

[188] Taylor (2014: 224). The unreferenced assertions being, that Flavin had seen a copy of Gray's book and that the sight of this book had caused him to review his future.

[189] Taylor (2014: 176). Taylor wrote, 'Eco speculated that such art "calls into question the principality of causality, bivalent logics, univocal relationships, and the principle of contradiction" – effectively a check-list of important Constructivist ideals' Taylor (2014: 176).

[190] Taylor used Flavin's *'monument' 1 for V. Tatlin* (created in 1964) as an example, stating 'it was immediately clear that a relevant new attitude to art-making had taken hold.' Taylor (2014: 221 and figure 130 on page 222). It may have been 'immediately clear', but only to Flavin and his close associates, since this work was not displayed publicly until 1969. See Govan and Bell (2004: 236). The first of the 'monument' series to be exhibited (in 1965) was *'monument' 7 for V. Tatlin*. See Govan and Bell (2004: 236-37).

[191] He writes of 'function, efficiency and motivated form [...] "truth to materials", secularism and democratic scale.' Taylor (2014: 200). And of 'efficiency, rationality, the motivated use of materials, and the re-activation of the viewer [...]. Taylor (2014: 221).

between Constructivism and the artistic moments that followed. A connection that has often been denied or overlooked.

Literature review conclusion

We have moved on from earlier texts that avoided discussion of the Russian revolution,[192] but several gaps in the literature remain. Two of these, the lack of precision when discussing Constructivism and International Constructivism[193] and the regular engagement with the 'construction versus composition' debate[194] – yet failing to project this towards Minimal art – with care, can be prevented. Two further gaps, the underexamination of the link between Constructivism and Minimal art and the overediting evident in the 1966 presentation of the 1964 WBAI radio broadcast – its subsequent influence on the reception of Minimal art, and its continued reproduction in various forms – are explored in this thesis, but these issues are more difficult to rectify. Here I highlight and investigate these gaps, but they can only be securely plugged with time.

[192] Nakov (1983).

[193] As seen in Taylor (2004: 67 and 103).

[194] Lodder (1983: 83-88), Margolin (1997: 14-15), Gough (2005: 21-59), Kiaer (2005: 155) and Taylor (2014: 44-47). See earlier discussion on page 26 onwards.

Chapter conclusion

The themes of this thesis have now been introduced. The labelling of ''isms' and the attendant difficulties with categorisation of artists into critically constructed groups gives rise to difficulties. Constructivism has previously been seen as a dead-end, but in the years since its demise, Constructivism has enabled non-representational abstract art to flourish. Fear of communism and all things Soviet has affected the Western reception of Russian and Soviet Constructivism. Furthermore, Minimal artists were creating art in opposition to their immediate predecessors, the Abstract Expressionists, and railed against the Europe-centric nature of modern art. The cold war also affected the promotion of art in the United States, and as a consequence Russian and Soviet Constructivism was not afforded the credit that it deserved. This thesis will show that Minimal artists did draw from Constructivist ideas. To begin this exploration, the next chapter contains an initial discussion relating to émigrés, followed by sections which examine International Constructivism from 1922 to the early 1960s.

CHAPTER TWO

Constructivism and International Constructivism (post-Russian revolution to post-World War II)

Introduction

The Russian artists Naum Gabo, Antoine Pevsner and Ivan Puni all left Russia and never returned. Each of them settled in the West, and changed their forms of practice from their earlier adherence to Constructivism.

Here, a chronological examination of the development of International Constructivism will consider groupings of artists selected to offer a further exploration of International Constructivism and its geographic propagation. I discuss the history of groups who were involved with International Constructivism, some more strictly than others, and show how ideas related to Constructivism were used and assimilated across the globe. These histories range from the stagnation that occurred during and following the 1922 Congress, to the early 1960s, before Minimal art's prominence. This exploration is important to my thesis, because it illustrates the spread of Constructivist ideas around the globe, eventually reaching the United States.

Émigrés

I will begin with some historical background to provide context for this section. Following the February 1917 Revolution, Tsar Nicholas II was deposed. Before the end of July, Bolshevik forces killed the Tsar and his immediate family. As a result of their reaction to the Bolshevik's overthrow of the Romanov dynasty, the armies – which had been controlled by the former Tsarist regime – became autonomous and led the military wing of the white movement which became known as the 'White army'. Thanks to the October Revolution of the same year, the Bolsheviks concluded that their grip on power had been secured. They were mistaken. The struggle for the retention of political power was yet to be settled. The Russian Civil War continued to be fought between the former forces of the Tsar and the 'Red Army' of the Bolsheviks.[1] In 1919 the Russian artist and graphic designer El Lissitzky captured the struggle between the two opposing forces in his design for the poster subsequently titled *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* (see Appendix A, Figure 3, page 200). With his scheme of red, white and black, Lissitzky chose to use the dominant colours of revolutionary art and unmistakably called for support of the Red Army to destroy the White Army (and by inference, urge for a continued support of the post-revolutionary power of the Bolsheviks). To reinforce the message, Lissitzky included textual confirmation of each of the sets of protagonists in his design.[2] No one viewing this arrangement could doubt that this design was a graphical metaphor for the armed struggle in Russia, and that this poster was in support of the Bolshevik fight for political power. This graphic artwork allowed the Bolsheviks to easily reproduce Lissitzky's work in the form of a lithographically printed poster.[3] By the publication of the poster, with

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[1] The civil war ended in 1922. The Bolsheviks were victorious.

[2] On the left of the image Клином красным (Klinom Krasnim) translates to 'Red Wedge' and on the right, Бей Белых (Bey Belych) translates to 'Beat Whites'.

[3] Camilla Gray's caption aptly describes the work as a 'Street Poster'. Gray (1962: 270 figure 215). Although she also dismisses the work as, 'an amusing illustration of these "leftist" artists' contribution to Bolshevik propaganda.' Gray (1962: 248-49).

the dissemination of its embedded message, Lissitzky and the Workers' party intended to garner further support for the Red Army. The need to publicise the continuation of the civil war was necessary, since the Russians were suffering because of the ongoing state of war.

Living in Russia during this civil war was demanding. Fighting was a regular occurrence, and supplies of food were infrequent. In part at least, this environment must have encouraged Lissitzky to leave Russia in 1921.[4] He remained in Berlin until 1924. After a short stay in Switzerland he returned, in 1925, to what by then had become the Soviet Union. The political climate and the physical environment must have been more welcoming to Lissitzky at this point. He died in the USSR in 1941. Other Russian artists were not so keen on returning to the Motherland.

Gabo left Russia in the spring of 1922 and his older brother Pevsner left the Soviet Union in 1923. They both initially travelled to Berlin, but Pevsner stayed there less than a year before putting down roots in France, where he remained for the rest of his life. Gabo spent ten years in Germany, then, like his sibling, travelled to France where he spent three years before moving to the UK.[5] Subsequently, in 1946, he settled in the USA, where he remained until his death in 1977.

Gabo, although a useful example of an artist who left Russia for the West, has become a source of contention among writers keen to explore Constructivism and its reception in the West in the long twentieth century. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, in his 'Cold War Constructivism' essay of 1990,[6] used Gabo as an example of the corruption of, what for him was, the genuine Constructivism as practiced by the Russian and Soviet avant-garde. Gabo and Pevsner were prime examples of Russian artists who arrived in the West

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[4] Martin Hammer and Christina Lodder (2000: 97) indicate that changes to the organisation of the arts within Russia in 1921, could also have influenced Lissitzky's decision-making.

[5] In Germany he was involved with de Stijl as well as the Bauhaus, and in France he was active within the Abstraction-Création group.

[6] Buchloh (1990a).

and proclaimed Constructivism to have been 'invented' by them. Pevsner's unequivocal statement of 1956, 'There were no others. I repeat it again and again: it was only Gabo and myself who invented Constructivism'[7] certainly cannot be misconstrued. But, as Martin Hammer and Christina Lodder have explained, Buchloh's citing of a Lissitzky essay published posthumously in 1967 (which Buchloh introduces as 'reasonable to assume that El Lissitzky was addressing, among others, the work of Gabo and Pevsner [...]'[8] in order to show the unrest between the brothers and VKhUTEMAS), is erroneous. Erroneous because Lissitzky was specifically addressing 'Tatlin and his colleagues'.[9] Despite this flaw, Buchloh's essay shows Gabo and Pevsner's attempts to claim Constructivism for themselves. And, as Buchloh has explained, this situation has continued to be propagated in the West for much of the twentieth century. This is an important point, because this representation of Constructivism is false, and I will talk about this further, a little later in this section.

Like Gabo and Pevsner, the Russian artist Ivan Puni also emigrated. Puni left in 1919, but his trajectory was much more conventional following his emigration. Prior to leaving Russia his work was inspired by a combination of Cubist ideas together with a Tatlin-like exploration of picture space projecting into the room. Some works were three-dimensional constructions designed to hang on the wall, such as *The Card Players* of 1913-1914 (see Appendix A, Figure 26, page 207) – with a nod towards Cézanne's painting of the same name – and his *Painterly Sculpture* of 1915 (see Figure 27, page 207). Puni created both by the use of timber, cardboard and thin sheets of metal in relief forms attached to a wooden ground, and each work shows the influence of synthetic Cubist forms. Latterly his art became more firmly associated with Cubist easel paintings, such as that displayed in his painting *Chair and Hat Box* (see Appendix A, Figure 28, page 207),

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[7] Pevsner in 1956, cited in Buchloh (1990a: 91). See also chapter one for discussion of the mythology surrounding Gabo and Pevsner.

[8] Buchloh (1990a: 89).

[9] Hammer and Lodder (2000: 97).

where the influence of works by Picasso and Braque is apparent. He travelled to Berlin (via Finland), arriving in 1921, where he set-up his studio. Lodder has noted that Puni's 'studio became a meeting place for artists and writers such as Il'ya Erenburg, Raoul Hausmann and Hans Richter.'[10] Eventually he moved to Paris in 1923, where, as Lodder has explained, he 'established close relations with Louis Marcoussis, Gino Severini, Fernand Léger, Amédée Ozenfant and the art critics André Salmon and Waldemar George.'[11] Following his arrival in France he worked under the name Jean Pougny. His output now reverted to an earlier, more impressionistic, style with paintings such as his *Harlequin with a Mask* of 1944 (see Appendix A, Figure 29, page 207), and his 1953 work *Personnages dans le Jardin* (see Figure 30, page 208). It is impossible to say with certainty whether these changes were prompted by his difficulty in making a living (selling impressionistic works in France with a French-sounding name would doubtless have been more fruitful), or simply a reluctance to return to his earlier practice because he was so deeply involved in his new life as a Parisian-based artist. He worked in Paris until his death in 1956.

In these particular cases émigrés tend, naturally enough, to become assimilated into the culture of the country or region to which they have travelled. Gabo, Pevsner and Puni all became less interested in the Russian and Soviet forms of art of the early twentieth century. The case is most pronounced in the example of Puni. He became an exponent of archetypal French art following his emigration and, like Peter Bürger suggested,[12] held life and art firmly apart. Puni's art was no longer a form of art that railed against established forms of art. Following his arrival in Paris, Puni embraced the status quo.[13] Whereas those that remained in the Soviet Union, artists like Tatlin, Rodchenko, Popova and Stepanova, retained their passion for the idea that art and

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[10] Lodder (1983: 303 n. 20).

[11] Lodder (2016).

[12] Bürger (1974).

[13] Although, in 1919, Puni made a statement which appears to be a presaging of his change in style. He wrote, 'aesthetics do not govern life, but follow in the wake of it [...].' Lodder (1983: 77).

politics should remain linked. These Russian and Soviet Constructivists continued to reject art as a bourgeois construct, to reject art as a commodity and avoided references to religion or the spiritual in their art.

As highlighted by Buchloh, the idea of what constitutes Constructivism (in the West), has been affected by the efforts of Gabo and Pevsner. My intention here is not to deny that these two brothers engaged in their own practice after their emigration, but to reinforce the fact that their practice was one which deserves to be referred to as a part of International Constructivism.

Constructivism must be seen as evolving in two phases which are geographically bounded. The first and the most important phase being Russian and Soviet Constructivism, and the second phase being International Constructivism. Gabo and Pevsner were undeniably artists who labelled themselves Constructivists, but, despite their proclamations, their work should always be clarified as being outside of the Russian and Soviet phase. Gabo and Pevsner's ideas and artistic output need to be firmly connected with the International phase. All too often these two phases have either become conflated or the possibility of their separation is ignored. The use of the term Constructivism in relation to these two émigrés should always be qualified with the prefix 'International'.

Gabo and Pevsner were essentially seen as Constructivists in the West, but the divergent practices that comprised International Constructivism were not confined to the adoptive homelands of Gabo (USA) and Pevsner (France). In the next section I will examine the spread of International Constructivism.

International Constructivism

Here I will explore the geographic spread of International Constructivism by an examination of a range of written texts by Constructivist groups of artists. This section is divided into two main groups of countries, these being pre- and post-World War II (WWII) manifestations. (France and Germany each appear in both of these groupings.)[14] The discussions are organised chronologically by the first appearance of the Constructivist influence in the country concerned (although the years of the activities of these groups do sometimes overlap). The concentration on texts as a means of exploring the dissemination of Constructivism in this section, is due to the engagement of the protagonists. The members of these groups felt compelled to publish their thoughts, and this urge was accelerated by events in the USSR. The restrictions in place in the Soviet Union from 1932 encouraged European artists to gather together as a means of retaining their independence. Before World War II, Constructivism and the ideas purloined from Constructivism were geographically limited to Europe. In the war's aftermath, Constructivism became more widespread.

[14] There were other groups that emerged in the years that followed, such as the Swiss Group Y and the UK's Systems Group, as well as the Art Workers' Coalition in the USA. But these groups fall outside the chronology of this thesis.

Initial manifestations

The 1922 Congress – stagnation

The Congress of International Progressive Artists, held in Düsseldorf, lasted for two days in May 1922.[15] This was an effort to encourage collaboration of supposedly like-minded artists. As it turned out, these artists were far from like-minded. Lissitzky (who at this time was still living in Berlin) spoke at the conference and his presentation to the congress included the following statement:

> Our thinking is characterized by the attempt to turn away from the old subjective, mystical conception of the word and to create an attitude of universality – clarity – reality.[16]

Lissitzky's missive chimed with the ideas of the Russian Constructivists. But the Congress was beset with infighting and doubts over what the attendees were seeking. The International Faction of Constructivists (IFdK) – ostensibly Theo van Doesburg, El Lissitzky and Hans Richter – were against the ideas proposed by the nascent Union of Progressive International Artists. This Union included Wassily Kandinsky as well as members of the Young Rhineland group (with artists such as Arthur Kaufmann and Adolf Uzarski), as well as many poets, writers and philosophers.[17] Most of the members of the Union, however, could never be described as Constructivist, either in deed or in thought. Among other statements, the members of the Union were seeking permanent worldwide international exhibitions of their work. The IFdK disliked the idea of exhibitions. As they put it, 'We reject the present conception of an exhibition: a warehouse stuffed with unrelated objects, all for sale.'[18] This was not so much a rejection of exhibitions, but a

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[15] Originally scheduled for three days, the event ended prematurely as explained below.
[16] Bann (1974: 63).
[17] See Bann (1974:59) for more details.
[18] Bann (1974: 69).

rejection of art as a commodity. And they went on to state that, 'art is no longer a dream set apart and in contrast to the realities of the world.'[19] Their statement concluded with the following sentence (originally reproduced entirely in capital letters):

> The artists of the congress have proved that it is the tyranny of the individual that makes the creation of a progressive and unified international impossible with the elements of this congress.[20]

This concluding sentence, as well as signalling the split between the factions, shows that the IFdK had their origins firmly rooted in socialist ideals. The conference ended abruptly without any real agreement and its only success was to antagonise the attendees.[21]

The shift into Europe

Constructivism gradually made its way across Europe. First to Germany,[22] Czechoslovakia and Poland and then to France, the UK and Switzerland. As a result of the failure to agree on a collective way forward in Düsseldorf, and because of the fact that the de Stijl movement (and its eponymous magazine first published in 1922), inevitably focussed on the de Stijl group, the magazine *G* was created. This short-lived publication was a result of a collaboration between the German avant-garde filmmaker Hans Richter and the Dutch artist Theo van Doesburg.[23] Published in Berlin in 1923 and 1924, *G* is important because

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[19] Bann (1974: 69).

[20] Bann (1974: 69). Reverted to conventional case here.

[21] See Bann (1974: 62).

[22] The Bauhaus existed in three locations – Weimar (1919-1925), Dessau (1925-1931) and Berlin (1932-1933) – prior to World War II. I do not intend to further explore the Bauhaus. See page 22 of this thesis for my explanation.

[23] Bann (1974: 90).

it reinforces the ambition of van Doesburg that was first on display at the 1922 congress. In issue one of *G*, van Doesburg wrote:

> the difference between composition (assembling) and construction (synopsis, concentration) is an aspect of our time that cannot be underestimated. Yet neither can lead to a fruitful monumental art production *if we do not agree to the elemental means of forming it.*[24]

And he went on to call for a '*conscious* control of [the artist's] elemental means of expression.'[25] Much of van Doesburg's piece in the first issue was influenced by his failure to rally like-minded artists at the previous year's congress. His missive was devoted to gathering support for the promotion of a Constructivist art in Germany.

By 1923, in Czechoslovakia, another Constructivist-influenced magazine, *Disk,* was created by the architect Jaromír Krejcar, the poet Jaroslav Seifert and the graphic designer Karel Teige.[26] Its initial passage of writing called on artists to reject imitation, the sentimental and to reject the products of the old masters. Instead, the editors asserted that 'A picture is born from thinking, construing, and combining objective elements and thoughts and will not become a superficial and enthusiastic view.'[27] This statement indicates that a Constructivist approach was being propagated in Czechoslovakia.

In Czechoslovakia's close neighbour, Poland, the association of Cubists, Constructivists and Suprematists, referred to as the Blok group, was formed in Warsaw in 1924. The artist Władysław Strzemiński was instrumental in creating this first group of Polish Constructivists, and their first public exhibition was held in a Warsaw car

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[24] Bann (1974: 91). van Doesburg's italics. His emboldening of 'composition' and 'construction' removed.

[25] Bann (1974: 92). van Doesburg's italics.

[26] There are a few difficulties here. Bann does not report Krejcar's given name and erroneously reports Seifert's given name as Kurt. Bann (1974: 97). Sayer (2000: 10) indicates that the poet Jaroslav Seifert was a co-editor of *Blok*. Kurt Seifert was a film actor unconnected with the magazine.

[27] Bann (1974: 102).

showroom.[28] This arrangement was not uncommon, since Henryk Berlewi, another prominent member of the group, also organised an exhibition of his own held amidst the cars of 1924 (see Appendix A, Figure 31, page 208).[29] Berlewi's print *Mechano-Factura* – with its concentration on graphic forms and by the use of the limited palette of red, white and black – is a clear example of the influence of Russian and Soviet Constructivism (see Appendix A, Figure 32, page 208), and was given a prominent position in his Warsaw show.

The magazine of the group, also called *Blok* was created in 1924. The first editorial carried the title *What Is Constructivism?* and concluded that:

> Constructivism does not aim at creating a style as an unchanging fixed pattern based upon forms once invented and accepted, but it takes up the problem of CONSTRUCTION that may and must be subject to continuous changes and improvements, under the influence of the ever new and more complex requirements imposed by the general development.[30]

It is likely that 'the general development' was a reference to political changes immediately prior to the magazine's inception and that the political climate influenced the writers of this piece. Poland had ceased to war with Russia by 1921 and the brief Kraków uprising – following the beginning of a general strike in November 1924 – which resulted in concessions from the government, seemed to bolster the idea that Polish workers could have an impact on future decision-making. In 1925 the Blok group disbanded, partly because of disagreements between the two artists Mieczysław Szczuka and Strzemiński,

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[28] Displayed at the Laurent-Clement company showroom in Warsaw. A few years later the company was subsumed into the Škoda group.

[29] Berlewi's show was held in the more prestigious surroundings of the Austro-Daimler showroom in Warsaw.

[30] Stanisławski *et al* (1973: 78), where the text is presented as a concluding paragraph. It is worth noting here that John Bowlt, in Bann (1974: 103), translates the title as 'What Constructivism Is' (a statement rather than a question), and Bowlt and Bann present the text as a preamble (when in fact it was set-out to the right of the main text column, with just a few words to each line – effectively a conclusion or a postscript, not a preamble). See Stanisławski *et al* (1973: 79) for a reproduction of the original document. Also, Bowlt translates it slightly differently, leaning more towards the apolitical.

and partly because of the drift towards a concentration on architecture. Shortly afterwards the group's magazine ceased production.[31]

By 1926 Polish democracy ended with Józef Piłsudski's military dictatorship. The promotion of Constructivism in Poland continued however, and was taken further by the Praesens group,[32] formed by the architect Szymon Syrkus, with Strzemiński joining just a few months after its inauguration.[33] This group also published its own magazine, again with the name of the group as its title. Once again – because of differences between artists and architects, and spurred on by Strzemiński – most of the artists left the Praesens group in 1929, but it continued until 1939 as a vehicle for architecture. The difficulties concerning the artists and the architects were caused by the difference between the architects' need to be involved in the urgent practical work of the rebuilding of Polish cities, and Strzemiński's keenness to explore the theoretical and the abstract.[34]

Later in 1929, Strzemiński, never one to be deterred for long, was involved in the setting-up of the 'a.r.' group.[35] Unlike the two earlier Polish groups, 'a.r.' produced relatively little in the way of written publications.[36] This group of artists and poets was notable for its success in collecting avant-garde works of art from European artists such as Hans Arp, Max Ernst, Fernand Leger and Kurt Schwitters. And the 'a.r.' group's collection of modern art formed the basis for the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź.[37]

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[31] Turowski (1973a: 38).

[32] Ultimately derived from Latin, meaning current or present.

[33] Turowski (1973b: 39).

[34] As explained by DeBoer (2005: 50).

[35] 'a.r.' referring to revolutionary artists. See Łabęcka (1973: 41). Although Yve-Alain Bois offers several possibilities. See Bois (2016: 4 n. 5).

[36] Interestingly, this year [2016], a translation of an essay by Katarzyna Kobro and Władysław Strzemiński appeared in the journal *October*. Kobro and Strzemiński (1931). Extracts of this text in English had appeared earlier in Stanisławski *et al* (1973: 107-09), but this fact is not mentioned in *October* – yet pages 55 to 56 of this same catalogue are referenced by Bois (2016: 8 n. 13) in his *October* piece in reference to Kobro's sculptures.

[37] In particular because of Strzemiński's friendship with Przecław Smolik (the president of the Education and Culture Section of the Town Council in Łódź). As explained by Łabęcka (1973: 45). Although many other works – including art by Alexander Calder, Albert Gleizes, Jean Gorin, Auguste Herbin, Pablo Picasso and Joaquín Torres-García – were lost as a result of World War II. As reported by Łabęcka (1973: 45).

France, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, saw the creation of four prominent artist-led groups, Cercle et Carré, Art Concret, Abstraction-Création, and Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, and each of these embraced abstract art including ideas introduced by Russian Constructivists. Remarkably, these four Paris-based groups were, in the main, formed by, and of, non-French artists.[38] Of these, only the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles survived World War II. Cercle et Carré, a gathering of abstract artists, was founded in 1929 by the Uruguayan-Catalan artist Joaquín Torres-García, the Belgian painter Michel Seuphor and the Catalan-American artist Pierre Daura.[39] This short-lived group is notable for the Paris exhibition that opened on 18 April 1930 at Galerie 23 on the Rue La Boétie. Mme Friedberger signed the exhibition contract on the 12 February 1930, for the gallery, and Seuphor, Torres-García, Luigi Russolo and Georges Vantongerloo were the signatories for the group.[40] The works on display included contributions from Torres-García, Seuphor, Piet Mondrian, Jean Gorin, Wassily Kandinsky, Vantongerloo, Jean Arp, Henryk Stażewski, Sophie Taeuber, Amédée Ozenfant and Antoine Pevsner.[41] A total of 46 artists displayed 127 artworks in the show.[42] Troublingly, as Marie-Aline Prat has explained, the gallery was never busy and no works were sold.[43] This must have been something of a shock to the group, but later, Seuphor wrote:

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[38] Jean Hélion (Art Concret) and Auguste Herbin (Abstraction-Création) were the notable French artists involved in these Paris-based organisations.

[39] Georgia Museum of Art (2013: 1).

[40] 'Le contrat fut signé le 12 février 1930 avec Mme Friedberger par Seuphor. Vantongerloo, Torrés [*sic*] et L. Russolo.' Marie-Aline Prat (1984: 76). ('The contract was signed on 12 February 1930 with Mme Friedberger by Seuphor, Vantongerloo, Torres[-García] and L[uigi] Russolo.') My translation.

[41] Prat (1984: 76-77) mentions Serge Charchoune, Torres-García, Seuphor, Otto Freundlich, Alberto Sartoris, Piet Mondrian, Wanda Wolska, Ingeborg Bjarnason, Carl Buchheister, Jean Gorin, Pierre Daura, Wassily Kandinsky, Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart, Vantongerloo, Jean Arp, Hendrik Werkman, Vilmos Huszár, Henryk Stażewski, Sophie Taeuber, Franciska Clausen, Marcelle Cahn, Amédée Ozenfant, Vera Idelson, Antoine Pevsner, František Foltýn, Germán Cueto and Adya and Otto van Rees. Artists listed here in the order in which they appear in Prat.

[42] Boland (2013: 13). Although 130 works are reported in Georgia Museum of Art (2013: 1) and Seuphor, in Issue 3 of *Cercle et Carré*, suggests a total of 140. Valeri (2013: 122).

[43] Prat (1984: 77) wrote, 'Seuphor rappelle qu'il y eut peu de visiteurs et pas de tableaux vendus.' ('Seuphor recalls that there were few visitors and no paintings were sold.') My translation.

> I am tempted to smile when I recall that this series of groups and publications — *Cercle et Carré*, *Abstraction-Création* and *Réalités Nouvelles* — all originated in a visit paid to me at Vanves in 1929 by the Uruguayan painter Torrès-Garcia [*sic*], which resulted in the founding of *Cercle et Carré*.[44]

With these words – originally published in 1957, after his inevitable reflection on the show of more than two decades earlier – Seuphor makes a forceful, yet self-aggrandising, point. Cercle et Carré, as a group of avant-garde artists, lasted for only a few years before being absorbed into Abstraction-Création, which was set-up in 1931 by van Doesburg, Auguste Herbin and Vantongerloo. Whereas Salon des Réalités Nouvelles, which remains in existence, was initiated in 1939 by Sonia Delaunay.

By contrast with the disappointment of the Cercle et Carré show, the closing night, held less than a fortnight after the opening, was extraordinary. The invitation card (see Appendix A, Figure 33, page 208) indicated that there would be recitations, Luigi Russolo performing on his Russolophone and 'Masque du Cueto'.[45] The night, as described by Prat, was more aligned to Dada and Surrealism[46] rather than a celebration of the kinds of abstract art on display in the gallery. Regardless of the poor performance of the exhibition, the closing night must have lifted the group's spirits. As Seuphor clumsily suggested later, Cercle et Carré should be regarded as being important in terms of the evolution of groupings of abstract artists, but in that 1930 moment the group failed to garner much interest, other than from within.[47]

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[44] Seuphor (1957: 50).

[45] Which, as Prat has indicated, was Seuphor performing poetry from behind a creation by the Mexican sculptor Germán Cueto. She wrote, 'les exemples concrets de poésie que Seuphor donne ce soir-là, la façon dont il les « dit en scène » derriere son masque de fer créé par Cueto [...].' Prat (1984: 78). ('concrete examples of the poetry that Seuphor gave that night, the way he "directs" behind his iron mask created by Cueto [...].') My translation.

[46] Prat likened Seuphor's use of the Cueto mask to, 'les soirées dadaïstes de Zurich au cours desquelles Hugo Ball récitait d'étranges poèmes, cachés lui aussi sous de costumes de carton.' Prat (1984: 78). ('the Zürich Dadaists' evenings during which Hugo Ball recited strange poems, hidden in cardboard costumes.') My translation.

[47] As Catherine Dossin concluded, '[...] Cercle et Carré had been a failure but, thanks to Seuphor's literary activities, it became a historical success.' Dossin (2013: 291).

A few weeks later in April 1930, as a reaction to the creation of Cercle et Carré, van Doesburg, along with fellow artists Otto G. Carlsund, Jean Hélion, Léon Tutundjian and Marcel Wantz,[48] published the manifesto of the Art Concret group on page one of the first and only edition of their magazine (a small booklet of just sixteen pages),[49] edited by Hélion, *Numéro d'introduction du groupe et de la revue Art Concret*.[50] Hélion's own essay in the publication – which included reproductions of examples of art from Tutundjian, Carlsund, van Doesburg and himself[51] – included the question, 'Is there a constructive poetry?' posed as a postscript.[52] And van Doesburg, in his article, wrote, 'There is nothing to read in the painting. It is there to see.'[53] This phrase is reminiscent of the well-known remark, uttered by Frank Stella in a radio interview of 34 years later, 'What you see is what you see.'[54] The sole edition of the Art Concret group's publication ended with a photograph of the Graf Zeppelin which carried the headline, 'Buy the Zeppelins.'[55] This could have been an advertisement accepted to bolster the funds of the group, but it is more probable that this was a celebration of the recently completed circumnavigation of the globe by the airship. As well as looking forward to the future, the use of this image on

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[48] Although, according to Hélion, soon afterwards Wantz sought a career in politics. Hélion (1967: 135) and reproduced in Hélion (2014: 213).

[49] Each page of the portrait format booklet, Hélion (1930a), measures approximately 7 ⅜" × 5 ½" (187 mm × 140 mm).

[50] Hélion (1930a: i).

[51] Examples of the work from these four artists were printed on a set of pages, comprised of a single smaller sheet of paper which was inserted into the centre of the publication, which then generated four additional square format pages, each approximately 5 ½" × 5 ½" (140 mm × 140 mm). (Whereas only two artists' work – by Tutundjian and Walmar Shwab – were printed (in the magazine proper) on pages 7 and 13.) Hélion (1930a). Although the square format was better suited to the art concerned, the insertion of these further images was an afterthought, since the inserted sheet carried no page numbers (and the numbers of the other pages remained uninterrupted by the addition), and the sheet was only secured by one of the two staples in each booklet.

[52] 'Existe-t-il une poésie constructive?' Hélion (1930b: 10). This sentence of Hélion's was entirely in upper case characters. My translation.

[53] 'Il n'y a rien à lire dans la peinture. Il y a a voir.' van Doesburg (1930: 11). This phrase of van Doesburg's was entirely in upper case characters. My translation.

[54] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 3, 1:11-1:44). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[55] 'Achetez des Zeppelins' Hélion (1930a: 16). This headline was entirely in upper case characters. My translation. The photograph clearly shows the characters D-LZ127, the Graf Zeppelin's registration mark.

the last page also reinforces the group's wish to associate their work with non-naturalistic forms.

The Art Concret group was, in this first incarnation at least, short-lived (although the reference to concrete art would be revived in the 1940s and 1950s – and I will discuss this later). To a large extent this was because of van Doesburg's disillusionment with the group.[56] So much so, that he had a hand in the creation of another group, Abstraction-Création. But his death in 1931 sealed the fate of this first flush of Art Concret.

Abstraction-Création thrived and absorbed the earlier group Cercle et Carré. The group's first journal was published in 1932 and carried the full title of *Abstraction-Création Art Non-Figuratif*.[57] Abstraction-Création became a large group of around 400 abstract artists and continued until 1936.[58] By this time Abstraction-Création had produced five annual journals, but the need for non-figuration became less strictly observed. The works accepted for inclusion, as Jed Rasula has explained, ranged from Pevsner's brand of Constructivism, through the scientific application of art promoted by Vantongerloo and Stażewski, and included examples of works from artists such as Mondrian, Kandinsky and László Moholy-Nagy.[59] Rasula wrote, 'Even Picasso contributed to one issue […]'.[60] Furthermore Surrealist tendencies were also embraced, which is surprising since the group itself was created as a reaction to Surrealist groupings.[61]

This gradual change in the ethos of the group enabled them to become more attractive to other overseas artists. Especially since at this moment British art groups

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[56] Rasula (2013: 270).

[57] Rasula (2013: 271).

[58] Tate (2015b). Although several notable members, such as Hélion, Jean Arp, Sophie Tauber, Robert and Sophie Delaunay resigned in 1934 due to the 'doctrinaire' attitude of the group. Rasula (2013: 271).

[59] Rasula (2013: 273).

[60] Rasula (2013: 273).

[61] And as Rasula has also explained, Seuphor railed against the Surrealists in issue 1 of Abstraction-Création's journal. Rasula (2013: 273).

such as the Seven and Five Abstract Group (renamed as such in 1935) and Unit One (organised by Paul Nash) became tentatively linked to Abstraction-Création.[62]

Around this time another important art group was founded within the United Kingdom too. The Circle Group created in 1937 by Ben Nicholson, Naum Gabo and the architect J. L. Martin, published *Circle*, which carried the subtitle *International survey of constructive art*.[63] This was intended to be a regularly published journal, but only one issue was produced. Amounting to 292 pages,[64] the publication began with Gabo's contribution 'The Constructive Idea in Art',[65] his explication of his kind of art, later categorised as International Constructivism, which was completely antithetical to the art of the Russian Constructivists.[66]

The Circle group was important in that it offered a British-led, and internationally regarded, forum for discourses related to abstraction and construction, but the group failed to continue after World War II.[67] By contrast, the group Salon des Réalités Nouvelles remains active to this day. The name presaged their intentions – with their art

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[62] Tate (2015b), Clarke (2010: 226) and Clarke (2010: 253).

[63] Martin *et al* (1937). These three people were also the editors of *Circle*. The subtitle only appears once on the inside title page. Martin *et al* (1937: iii).

[64] Excluding the front matter.

[65] Gabo (1937).

[66] The front cover of *Circle* suggested that the journal included pieces from all of the names listed, but this was not the case (and certain of the names on the cover were repeated in different columns too). References to sixty-seven surnames of members of the group (plus one other group, Praesens) were printed. (Under four columns labelled, 'painters', 'sculptors', 'architects' and 'writers, and the repetition of certain names led to eighty-one instances of surnames (plus one group) being presented on the cover.) However, there were only twenty-two different contributions in total by twenty people in *Circle*. And these contributions were divided into four sections, 'painting', 'sculpture', 'architecture' and 'art and life' (Gabo and Giedion each contributed two pieces. One of Giedion's was located in the Appendix.) The cover also listed twenty-two people as painters, but only four of these artists had articles published in *Circle*. (These four being Winifred Dacre, Moholy-Nagy, Mondrian and Nicholson.) By contrast, of the twenty-one names listed under the 'writers' heading, eighteen of these had contributed to the contents of the journal. My analysis is indicative of a few points of note. It appears that the editors were keen to bolster the cachet of the group by listing the names of group members on the front of the first edition – rather than just naming the contributors – citing the great and the good in an effort to encourage others to join the group. Furthermore, the evident bias of contributors from the 'writers' classification and the lack of 'painters' suggests that many artists preferred to be considered as writers.

[67] Bann (1974: 223). Although, other than the editorial team, the majority of the contributors were not UK-based.

they espoused a new reality, and by inference the old reality, that which went before, was to be avoided. Sonia Delaunay organised the group in 1939,[68] but the arrival of World War II curtailed their activities. Following the end of the war Delaunay had a hand in reinvigorated the group.[69] The first manifesto of the group, amounting to four pages, was printed in 1948 and began with the following question and assertion:

> What is non-figurative and non-objective abstract art? Unrelated to the world of external appearances, it is, for painting, a design or space animated by lines, shapes, surfaces, colours, in their mutual relations, and for sculpture, a certain volume animated by design, with a full, empty and exhilarating light.[70]

As well as this attempt to provide an explanation of their flavour of abstract art, the manifesto condemned the organisation of the Venice Biennale[71] and attacked Communist party control of art in the Soviet Union.[72] The editors of the pamphlet[73] wrote in their penultimate paragraph:

> A true creator does not work for the steak. The real creators have never made a fortune. Environmental influences, social conditions, the signs of happiness or suffering experienced by the material being, disappear with him. Despite the death of civilisations, what remains and will always remain alive in the works, through the centuries, what astonished Marx and so strongly that a materialist cannot exclusively understand, is the

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[68] Tate (2015c). Also Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (2015) report that, 'The first exhibition with the name was held in 1939 in Galerie Charpentier, organised by Robert Delaunay, Sonia Delaunay, Nelly van Doesburg and Fredo Sidès.'

[69] Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (2015) also report that, 'In 1946 the Salon was officially established as a successor to Abstraction-Création by Fredo Sidès, and its first board included Jean Arp, Sonia Delaunay and Albert Gleizes as members.' By 1948 Delaunay had resigned from the group.

[70] 'Qu'est-ce que l'Art abstrait non-figuratif et non-objectif? Sans lien avec le monde des apparences extérieures, c'est, pour la peinture, un certain plan ou espace animé par des lignes, des formes, des surfaces, des couleurs, dans leurs rapports réciproques et, pour la sculpture, un certain volume animé par des plans, des pleins, des vides, exaltant la lumière.' Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (1948: 2). My translation.

[71] Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (1948: 3).

[72] Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (1948: 4).

[73] Accepted as Auguste Herbin and Félix del Marle.

> very essence of art, that is to say the expression of the spiritual element of man by the means in Art.[74]

The group, at this stage in 1948, remained firmly associated with the ideals of the immediate post-revolutionary Marxist ideology, and this avid adherence contributed to Delaunay's decision to leave the group.[75]

In terms of the exploration of pre-World War II artists' groups, the last of these to be mentioned in this section are the two Swiss groupings, Gruppe 33 and Allianz. Gruppe 33 was founded in 1933 by a large group of artists, mostly Basel-based, who were committed to non-representational art. Four years later, Allianz was formed by the painter Richard Paul Lohse, and the painter and sculptor Leo Leuppi. Although Allianz, in the main, represented Zürich-based artists, their first group exhibition was held in Basel in 1938.[76] Max Bill, Walter Bodmer, Theo Eble, Hans Fischli, Camille Graeser and Leuppi were the long-standing members of Allianz between 1937 and 1954,[77] and of these the painter, sculptor and architect Bill was an influential member (as will be discussed further in the next section). Thanks to Bill's post-war success in Brazil, non-representational art flourished in South America in the 1950s and 1960s.

As indicated in this section, the spread of Constructivism before World War II was mainly limited to the geographic regions of central Europe with a northern bias and, in particular, to the countries that shared boundaries with what is now Germany. After the war, the influence of Constructivism ranged further afield, initially into South America,

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[74] 'Un véritable créateur ne travaille pas pour le bifteck. Les vrais créateurs n'ont jamais fait fortune. Les influences du milieu, les effets des conditions sociales, les marques des joies ou des souffrances éprouvées par l'être matériel disparaissent avec lui. Malgré la mort des civilisations, ce qui reste et restera toujours vivant dans les œuvres, à travers les siècles, ce qui étonnait si fort Marx et ce qu'un matérialiste exclusif ne peut comprendre, c'est l'essence propre de l'Art, c'est-à-dire l'expression de l'élément spiritual de l'homme par les moyens propres à l'Art.' Salon des Réalités Nouvelles (1948: 4). My translation.

[75] Although the group's infighting and the earlier death of her husband also played a part.

[76] Held at Kunsthalle Basel (9 January to 2 February 1938), the exhibition catalogue listed art from Abt, Bartoletti, Bill, Bodmer, Brignoni, Eble, Erni, Evard, Fischli, Freidrich, Gessner, Graeser, Hege, Hindenlang, Indermauer, Jacoby, Klee, Leuppi, Loewensberg, Maass, Moeschlin, Schiess, Seligmann, Taeuber-Arp, von Moos, Vulliamy, Weisskopf and Wiemken. Kunsthalle Basel (1938).

[77] From my analysis of the Allianz group's four published catalogues. Kunsthalle Basel (1938), Kunsthaus Zürich (1942), Kunsthaus Zürich (1947) and Helmhaus Zürich (1954).

but also spreading more widely in Europe and eventually to North America. The next section discusses this post-War expansion. Discussion of these historical details is included here in order to contextualise the eventual borrowing from, and adoption of, Constructivist ideas and techniques that will be discussed later.

Further afield – post-WWII manifestations

Joaquín Torres-García, one of the co-founders of Cercle et Carré, left France and returned to Montevideo in 1943,[78] where he created an art school[79] and founded his Taller Torres-García group. The name given to this group of artists reveals something of the character of the man. He felt the need to incorporate his own name, and the name of his studio, into the name of the group.[80] Torres-García was a prolific writer and championed his form of constructivism in a large collection of his lectures and articles published in 1944 under the title *Universalismo Constructivo*.[81] Torres-García offered his Universal Constructivism as a means of combining the structure and the geometry of the grids which he regularly used, together with symbolism embodied by the representation of forms within his paintings. Promoting his Universal Constructivism, in many of his treatises Torres-García campaigned for a hybrid type of constructivism. Although, like the Russians, he always remained concerned with the social duty of artists, his overriding concern was to publicise a form of constructivism which emphasised his belief that

[78] Before World War II, Torres-García had formed a short-lived group of Uruguayan artists, known as Asociación de Arte Constructivo. Cecilia de Torres (2015).

[79] The school itself was given the name 'Nueva Escuela de Arte del Uruguay' ('The New Art School of Art, Uruguay'). Cecilia de Torres (2015).

[80] The word 'Taller' in Spanish translates to 'Workshop' or 'Studio'.

[81] The book contains over 1000 pages and includes the text of over 150 of Torres-García's lectures. Torres-García (1944).

Uruguayan art should reflect Uruguay's pre-Hispanic history.[82] His constructivism differed from that of Russian Constructivism in others ways too, especially in his determination to use references from the natural world. In his own art, for example with his *Pachamama*,[83] (see Appendix A, Figure 34, page 208), he alluded to the pictographs of the Incas, the symbolic representation of the Mayans and the compartmentalisation often seen in Andean textiles. Torres-García's later work (he died in 1949) tended to revert to the more representational. Nevertheless, he enabled Uruguayan artists to be more confident about their abstraction, albeit a form of abstraction with more than a touch of naturalistic representation.

Elsewhere in South America, two groups of artists were formed in Argentina in 1944; Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención and Grupo Madí. By the end of the war, artists' groups were keen to publicise their ideas, and these two groups were no exception. Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención, which was largely driven by the artist Tomás Maldonado, held their first exhibition in March and April 1946.[84] The catalogue for the show included their manifesto, which concluded with the words:

> Against all elite art. For a collective art. "Kill the optical" the Surrealists have said, the last Mohicans of representation. EXALT OPTICS, we say. Bottom line: surround man with real things, not ghosts. Concrete Art familiarises man with a direct relationship with things and not with the fiction of things. To an aesthetically accurate and a precise technique. The aesthetic function against "good taste". White function. NEITHER FIND NOR SEARCH: INVENT.[85]

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[82] Building on his earlier texts, *Metafísica de la Prehistoria Indoamericana*, Torres-García (1939), and in his 'The New Art of America', of 1942, where he wrote, 'we here are not in Western Europe. This is a reality. And although this land was colonised by Europeans, that means nothing; we are in South America.' Torres-García (1942) translated and reproduced in Ramírez (1992: 79).

[83] Referring to an Andean goddess, which translates to earth goddess or earth mother.

[84] Although in 1943 Maldonado offered some of his ideas in answers to questions posed by the journal *Contrapunto: Literatura – Crítica – Arte*. Maldonado (1943).

[85] 'Contra todo arte de élites. Por un arte colectivo. "Matar la óptica", han dicho los surrealistas, los últimos mohicanos de la representación. EXALTAR LA OPTICA, decimos nosotros. Lo fundamental: rodear al hombre de cosas reales y no de fantasmas. El arte concreto habitúa al hombre a la relación directa con las

Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención wanted to avoid the ideas expounded by the Surrealists. By the publication of this manifesto,[86] members of Arte Concreto-Invención, unlike those of the Taller Torres-García group, were being urged to follow the path of invention, rather than that of appropriation.

Arte Concreto-Invención were agitational in their approach, but the other prominent Argentinian group, Grupo Madí, were less so. Unsurprisingly Grupo Madí, led by the artist Gyula Kosice,[87] also published a manifesto. The group's inaugural exhibition was hosted by the Instituto Francés de Estudios Superiores in Buenos Aires in August 1946, and consequently their manifesto, published in the show's catalogue, first appeared in French.[88] Grupo Madí's manifesto included the following:

> We others are the madístes, taking such elements from each art, we build; that is to say, we make a real invention. With this we express nothing, we represent nothing, we symbolize anything, we create the thing in its presence alone, its only immanence. The thing is in space and time; SHE EXISTS. It is a transcendent act, a wonderful act. Our art is human, deeply human, because it is the person in all its essence which CONSCIOUSLY creates, builds, actually invents.[89]

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cosas y no con las ficciones de las cosas. A una estética precisa, una técnica precisa. La función estética contra el "buen gusto". La función blanca. NI BUSCAR NI ENCONTRAR: INVENTAR.' Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención (1946a). My translation. It has been suggested by Adriana Lauria that the enigmatic sentence 'White function' is a reference to Malevich's *White on White* painting of 1918. Lauria (2003a). The manifesto carried the following names: Edgar Bayley, Antonio Caraduje, Simón Contreras, Manuel O. Espinosa, Claudio Girola, Alfredo Hlito, Enio Iommi, Rafael Lozza, Raúl Lozza, R.V.D. Lozza, Tomás Maldonado, Alberto Molenberg, Primaldo Monaco, Oscar Nuñez, Lidy Prati and Jorge Sousa. Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención (1946a).

[86] Which was also published in the journal *Joaquim* in 1947. Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención (1947). This version omitted one sentence of the earlier manifesto, 'Un arte presentativo contra un arte re-presentativo.' Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención (1946a). ('A presentational art against a representational art.') My translation. Although it is possible that this was just a printing error. The single page also displayed four monochrome representations of art by Sousa, Monaco, Raúl Lozza and Maldonado. Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención (1947).

[87] Kosice was an Argentinian. The other two main figures involved in the formation of the group, Rhod Rothfuss and Carmelo Arden Quin, were both from Uruguay.

[88] Grupo Madí (1946a). There were a few lines of Spanish and a few lines of English too, but the majority of the text was printed in French.

[89] 'Nous autres madistes, [*sic*] prenant les éléments propres de chaque art, nous construisons; c'est à dire, nous faisons une invention réelle. Avec celà [*sic*] nous n'exprimons rien, nous ne représentons rien, nous

Other than the emphasis created by the repeated use of capitals, the common theme shared by Arte Concreto-Invención and Grupo Madí is that of their assertions that their art was based on invention. However, works by artists affiliated with Grupo Madí were often more dramatic by their use of shaped canvases (see Appendix A, Figure 35, page 208).[90] And this unusual use of an irregularly-shaped canvas had already been declared as a possibility in the group's 1947 version of their manifesto. This second version, printed for the first time wholly in Spanish, appeared in the first issue of the group's own journal *Madí*.[91] The section on painting asserted that, 'Madí paint colour and bidimensionality. A trimmed and irregular frame, flat, curved or concave surfaces. Articulated planes with linear, rotational and translational motion.'[92] And this later version of the manifesto concluded with the sentence, 'For Madíism, the invention is an internal "method", creating an unchanging whole. Madí, therefore, INVENTS AND CREATES.'[93] This closing statement by Grupo Madí is remarkably similar to the closing remarks in the manifesto of Arte Concreto-Invención of the previous year (cited above).

The Uruguayan Torres-García and the Argentinian Maldonado became openly hostile towards each other's ideas in a series of textual exchanges. Torres-García – a

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ne symbolisons rien, nous créons la chose dans sa [*sic*] seule présence, sa [*sic*] seule inmanence [*sic*]. La chose est dans l'espace et dans le temps; ELLE EXISTE. C'est un acte transcendant, un acte merveilleux. Notre art est humain, profondément humain, puisque c'est la personne dans toute son essence celle qui CONSCIENMENT [*sic*] crée, fait, construit, invente réellement.' Grupo Madí (1946a). My translation.

[90] Carmelo Arden Quin, originally a member of the Taller Torres-García group, who was a founder member of Grupo Madí (he left the group the following year), may have produced paintings with shaped canvases while he was with the Taller Torres-García group. However, the dubious protestations by Arden Quin in 1995 over the formation of Grupo Madí give rise to an element of doubt as to when he adopted the shaped canvas. See Pozzi-Harris (2007: 228 n. 8) where she cites Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro's University of Essex PhD of 1996 'The Argentine Avant-garde 1944-1950', pp. 297-308 in which Pérez-Barreiro reported the argument between Arden Quin and Kosice during the *Art from Argentina 1920-1994* exhibition at the Royal College of Art Galleries (on display from 13 to 23 April 1995). (Originally at Oxford's Museum of Modern Art 2 October to 31 December 1994.)

[91] Grupo Madí (1947).

[92] 'La pintura madí color y bidimensionalidad. Marco recortado e irregular, superficie plana y superficie curva o cóncava. Planos articulados, con movimiento lineal, rotativo y de traslación.' Grupo Madí (1947). My translation. Emboldening removed.

[93] 'Para el madismo [*sic*], la invención es un "método" interno, superable, y la creación una totalidad incambiable. Madí, por lo tanto, INVENTA Y CREA.' Grupo Madí (1947). My translation.

proponent of spiritual and indigenous themes, and someone who promoted the representational – produced an essay titled, 'Nuestro Problema de Arte en América' ('Our Problem of Art in America').[94] In this text Torres-García was purportedly speaking for all South American artists when he accused the Argentinian groups of a lack of knowledge of the past, as did his friend and compatriot, Sarandy Cabrera in his essay in the same journal.[95] These pieces attacking Arte Concreto-Invención and Grupo Madí resulted in a reply from Maldonado who was firmly opposed to Torres-García's ideas.[96] In his article titled 'Torres García Contra el Arte Moderno' [*sic*] ('Torres-García Against Modern Art'),[97] denouncing the ideas of the Taller Torres-García group, Maldonado wrote:

> But one thing they forget, and then have lost; is the irreducibly antagonistic character of modern art (non-representative) with the kind of art that preceded it.[98]

Here Maldonado refutes the idea that modern art should be looking backwards for inspiration. For him modern art should rail against the art of the past. And a few lines later, his choice of phrases became a little more personal when he wrote:

> Uruguayan "Constructivism" is a typical example of the eclectic mix. In the construction works of Torres-García, we find Cubism (bad Cubism), impressionism, the cuisine of the

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[94] Torres-García (1946).

[95] In particular when Cabrera wrote, 'Mondrian, Vantongerloo, Van Doesburg, y otros también buscaron la invención. Buscaron no hacer concesiones a la realidad que los rodeaba, buscaron no transigir, no hacer concesiones a lo sensual. Los Madí se lo proponen ahora y aparentemente desconocen a aquellos que desde hace muchos años estuvieron en ese problema.' Cabrera (1946) ('Mondrian, Vantongerloo, van Doesburg, and others also sought the invention. They sought not to make concessions to the reality that surrounded them, they sought no compromise, no concessions to the sensual. The Madí propose, seemingly unaware of those which for many years were tackling that problem.'). My translation. Guido Castillo also wrote in the same journal. Castillo (1946).

[96] Maldonado (1946). Maldonado also indicated that he was responding to the pieces by Torres-García, Cabrera and to Castillo's sycophantic overtures to Torres-García.

[97] Maldonado (1946).

[98] 'Pero hay algo que ellos olvidan, y que los pierde; es el carácter irreductiblemente antagónico del arte moderno (no-representativo) con el tipo de arte que le precedió.' Maldonado (1946: 1). My translation.

> nineteenth century (especially this) and cheap symbolism (suns, pictographic puppets, small fish).[99]

Maldonado leaves his reader in little doubt as to his feelings towards the art practiced by Torres-García and his eponymous group. And this exchange of views between Maldonado and Torres-García would probably have continued, but for Torres-García's death in 1949. As for Maldonado, by 1956 he was part of the team that replaced Max Bill as the head of the School of Design in Ulm, where he became rector in 1964.[100] He went on to hold several prestigious design and philosophy academic positions including at Princeton and several posts in Italy.[101] And it is to Italy where this discussion moves next.

In early twentieth-century Italy the Futurists had already made a dramatic impact with their art referring to modernity and modern life. But this situation became attenuated with the rise of fascism. In Rome in 1947, the group of abstract artists, referred to as Gruppo Forma, published their manifesto in their first and only edition of their journal also titled *Forma*. The text of the manifesto sets out their dislike of, the then, present-day Italian art:

> We proclaim as "formalists" and "Marxists", convinced that the terms Marxism and formalism are not "irreconcilable", especially now that the progressive elements of our society must maintain a position "revolutionary" and "avant-garde" and not recline into the ambiguity of an extinct realism and conformism that in its most recent experiences in painting and sculpture has demonstrated the limited and narrow street it is.[102]

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[99] 'El "constructivismo" uruguayo es el ejemplo típico de la mezcla ecléctica. En las obras constructiva de Torres García [*sic*], encontramos cubismo (mal cubismo), impresionismo, cocina del siglo XIX (sobre todo esto) y simbolismo barato (soles. muñecos pictográficos, pescaditos).' Maldonado (1946: 1). My translation.

[100] HfG-Archiv Ulm (2011a) and HfG-Archiv Ulm (2011b).

[101] Oxford Index (2014). This is not an obituary, he is still alive.

[102] 'Noi ci proclamiamo "formalisti" e "marxisti", convinti che i termini marxismo e formalismo non siano "inconciliabili", specialmente oggi che gli elementi progressivi della nostra società debbono mantenere una posizione "rivoluzionaria" e "avanguardistica" e non adagiarsi nell'equivoco di un realismo spento e conformista che nelle sue più recenti esperienze in pittura e in scultura ha dimostrato quale strada limitata ed angusta esso sia.' Reproduced in Sauvage (1957: 248). My translation.

This initial paragraph is a barely disguised attack on the Italian form of Socialist Realism which had been prevalent since Mussolini's rise to power. But now Il Duce was dead the idea of Italian art should change. The manifesto continued:

> The need to bring Italian art in terms of the European language forces us in a clear stance against all silly and prejudiced nationalistic ambitions and against gossip and useless province which is in the present-day Italian culture.[103]

The signatories of the Gruppo Forma manifesto[104] were setting out their vision of art outside of the confines of those embraced by the former fascist regime. Furthermore, in their final affirmation they wrote, 'In our work we use the forms of objective reality as a means to achieve objective abstract shapes, we are interested in the lemon-shaped, and not the lemon.'[105] This lucid and effective statement described their ethos as well as emphasising the means by which they practiced their form of abstraction. Their aim for art could be likened to that of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists, as they expounded in their manifesto, but inevitably there were differences in approach.

One powerful example of the group's work is the sculpture *Monumento al partigiano* (see Appendix A, Figure 36, page 209) by Pietro Consagra, a prominent member of Gruppo Forma. Knowledge of the title suggests that the central horizontal spike is a representation of a machine gun, which then leads the viewer to think of the tapered top as a stylised head. These sculptural propositions then indicate that the second element is a corner of a building, around which the freedom fighter is tentatively looking.

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[103] 'La necessità di portare l'arte italiana sul piano dell'attuale linguaggio europeo ci costringe ad una Chiara presa di posizione contro ogni sciocca e prevenuta ambizione nazionalistica e contro la provincia pettegola e inutile quale è la cultura italiana odierna.' Reproduced in Sauvage (1957: 248). My translation.

[104] Carla Accardi, Ugo Attardi, Pietro Consagra, Piero Dorazio, Mino Guerrini, Achille Perilli, Antonio Sanfilippo and Giulio Turcato. Vetrocq (1994: 22).

[105] 'Nel nostro lavoro adoperiamo le forme della realtà oggettiva come mezzi per giungere a forme astratte oggettive, ci interessa la forma del limone, e non il limone.' Reproduced in Sauvage (1957: 248). My translation.

Despite the declared aims of the group, this work does tend towards an abstraction from forms of representation. But since the manifesto is suitably all-embracing, this work still fits in with the ethos of the group. For instance, the fourth of their affirmations stated:

> The form is the middle and end; the framework must be able to serve also as a decorative complement of a naked wall, even sculpture as the furnishing of a room - the purpose of art is the utility, the harmonious beauty, not heaviness.[106]

This work by Consagra certainly does not carry a heaviness, neither physically nor aesthetically. And it would prove to exude a harmonious beauty when examined as a part of a room's furnishings, but it is doubtful that this was what Consagra was aiming for. Despite this paradox between the work and his group's manifesto, the sculpture is thoroughly modern, in its use of forms and in its execution from thin sheets of iron.

By contrast with Consagra's work, the painting *Composizione*, by Antonio Sanfilippo (see Appendix A, Figure 37, page 209), offers the viewer a melee of colour and shapes without any easily discernible representation. This is more in keeping with Gruppo Forma's third assertion in their manifesto:

> The painting, sculpture, presented as means of expression: the colour, the design, the plastic masses, and the ordering of a harmony of pure forms.[107]

The work is reminiscent of the early paintings of Kandinsky, but with a little less fluidity and a more bounded set of areas of colour. This art of Sanfilippo's is certainly abstract, and without abstraction from nature. This work does fulfil the aims of Gruppo Forma's manifesto, and again is a thoroughly modern form of art, yet one which remains created with traditional techniques. These two artists, Consagra and Sanfilippo, were suggesting

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[106] 'La forma è mezzo e fine; il quadro deve poter servire anche come complemento decorativo di una parete nuda, la scultura anche come arredamento di una stanza – il fine dell'opera d'arte è l'utilità, la bellezza armoniosa, la non pesantezza.' Reproduced in Sauvage (1957: 248). My translation.

[107] 'Il quadro, la scultura, presentano come mezzi di espressione: il colore, il disegno, le masse plastiche, e come fine un'armonia di forme pure.' Reproduced in Sauvage (1957: 248). My translation.

similar paths to those followed by Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención and Grupo Madí. An abstract art, but an abstract art with very little abstraction from nature.

Also arguing for an avoidance of references from nature was the Argentine-born Italian artist Lucio Fontana. Fontana published the first of his manifestos, *Manifiesto Blanco*,[108] in Buenos Aires in 1946, yet it was only signed by eight of his Altamira school students.[109] This first set of statements by Fontana included the assertions:

> Reason does not create. […] The free development of all is a fundamental condition in the creation and interpretation of new art. Analysis and synthesis, meditation and spontaneity, construction and sensation are values which contribute to their integration into a functional unit.[110]

Again, this passage appears to be a protest at the ideas previously wrapped-up with Italian Socialist Realism as well as a call to artists to produce art which has a social function. *Manifiesto Blanco* was the precursor to the manifesto *Primo manifesto dello spazialismo*,[111] published in Milan in May 1947, that Fontana wrote with the assistance of the artists Beniamino Joppolo and Milena Milani along with the critic George Kaisserlian.[112] The following year Fontana exhibited his work as part of the newly-formed

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[108] There are many Italian reproductions of this manifesto, but getting sight of the complete and original Spanish version has proven to be difficult. I have used the Spanish version from Lauria (2003b). Although Lauria omits the underlined and capitalised heading 'Nosotros continuamos la evolución del arte' ('We continue the evolution of art'). As seen in the image of the first full page of text as reproduced in Fondazione Lucio Fontana (2016). My translation.

[109] White (2001: 59). The signatories were, Bernardo Arias, Horacio Cazeneuve, Marcos Fridman, Pablo Arias, Rodolfo Burgos, Enrique Benito, César Bernal, Luis Coll, Alfreo Hansen and Jorge Roccamonte. Fossati (1970: 124-26). As White has noted, Roccamonte suggested that Fontana avoided signing the manifesto in order to, 'avoid censure by the Argentine academic establishment, which could prevent the exhibition and sale of his work.' White (2001: 74 n. 11). *Manifesto Bianco* was later published in Italy in 1948, as reproduced in Fossati (1970: 124-26).

[110] 'La razón no crea. […] El libre desarrollo de todas ellas es una condición fundamental en la creación y en la interpretación del arte nuevo. El análisis y la síntesis, la meditación y la espontaneidad, la construcción y la sensación son valores que concurren a su integración en una unidad funcional.' Reproduced in Lauria (2003b). My translation.

[111] Fossati (1970: 127).

[112] These four people signed this manifesto. Fossati (1970: 127).

Movimento d'arte concreta [113] in the first of the group's exhibitions, based in Milan's Libreria Salto. As well as exhibiting art by Fontana, this show also displayed works by eleven other Italian abstract artists including three members of Gruppo Forma.[114]

The artistic output from Movimento d'arte concreta ranged from the Picassoesque flowing lines and well-worked areas of colour in Gillo Dorfles's *Untitled* (see Appendix A, Figure 38, page 209), to the play on typography used by Achille Perilli in his *L'Aigle Blanc* (see Figure 39, page 209), where stylised birds tumble in a summer's sky. Another member of the group, Atanasio Soldati, produced *Sospeso* (see Appendix A, Figure 40, page 209). A painting which at the same time as offering a series of geometric shapes in a quasi-perspectival arrangement, also used touching and intersecting quadrilaterals which result in a likeness of a squirrel, together with the unmistakable roundel of the sun. At the time of its production this painting was undoubtedly modern in its outlook, but it also undoubtedly carries elements which are representational. Two years later, Galliano Mazzon created his painting *Modulazione Spaziale* (see Appendix A, Figure 41, page 210). This free-flowing piece, produced with the use of a limited palette, is suggestive of the works of Picasso. The painting is strong in its arrangement of shapes and sufficiently ambiguous to fit within the bounds of the manifesto of Movimento d'arte concreta.

Italy saw many other groups of artists created in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Among these were Gruppo T, also based in Milan, whose members regularly concentrated on Kinetic art. The main participants of the group were, Gianni Colombo and Grazia Varisco. They each produced mechanically animated works such as Colombo's *Strutturazione Pulsante* (see Appendix A, Figure 42, page 210) and Varisco's *Schema luminoso variabile R. Cubo* (see Figure 43, page 210). Colombo – with his large wall of foam

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[113] The group was formed by Bruno Munari, Atanasio Soldati, Gillo Dorfles and Gianni Monnet. Vetrocq (1994: 24). Fontana was involved with the group and displayed work in the first exhibition. Panzera (1994: 669).

[114] The first show opened on 22 December 1948 and included works by, Piero Dorazio, Gillo Dorfles, Fontana, Salvatore Garau, Lorenzo Guerrini, Galliano Mazzon, Gianni Monnet, Bruno Munari, Achille Perilli, Atanasio Soldati, Ettore Sottsass and Luigi Veronesi. Panzera (1994: 669). Of which Dorazio, Guerrini and Perilli were also members of Gruppo Forma. Vetrocq (1994: 24).

blocks shifting, as if alive – gave the viewer an unusual gallery experience. The repetition of the blocks also precedes the Minimal artists' use of the repetition of units in order to create a work which transfixes the viewer. Varisco with her lightbox containing rotating slotted masks, each containing a graphical representation of a cube, creates a more rapidly changing experience. By use of the overlapping and turning grids, she creates accelerated movement by the generation of shifting moiré fringes in an early form of optical art.

Optical art was also something practiced by the later Italian group, based in Padua, Gruppo N. The founders, Alberto Biasi and Manfredo Massironi experimented with fringing effects by their use of mesh, and later with folded and painted card.

Another early 1960s Italian group was Gruppo Uno. Unlike Gruppo N, Gruppo Uno was much more adventurous. The group was fairly short-lived, in existence from 1962 until 1967, but one of the three continuous members, Giuseppe Uncini, experimented with the use of concrete as an art medium. His *Ferrocemento Bianco* (see Appendix A, Figure 44, page 210) uses the structural material as a replacement for the canvas, in an artwork that is intended to hang on a gallery wall. Uncini rejects the use of the conventional painterly canvas support. This work also includes hooked elements, of painted steel, in a play on his own surname.[115] Nicola Carrino was another long-standing member of Gruppo Uno. His work often used floor-based modular sculptures produced from iron, as in his later work of 1969 *Costruttivo 1/69* (see Appendix A, Figure 45, page 210), an arrangement of twenty-eight stepped iron blocks on the floor of the gallery space, which appear to draw from ideas initiated by Carl Andre.

As explored here, these Italian groups were often short-lived, but their manifestos and their works of art were important elements in the progression of twentieth-century art from Constructivism to Minimal art.

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[115] Since the English translation is 'Hook'.

Returning now to France, as previously mentioned, Salon des Réalités Nouvelles continued after World War II and remains active today. The Uruguayan Carmelo Arden Quin, previously a member of the Taller Torres-García group and Grupo Madí, was involved with Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in 1948, following his emigration to France in the late 1940s. The group remains committed to the promotion of abstract art, especially though its exhibitions and conferences, but its earlier need to promote abstraction per se, now appears to be less of a concern.

The October 1951 edition of the journal *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, edited by the sculptor André Bloc, included the manifesto of a new gathering of artists; Groupe Espace.[116] By December of the same year, the journal *Art d'Aujourd'hui*, also edited by Bloc, became the organ of the group.[117] The group's many pronouncements in their manifesto included the statement that they advocated, 'constructive art which, by actual achievements, takes part in direct action with the human community.'[118] This declaration, and their inclusion of other statements surrounding architecture, undoubtedly shows that the group were socially aware and that they wanted their message to be propagated by their art and their architecture to make a difference socially. And by way of confirmation, the reproduction of the manifesto in *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* of October 1951 was prefaced with the following statement:

> The dissociation of the visual arts: painting, sculpture, architecture, is a deplorable fact, but so accepted by artists, critics and the public, that the most timid attempts to put

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[116] *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* was first published in November 1930 and continues to be published today. Suncat (2016a). The original manifesto was distributed at the general assembly of the group on 17 October 1951. Groupe Espace (1951a) and Groupe Espace (1951b). A facsimile of the manifesto appeared in *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. Groupe Espace (1951b: v). But this facsimile was incomplete. The page was also headed with a short piece of text describing the group, its aims and listed its committee members. Listed first was Sonia Delaunay.

[117] *Art d'Aujourd'hui* was first published in June 1949 and the final edition was dated December 1954. Suncat (2016b).

[118] 'un Art constructif qui, par d'effectives réalisations, participe à une action directe avec la communauté humaine'. Groupe Espace (1951a). My translation.

> the arts in daily life appear, to many, as unnecessary audacity.[119]

In particular, the reproduction of the manifesto in an architecture journal was an indication of the group's interest to attain a greater connection with the built environment. And again, this appearance of the group's manifesto was a form of promotion of the need for art and life to, once again, become entwined.

Another French group with a concern for the reduction or elimination of the art and life gap was the small group of artists who formed the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel in Paris in 1960. Among the founders were François Morellet and Julio Le Parc, each of whom experimented with works which challenged the viewer with optically-based effects.[120] In 1964 Frank Stella explained that much of his art had already been previously explored by this group. Stella, in trying to recall the name of Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel, said:

> that whole group of Vasarely, Vasarely's son, and Morell, Morrei, or something like that.[121] [DJ *Morellet*] And they've used actually, I can't, can't think of his name, the Frenchman, but they had that group that they had,[122] and it actually painted before I did all the patterns, the basic designs that are in my painting. Not the way that I did it, but, I mean, you could find the schemes or what would be, like what are actually the sketches I make for my own paintings have been painted in France by Vasarely in that sort of group over the last seven or eight years. [...].[123]

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[119] 'La dissociation des arts plastiques: peinture, sculpture, architecture, est un fait déplorable, mais tellement admis par les artistes, les critiques et le public, que les essais les plus timides pour replacer les arts dans la vie courante apparaissent, à beaucoup, comme des audaces inutiles.' Groupe Espace (1951b). My translation.

[120] Later, both of these artists experimented with the use of light.

[121] I think that he was trying to recall François Morellet's name. Born 1926, died 2016.

[122] Glaser, in the *ARTnews* article and in the Battcock anthology, reports this group as being the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel. Glaser (1966: 55) and Glaser (1968: 149).

[123] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 1, 8:01-8:32). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript. Although Stella mentions him by name, it is worth noting that Victor Vasarely was not a member of the group, but his son, Jean-Pierre Yvaral, was. However, it is fair to say that Vasarely had a strong influence on the group's practice. Also, a few sentences later, Stella backtracked when he said,

The group issued at least two manifestos, in the first of which they encouraged artistic practices that:

> engender a strong visual excitement, or demand a move on behalf of the part of the spectator, or contain in themselves a principle of transformation, or [...] call for active participation from the spectator.[124]

But more importantly, they asserted that this was, 'only a first stage'.[125] They went on to say that:

> The second might be, for example, to produce, no longer only the works, but ensembles which would play the part of social incitement, at the same time as liberating the spectator from the obsession with possession.[126]

These statements certainly show the influence of Marx. The Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel wanted to produce works that subverted the traditional, which surprised the viewer, or which encouraged the viewer to participate in the work by means of movement. An art which, as they wrote, 'would become collective'.[127] And these are the values that they shared with the Russian and Soviet Constructivists. Both promoted art with a social purpose.

Turning now to the spread of Constructivist ideas to Brazil, the Swiss artist Max Bill held his one-person exhibition at Museu de Arte in São Paulo in March and April 1950. In the following year, at the inaugural Bienal de São Paulo, Bill was awarded the international prize for sculpture.[128] Bill's post-war success in Brazil led to an increased interest in non-representational art in South America in the 1950s and 1960s. Subsequently, two groups of concrete artists were formed in the early 1950s in Brazil.

'But I mean, in spite of the fact that they used those ideas, those basic schemes, it still, it doesn't have really anything to do with it.' Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 1, 8:37-8:44).

[124] Manifesto of 1966, extract reproduced in New York Graphic Society (1971: 296).

[125] Manifesto of 1966, extract reproduced in New York Graphic Society (1971: 296).

[126] Manifesto of 1966, extract reproduced in New York Graphic Society (1971: 296).

[127] Manifesto of 1966, extract reproduced in New York Graphic Society (1971: 296).

[128] Staber (1964: unpaginated). Bill's prize was for his *Tripartite Unity* of 1948-1949.

Grupo Ruptura, led by the artist Waldemar Cordeiro, which was created in 1952 in São Paulo, and in 1954, Grupo Frente was organised in Rio de Janeiro by the painter Ivan Serpa. Of these two groups, only Grupo Ruptura issued a manifesto, which was published as a single sheet of paper at the opening of their exhibition on the 9 December 1952. At the foot of the page was printed, 'modern art is not ignorance, we are against ignorance.'[129] With the advent of Grupo Frente, these two Brazilian groups were often in opposition over the future of abstract art.

Bill was closely involved in the work of the two groups, and in December 1956 assisted in the organisation of the exhibition *Exposição Nacional de arte Concreta*.[130] This show was held initially in São Paulo, and then travelled to Rio de Janeiro and displayed work from members of both groups.

By 1959 the more dogmatic nature of Grupo Ruptura, with its concentration on form and an adherence to the ideas of Bill, clashed with the philosophy of Grupo Frente, whose members were more flexible in their approach. This conflict resulted in several of the artists forming another group, and unsurprisingly they too produced a manifesto, *Manifesto Neoconcreto*, which was written by the Brazilian critic Ferreira Gullar. The manifesto appeared in the Sunday supplement of the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* in March 1959, which was wholly devoted to neoconcretism.[131] At the foot of the first of the two pages of the manifesto were four small monochrome reproductions of works by Pevsner, Bill, Albers and Malevich.[132] Whereas printed at the head of the second page of the manifesto were images of works by Franz Weissman, Amílcar de Castro, Lygia Clark and Lygia Pape, all of whom were members of the group.[133] These artists wanted to be directly

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[129] 'arte moderna não é ignorância, nós somos contra a ignorância.' Grupo Ruptura (1952). My translation.
[130] Perlingeiro (2003: 42).
[131] Gullar (1959).
[132] Gullar (1959: 4).
[133] Gullar (1959: 5).

associated with the exemplars of modernism that appeared on the previous page. In a barely concealed attack on the earlier Brazilian concrete groups, Gullar wrote:

> Rationalism robs art of its autonomy and substitutes the unique qualities of art for notions of scientific objectivity: thus the concepts of form, space, time and structure [...] are confused with the theoretical approach of those who want to make a science of art.[134]

The members of this breakaway neoconcrete group were not keen on the connections with scientific or mathematical principles that were being pursued by the members of Grupo Ruptura in particular. Instead, as Gullar urged, they wanted to create art which could, 'only be understood phenomenologically.'[135] Despite this assertion, artists such as Weissman, de Castro, Clark and Pape continued to create sculptural works with an evident Constructivist flavour (see Appendix A, Figure 46, page 211 for an example of Clark's work), with the use of sheet metal, variously cut (sometimes hinged in Clark's case), bent and welded into mathematically-based, geometric shapes.

Returning now to examine the spread of Constructivism in post-war Europe, there were several post-war magazines that promoted the ideas of Constructivism in the Netherlands in the late 1950s. *Parnas*, created in 1955 and short-lived, was followed by *Structure* in 1958. Both of these publications were edited by the artist Joost Baljeu. In his 1964 text, 'The Constructive Approach Today',[136] Baljeu talks of the key features of 'related spaces', 'dynamism' and 'the "how" of reality', and likens Constructivism in art to similar ideas in economics, sociology, engineering, drama, literature and architecture.[137] In doing so, and explaining that the 'constructive approach, the oldest in modern plastic expression, is still the youngest today',[138] he indicated that Constructivism had yet to fully realise its potential.

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[134] Gullar (1959) translation reproduced in Danchev (2011: 340).

[135] Gullar (1959) translation reproduced in Danchev (2011: 340). Gullar also mentions Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

[136] Reproduced in Bann (1974: 287-95).

[137] Reproduced in Bann (1974: 291-92).

[138] Reproduced in Bann (1974: 295).

Two groupings of artists each began in Spain in 1957; Equipo 57 and Equipo Córdoba. Both groups comprised Spanish artists from Córdoba, but the former was originally founded in Paris, consisting of Spanish émigré artists. Both groups were interested in mathematically-based art and the work produced by Bill. Their work shows the influence of Constructivism, but the most striking point is that their members endeavoured to make art which was collaborative, and hence a great deal of their output is difficult to accurately attribute to any specific member or members. The Russian Constructivist impact on the group is evident in their ideology (of their use of the collective) and in their art. For example, their 1957 painting, *Untitled* (see Appendix A, Figure 47, page 211) with its large expanses of solid colour, relates to earlier (but smaller in scale) Constructivist works such as those by Aleksandr Vesnin, Aleksandra Ekster and Liubov Popova. (And it is interesting to see how similar this work is to that of the slightly later painting produced in the Western USA, soon to be described 'hard-edge'.[139]) Also, the influence of Bill can be seen in their sculpture, for example, such as in their quasi-mathematical and amorphous form of bronze *Untitled* (see Appendix A, Figure 48, page 211), of 1959.

In post-war West Germany the artists Heinz Mack and Otto Piene founded Gruppe Zero in Düsseldorf in 1958. This was a gathering of artists which initially worked with pure colour as well as with serial repetition (especially in Mack and Piene's cases). Reflecting on the naming of the group, Piene later wrote that:

> from the beginning we looked upon the term not as an expression of nihilism or a dada-like gag but as a word indicating a zone of silence and of pure possibilities for a new beginning like at the count-down when rockets are started – zero is the incommensurable zone where the old state turns into the new.[140]

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[139] See also page 119.
[140] Piene (1964: 812).

In the same article, Piene also described the single night-time exhibitions, arranged because galleries tended to refuse their requests to host their shows during the day. And he went on to say that the group was very informal, 'there is no president, no leader, no secretary – there are no "members", there is only a human relation between several artists and artistic relation between different individuals.'[141] Nevertheless Gruppe Zero's influence did spread across Europe in the early 1960s, with their later themes of experimentation using unusual materials, light, vibration and even fire and smoke to produce their art. The ideas of the group attracted avant-garde artists such as Lucio Fontana, Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni and Jean Tinguely, all of whom engaged with the group before its eventual demise in the early 1960s.

The spread of Constructivist-related art to the United States in the post-war period was somewhat mixed before the advent of Minimal art. The Anonima group was created in 1960 by Ernst Benkert, Francis Hewitt and Ed Mieczkowski, and lasted more than ten years. Intent on remaining with painting alone, the members of the group, prior to a London exhibition at the ICA in 1966,[142] stated that they wanted the group, 'to limit its own activity and interests to the problems generated by a strict commitment to stable two-dimensional systems.'[143] Their work concentrated on paintings which experimented with optical effects and ideas around seriality, such as that in evidence in Mieczkowski's *Anon* of 1961 (see Appendix A, Figure 49, page 211).

Although there appears to have been very few large-scale and long-lived groups in the United States, individual artists from overseas continued to show their work. For instance, Max Bill managed to secure his first solo exhibition in 1963.[144] This show was appraised by Donald Judd in *Arts Magazine*. The review began in Judd's typical matter-of-

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[141] Piene (1964: 813).

[142] On display 10 February to 19 March 1966.

[143] Anonima Group (1966).

[144] Titled *Max Bill (sculptures 1937-1959, paintings 1955-1962)* displayed at the Staempfli Gallery, New York, NY, 19 March to 13 April 1963. (Like Bill, George Staempfli was Swiss-born.) Shortly afterwards the show travelled to the Pace Gallery, Boston (open 22 April to 11 May 1963).

fact style, 'Bill is apparently well known in Europe, but is not here.' Judd dismissed Bill's paintings, writing that, 'The color is almost anything, if pure, both pastels and primaries.' But Judd was pleased with Bill's three-dimensional work, in the next sentence he wrote, 'The sculpture is first-rate', singling out Bill's *Construction* of 1937 and referring to it as 'especially powerful'.[145] Judd became more interested in the work of Bill, and subsequently sought to avoid any further attack of him during the WBAI interview of 1964 (see chapter six for further details of this interview).[146]

Chapter conclusion

By this point in time Constructivist art and ideas had reached the shores of the United States. Before discussing the growth of Constructivist themes in American art, at this stage I will open-up the discussion to include a notable collector of Russian and Soviet Constructivist art, George Costakis, and include an examination of the impact of this man's collection on Constructivism in the West. The following chapter uses Costakis, and two major Western exhibitions which borrowed from his collection, as a means to better understand this reception.

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[145] Judd (1963: 88).

[146] Judd's personal library contains several catalogues of Bill's exhibitions. Judd Foundation (2015). I am grateful to Dr Alistair Rider for alerting me to the existence of this resource. Judd's swift shift of the conversation away from Bill and back onto Vasarely occurs after Stella describes the 'post-Bill school' as being 'very dreary'. Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 1, 8:54-Track 2 0:41). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

CHAPTER THREE

Constructivism: defined by one collection

Introduction

Since World War II, and because of the cold war in the years that followed, Western access to Russian and Soviet art collections was limited. Very few artworks were allowed to leave Soviet Russia. By contrast – since George Costakis brokered his deal with the Soviet state to leave the USSR with some of his collection in 1978 – the West has had relatively easy access to the works belonging to the Costakis collection. Thanks to this ease of access, as well as the variety and the evident quality of the works in the collection,[1] since 1978 Constructivism has, in the main, been received in the West via the collection assembled by this one man. Therefore, I will explore the influence of the Costakis collection on the reception of the Russian avant-garde in the West. With his substantial disposable income,[2] Costakis, living in Moscow, was able to pick up early twentieth-century Russian avant-garde art. Such avant-garde works were seen to be against the artworks (now known as Socialist Realism) that were officially approved by the Soviet state. Out of favour avant-garde artworks were bought by Costakis, at bargain prices. S. Frederick Starr wrote, 'When Costakis began buying avant-garde paintings, he recalls contemptuous older collectors saying "Stupid Greek – collecting junk!"'.[3] The

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[1] John Bowlt, in correspondence referred to, 'the global art-historical importance of the collection'. Bowlt (2012). Bowlt's case changed from upper to lower.

[2] In Canadian dollars converted at favourable rates, as Starr has clarified. Starr (1981 :45).

[3] Starr (1981: 44).

Costakis collection stands as an important source for study of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde, and the way in which Constructivism has been examined in the past has regularly been through the use of works of art from the Costakis collection. Costakis was seen, at best, as something of an entrepreneur, yet others have deemed him to be ruthless and greedy. Prior to his death in 1990 his character was tarnished by his avaricious behaviour when selling several of his artworks.[4] So much so, that in his 1994 book[5] the former Canadian diplomat Peter Roberts, a personal friend of Costakis, felt the need to attempt to rehabilitate the memory of Costakis as a more agreeable and avuncular character.

The Costakis collection has been used in most major exhibitions of Constructivism in the West (see Appendix E, page 254 onwards, for further details). The collection does not purport to be a comprehensive representation of Constructivism, but has often been seen in the West as a convenient and accessible collection with which to explore Constructivism. The art works that Costakis brought to the West are not wholly representative of the Constructivists' output, since certain artists are poorly represented and some not represented at all. The collection has many works by artists such as Ivan Kliun (with a total of 202), Liubov Popova (189) and Gustav Klutsis (sixty-five). Yet has very few by Paul Mansurov (one), Konstantin Medunetsky (two), Vladimir Stenberg (two), Petr Miturich (two)[6] and no examples from artists such as Aleksei Gan, Vasilii Erminov, Valentin Iustitskii, David Kakabadzé, Khaia (Anna) Kagan and David Zagoskin.[7] Inevitably any show based on this collection will have the potential to be skewed towards Kliun, Popova and Klutsis. As exemplified by an analysis of works associated with the exhibition *Building the Revolution: Soviet Art and Architecture 1915–1935*, held at the Royal

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[4] One former employee of Sotheby's, who had first-hand experience of him, told me in 2012 that 'Costakis was quite a greedy man, he insisted on prices that were considered to be quite high'.

[5] Roberts (1994).

[6] Statistics from my analysis of Rudenstine (1981b).

[7] Costakis, prior to 1978, owned one Kakabadzé painting, but he gave this to the Tretyakov. Gleaned from my analysis of Rudenstine (1981b).

Academy of Arts (RA), London, in 2011 and 2012, which confirms that the avant-garde art on display fitted this pattern. There were eleven of Klutsis's works on display (he was the most exhibited artist), eight works by Kliun, eight from unknown students of UNOVIS (Utverditeli novogo iskusstvo [Affirmers of the new art]), as well as seven examples of Popova's work.[8]

Curators keen to show early twentieth-century Russian and Soviet art, such as Margit Rowell and Angelica Rudenstine (*Art of the Avant-garde in Russia*), Richard Andrews and Milena Kalinovska (*Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932*), John Bowlt, Matthew Drutt and Zelfira Tregulova (*Amazons of the Avant-garde*) and Margarita Tupitsyn (*Rodchenko and Popova: Defining Constructivism*), have each used the Costakis collection.[9] And the repeated use of this resource has led to the collection becoming a pseudo-definition of Constructivism. As explored in chapter one of this thesis a definition of Constructivism is difficult to achieve, and this pseudo-definition of Constructivism by the repeated use of this single collection (however important) is something that should be treated with care. Any curator that relies on this collection should ensure that the make-up of the collection does not impact directly on the exhibition which draws from it. The Royal Academy show *Building the Revolution* suffered from this difficulty. All seventy-seven works of avant-garde art in the exhibition were from the Costakis collection, now held by the SMCA. *Building the Revolution* was affected because the art on display had been selected solely from the Costakis collection, but was more seriously flawed by the erroneous concept forced on the show. The falsehood that a 'dialogue' between the artists and the architects existed.[10]

Following the break-up of the USSR in 1991 Russian and former Soviet museums were more open to loaning their holdings to Western institutions. This situation was

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[8] Statistics from my analysis of Cohen and Lodder (2011).

[9] See Appendix E, page 254 onwards, for further details of these and other exhibitions that used the Costakis collection.

[10] This statement is backed-up by my analysis on page 107 onwards.

especially evident with the arrangements that were put in place to use Russian and Soviet avant-garde works of art for the exhibition *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-garde, 1915-1932*. As well as borrowing forty works from the Costakis collection[11] the curatorial team of *The Great Utopia* borrowed 474 works (of the total of 739) from sixty former Soviet-related institutions.[12] The show's organising committee were effective, in that their requests for loans were deemed to be acceptable to such a large number of lenders. But the show was far too ambitious in its scope and sheer quantity of works on display to be completely successful. As well as the works ranging in date from 1914 to 1935, the categories of the works included examples of Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism, Socialist Realism, photography, agitational posters, theatre sets, costumes, fabric designs, architectural drawings and ceramics, as well as other examples related to Constructivism. This breadth of scope created difficulties for any visitor to the exhibition, as did the show's emphasis on the characters of the two adversaries Tatlin and Malevich.

I will begin by introducing some biographical details of the art collector George Costakis, discuss his collection – including how part of it came to the West in 1978 – and examine the influence and the impact of the Costakis collection in the West. I conclude with a brief exploration of the limited alternatives to the Costakis collection that have, more recently, become available.

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[11] At this time held in Cologne.

[12] Statistics from my analysis of Guggenheim Museum (1992a).

Costakis and his collection

This section includes an examination of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde art collection assembled by George Costakis. Along with the details of his collection there will be an exploration of the political ramifications that ensued from his decision to collect art from what was a despised period in Russian and Soviet cultural history. Because of his persistence in pursuit and promotion of avant-garde art and artists, Costakis left himself open to pressure from the Soviet authorities during the cold war. This pressure eventually became too much for him to bear. He arranged to donate a number of works from his collection to The State Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow, to gain safe passage from the country. He left the USSR for Greece in 1978, along with twenty per cent, by value, of his collection.[13]

Born in Moscow in 1912, Costakis was the son of a wealthy Greek businessman who settled in Russia. In 1943, he secured a job with the Canadian embassy where he worked until shortly before his departure from the Soviet Union in January 1978.[14] Costakis was paid in Canadian dollars, had a Canadian bank account and had the facility to exchange his salary for roubles at a favourable rate of exchange. This gave Costakis a good income and this situation lasted until 1960 when payment in Canadian dollars ceased.[15] By this time, however, Costakis had already built up the core of his collection of Russian and Soviet avant-garde art.

His early art collecting habits were a reflection of the goods that were readily and cheaply available. Costakis told a parable-like tale of the lack of competition when buying the works of the avant-garde, 'At that time, I was like a fisherman in a lake full of fish –

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[13] Starr (1981: 12 and 51) and Roberts (1994: 1 and 177).
[14] Roberts (1994: 34) and Starr (1981: 33 and 42).
[15] Starr (1981: 45), Roberts (1994: 113) and Roberts (1994: 145).

alone in a boat – while everyone else was looking for meat. There was no competition for the fish'.[16]

Costakis's collecting of Russian and Soviet avant-garde art went against the grain of the officially promoted art of the Stalin period; Socialist Realism.[17] Costakis decided to concentrate on avant-garde art produced in the period around and after the time of the October Revolution, and he encouraged others with his philanthropic outlook. As Angelica Z. Rudenstine has confirmed, 'The collection served as a visible and living documentation of an otherwise buried past; it stimulated creativity and gave courage to innumerable contemporary Soviet artists who continuously visited the Costakis home'.[18]

In addition to his focus on collecting art of the, by then, despised avant-garde, Costakis had gained a reputation for his collection among art historians and art-related institutions. Various foreign visitors were welcomed into the Costakis household. Alfred H. Barr Jr saw Costakis's collection in his Moscow apartment in 1956 and this viewing was quickly followed by visits from representatives from the Tate and the Louvre.[19] The West had a vested interest, both in encouraging Costakis and in the promotion of his collection. If the art of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde was, in the main, being looked after by one unofficial collector in his small home, then it would seem that the Western interest in the Costakis collection effectively reinforced the Western idea that the Soviet Union could not look after their own cultural heritage.[20] With the Western interest in Costakis and his collection, the political cold war was being echoed by a cultural cold war. This was a Western celebration of Russian and Soviet avant-garde artists and their art.

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[16] Costakis, cited in Starr (1981: 44).

[17] In August 1934 the First Congress of Soviet Writers defined the method/model of Socialist Realism and in March 1953 Stalin died. However, Socialist Realism continued to have a hold over Soviet Culture for many years after Stalin's death.

[18] Rudenstine (1981a: 9).

[19] Starr (1981: 45-46).

[20] A similar theme to that explored in the Royal Academy of Arts exhibition *Building the Revolution*, as discussed later in this chapter.

Paradoxically, an art which was initially created as a means to encourage the utopian vision of the post-revolutionary Communist ideal was now being embraced by the West.

This became a time of great uncertainty for Costakis and his family. Furthermore, the change in the popularity of Russian and Soviet avant-garde art tended to raise the market prices for such works. Since this situation curtailed his collecting, he made the decision to make his collection more easily available to others. Starr wrote that,

> [...] Costakis decided to open his house to visitors. By showing his collection to prominent guests from abroad, he hoped to help legitimize avant-garde art at home.[21]

Costakis's efforts were commendable, but attempts to reinvigorate interest in avant-garde art in the USSR at this time were fraught with danger. Western visitors to his apartment must have attracted the interest of the authorities. Camilla Gray, author of the study of pre- and post-revolutionary avant-garde art, *The Great Experiment: Russian Art 1863-1922*,[22] visited Costakis and saw his collection before the publication of her work in in 1962.[23] Yet, remarkably, Gray makes no mention of Costakis in her book.

By the 1970s Costakis and his collection had become so well renowned that he was invited to travel to the West to embark on a lecture tour of North America, which was eventually extended to include London.[24] But on his return to Moscow, and chiefly because of the visit in April 1974 by Senator Edward Kennedy to the Costakis apartment, Costakis felt under pressure from the authorities. The Kennedy visit, following his lecture tour, meant that Costakis was now a man in the spotlight. The period around the Kennedy visit to Costakis was, as Roberts has stated, 'about the time that the KGB

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[21] Starr (1981: 45).

[22] Gray (1962).

[23] Starr (1981: 46).

[24] In the Autumn of 1973 Costakis addressed audiences at Harvard University, Princeton University and the Solomon R. Guggenheim museum in New York, NY. Starr (1981: 49) and Roberts (1994: 153). He then travelled to London and lectured at The University of London and The Tate Gallery. Roberts (1994: 155). (Although Roberts refers to The University of London as 'London University'. 'The Tate Gallery' has since been renamed 'Tate Britain'.)

started its campaign of personal terror aimed at getting rid of Costakis one way or another'.[25] And that '[the KGB] regarded him [Costakis] at best as a nuisance, a usurper of a position in the embassy they would rather have had themselves, and at worst as an enemy to be destroyed'.[26] This telling of the pressured endgame to Costakis's Soviet life story is one that is difficult to corroborate. It is by no means certain that Costakis's situation was one which included threats to him and to his family, but by now Costakis was falling out of favour with many of his compatriots. As Starr has explained, 'Nationalistic Russians, ignorant of the fact that Costakis had saved hundreds of works of art from neglect and even destruction, charged him with pilfering their national heritage'.[27] This change in Costakis's fortunes must have been difficult to bear. He was Russian, he was patriotic and he loved Russia.

Nevertheless, Costakis was in a difficult spot. He was collecting works of art that were decried by Soviet officialdom. That in itself might have been acceptable if he had kept a reasonably low public profile. But in his eagerness to promote his beloved avant-garde artists and their art, he antagonised the people in command of Soviet culture.

Costakis had become a pawn in a cold war game between the superpowers. The Costakis home was burgled on several occasions and his dacha was burnt to the ground.[28] To add insult to injury Costakis was accused by some artists of arranging these events himself in order to smuggle out some of his collection in the name of profit. He was subjected to several attempts of entrapment and he feared for his life.[29] By the autumn of 1977 Costakis appeared to have lost all hope, especially since he had also lost his job with the Canadian embassy. Given the extreme pressure that Costakis was under it was understandable that he would seek to organise a way out of this personal crisis. As

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[25] Roberts (1994: 4).
[26] Roberts (1994: 119).
[27] Starr (1981: 50).
[28] Starr (1981: 51).
[29] Roberts (1994: 134-36).

Costakis himself recorded, in something of an understatement, 'I opened discussions with the Ministry of Culture'.[30] Costakis contacted the Soviet diplomat Vladimir Semyenov in order to make it known that he would be willing to donate eighty per cent of his collection to the Soviet state in return for his free passage out of the country. At the end of the meeting Costakis said, 'May God help you, because otherwise I'm done for'.[31] Despite the urgency of his discussions with two curators from The State Tretyakov gallery which began in August 1977,[32] Costakis recalled that 'On the whole they let me select the works which were to be left in Russia, and those which were to be exported'.[33]

These works totalled 1275 in number. The quantity of works that are held by The State Tretyakov gallery according to the Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art is recorded as '144 paintings and 656 sketches'.[34] Costakis took twenty per cent of his total collection with him when he left the Soviet Union, but ostensibly this was 'twenty percent by value'.[35] It comes as no surprise that – given the imbalance of the numbers of works of art in question – Costakis felt the need to explain the selection of works that he agreed to pass to the Tretyakov gallery; he said:

> while I lived in Russia and created this collection, I had many friends, people who valued me and treated me well. And I thought, if I take the supreme pieces, pieces like *Portrait of Matiushin*, what will my friends say? They'll say, "He had no concern for art, for the Russian avant-garde. He was out for himself. He knew which were the best pieces, and the son of a bitch took them and cleared out." Even my closest friends would condemn me. And for those reasons I didn't go that way, and I think I did the right thing.[36]

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[30] Costakis (1981: 74).

[31] Roberts (1994: 136-37). Roberts cites Costakis's recollection of subsequent telephone calls with Semyenov (purporting to have agreed this with Yuri Andropov who, at the time, was head of the KGB). In the last of which the twenty per cent quota was communicated to Costakis as being acceptable. Roberts (1994: 138).

[32] Starr (1981: 12).

[33] Costakis (1981: 74).

[34] SMCA (2012).

[35] Roberts (1994: 1).

[36] Costakis, cited in Roberts (1994: 175).

By September 1977 much of his collection was on show in Düsseldorf.[37] Costakis and his family left the USSR for Athens in January 1978 and with him Costakis took his share of his collection. In 1981 Thomas M. Messer, the then Director of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, recalled the discussions with Costakis:

> Many visits, first to the Costakis home, then to the Tretiakov [*sic*] Gallery and eventually to Düsseldorf, were made by Margit Rowell, Angelica Rudenstine and myself. They led us to approach Costakis with a proposal to entrust the collection now in the West to the Guggenheim Museum for thorough study, conservation and documentation as necessary preliminaries to a selective exhibition at the Guggenheim and subsequent extended circulation to other museums under our auspices. Mr. Costakis agreed to this undertaking [...].[38]

And Costakis has recorded that Messer 'offered to accept the collection for safekeeping under his roof after its showing in Düsseldorf'.[39] This arrangement seemed, initially at least, to be reasonable for all concerned. Costakis no longer had to worry about the safety of his avant-garde art, and the Guggenheim had managed to secure a world-class collection. This was a collection which fitted well with the Guggenheim's overt agenda to promote non-objective art. Brezhnev was still in a position of power in the Soviet Union and the acquisition of the Costakis collection was something of a cold war coup. Once again this situation suggested that the West could appreciate and become the guardians of the cultural heritage of the Soviet Union.[40] While, by contrast, it seemed that the Soviets were allowing a great deal of the output of their artists to go abroad. An exhibition based on the collection opened at the Guggenheim in New York, NY on 16

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[37] The exhibition *Werke aus der Sammlung Costakis: Russische Avantgarde 1910-1930* was on display between 16 September and 31 October 1977 at the Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf.

[38] Messer (1981: 6).

[39] Costakis (1981: 75).

[40] And again this theme is explored in the later section of this chapter related to the exhibition *Building the Revolution*.

October 1981 titled *Art of the Avant-garde in Russia: Selections from the George Costakis Collection*. For this exhibition, as Messer wrote, Rudenstine along with Margit Rowell 'engaged in extensive scholarly research in order to arrive at the carefully considered selection on display [...]'.[41] But herein lay the problem for Costakis, the exhibition omitted Costakis's Chagalls and Kandinskys. Costakis was annoyed at what the curators of the exhibition had decided to show and not to show.[42]

Thanks to his experience with the Guggenheim, and because of later financial difficulties, Costakis decided to sell some works from his collection and in particular those that were created by Kandinsky and Chagall.[43] Following the closure of the Guggenheim's show on 3 January 1982 the exhibition was hosted in several Western cities,[44] and by 1985 the collection was back in storage in New York.

Following Gorbachev's accession to power in 1985, and the beginnings of perestroika,[45] eventually there evolved a more relaxed attitude in Soviet relations with the West.[46] Consequently, in 1986, Costakis was invited back to the USSR and was treated with the utmost respect.[47] No longer was Costakis a pariah. The fermentation and feeding of the cold war was being gradually reduced and with the change in the political situation Costakis could be welcomed back as a visitor. Here was a visitor that had a certain Western kudos that could be taken advantage of to show the West that things

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[41] Messer (1981: 6).

[42] Roberts (1994: 178), citing Costakis saying, 'They treated me like a nigger who has found a jewel and doesn't understand its value. [...] They castrated me'.

[43] Roberts (1994: 179). The collection, currently held by the Greek State Museum of Contemporary Art, does not contain any works by Chagall and only contains two ceramic teacups by Kandinsky from 1921 and 1923. SMCA (2012). In 1981 the collection contained 7 works by Chagall and 10 works by Kandinsky. From my analysis of Rudenstine (1981b).

[44] The show travelled to Houston, TX (15 February to 15 April 1982), Ottawa (25 June to 22 August 1982), Indianapolis, IN (25 October to 15 December 1982), Chicago, IL (January to March 1983), Stockholm (May to July 1983), London (15 September to 15 November 1983) where Costakis was introduced to the Queen and had dinner with Princess Margaret, Frankfurt (January to April 1984) and Helsinki (June to September 1984). Roberts (1994: 180-81).

[45] Restructuring.

[46] Although, more recently relations have cooled once again.

[47] Roberts (1994: 3).

were changing in the Soviet Union. Once again George Costakis was being used to make a political point.

There were further exhibitions of the collection, specifically in Dublin in 1988 and Montreal in 1989 (see Appendix E, page 254 onwards, for full details), but Costakis died on Friday 9 March 1990. A few days later, on Tuesday 13 March 1990 an obituary in *The New York Times* concluded with the prediction that 'An auction of 22 works owned by Mr. Costakis is expected to bring $8 million on April 4 at Sotheby's in London.'[48] At this sale, in which twenty-six lots from Costakis's collection were being offered, just ten works were sold, realising a total of £800,800.[49] Later in 1990 the collection was removed from New York to storage in Cologne and by 1994 the collection remained in storage in Germany.[50] Despite this apparent wane in popularity shown by collectors, there was a revitalisation in interest for the Costakis collection, specifically from the Greek authorities. This interest was accelerated by the 1995 to 1996 Athens exhibition *Russian Avant-garde 1910-1930. The G. Costakis Collection*.[51] Following this show the Greek authorities entered into negotiations with the Costakis family with a view to purchasing the Costakis collection for the Greek nation. The works in the collection that remained with Costakis's family were subsequently bought by the Greek government in March 2000. Many exhibitions have used the Costakis collection since being under the auspices of the SMCA, (see Appendix E, page 254 onwards for details), but, as introduced earlier and as I will later conclude, the collection is both a blessing and a curse. The Western perception of Constructivism has been seen through the occluded prism of the Costakis collection.

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[48] Yarrow (1990). An estimate of $8 million equated to £4,870,624, with the average rate of exchange on the 4 April 1990 being £1 = $1.6425. Bank of England (2012).

[49] The sale was held on Wednesday 4 April 1990. Of twenty-six lots (lots 500 to 525), only ten were sold. Sotheby's (1990). The sum of the ten sold lots equated to $1,315,314, with the average rate of exchange on the 4 April 1990 being £1 = $1.6425. Bank of England (2012).

[50] Roberts (1994: 216).

[51] SMCA (2012).

The Great Utopia: a missed opportunity

The exhibition *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-garde, 1915-1932* – held at the Guggenheim, New York, NY, in 1992 and 1993 – took advantage of the opportunity of the availability of holdings of the Soviet institutions that had not been easily accessible beforehand. The show certainly used works from many former Soviet organisations, however, the scope of the show was too ambitious.[52] (Museum or Gallery Fatigue is a phenomenon that has been researched for some time. Initially referred to by Benjamin Gilman in 1916,[53] Gallery Fatigue must have affected visitors to *The Great Utopia*. Sometimes less really is more.)

The Great Utopia was flawed by the Guggenheim's decisions related to the selection of works, in addition to decisions over the Guggenheim's reasoning for the exhibition and their intended slant for the show. These issues were deep-seated and were especially evident in the Guggenheim's press release.[54] Furthermore, the Guggenheim appeared to be in competition with MoMA and their blockbuster shows. Public promotion, marketing and subsequent success of large shows such as *The Great Utopia*[55] was, and still is, important for organisations to maintain their profile and their subsequent status, as well as to preserve their income streams and reputations, especially in the face of funding difficulties.[56]

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[52] As mentioned earlier, there were a total of 739 artworks on display, of which 474 were from sixty different former Soviet sources.

[53] Cited by Davey (2005: 17).

[54] Guggenheim Museum (1992b).

[55] Which saw a total of 253,670 visitors (the *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective* show at MoMA had 944,913 visitors). The economic benefit to the City of New York was estimated to be $138 million for the Guggenheim's exhibition and $475 million for MoMA's show. All statistics from Alliance for Arts (2008).

[56] Relevant for those institutions that rely on government funding, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) cuts were protested against by many artistic and cultural groups including the College Art Association (CAA) in their letter to the United States house of representatives of 25 July 2011, in which they indicated that in 2011 the NEA budget was cut by $12.5 million. CAA (2011).

Because of the openness engendered by political events, the states of the former Soviet Union and their various cultural authorities were relaxing their grip on their works of art. They were allowing much more of their holdings to be seen in the West. Thanks to this openness, coupled with a dependence on works from the Costakis collection, a vast amount of material (739 items) was on show in this ambitious exhibition. This show opened at a major moment of cultural crisis, yet the Guggenheim continued with their agenda based on a promotion of non-representational art, and used characters such as Malevich and Tatlin, with which the public could relate, to further their cause. Furthermore, the vastness of the show and its design by committees resulted in a flawed presentation and a missed opportunity to present a coherent exhibition that visitors would find to be manageable.

***Building the Revolution*: conceptual failure**

The Russian and Soviet avant-garde has been explored in several exhibitions in the West and, especially since the mid-1980s, has also been afforded the benefit of many eminent publications based around the art, artists and practices of the immediate post-revolutionary moment. Following these earlier explorations, the Royal Academy exhibition *Building the Revolution: Soviet Art and Architecture 1915–1935*, on display in London between 29 October 2011 and 22 January 2012,[57] was a means to reinvigorate critical engagement with these works along with a promotion of the work of the British contemporary photographer Richard Pare, as well as highlighting the plight of important

[57] The use of the term 'Soviet' in the title is a source of potential ambiguity. Soviets did exist in 1915, but the Soviet Union was not formed until 1922. See Appendix A, Figure 50, page 211 and Figure 51, page 212 for installation views of the RA show. The exhibition had already been at the CaixaForum Barcelona (4 February to 17 April 2011) and the CaixaForum Madrid (24 May to 18 September 2011), before it came to London and it then travelled on to Berlin (at Martin-Gropius-Bau between 5 April and 9 July 2012).

architecture in Russia. This section will briefly examine this exhibition in order to offer a contemporary view of the reception of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde in the West.

Despite including many great and familiar examples of avant-garde art, these did not become an integral part of the exhibition's *raison d'être*. In discussing the arrangement of the artworks in the exhibition, the Royal Academy's press release asserted that Pare's photographs:

> are set in dialogue with paintings and works on paper from the Costakis Collection, which demonstrate the vital experimentation of Russian avant-garde artists from c.1915 to 1930, as well as the intense dialogue that developed between them and radical architects, contributing to a new, revolutionary language of architecture.[58]

On the 7 November 2011 MaryAnne Stevens, one of the exhibition's curators, presented her lecture at the Royal Academy titled *Revolution: Ideals and Realities in Soviet Art and Architecture 1915–1935*. When talking of the show's mixture of art and architecture she asserted that 'the two art forms really spoke to each other, there was a dialogue that was going on, a conversation that was going backwards and forwards between the artists and the architects [...]'.[59] The exhibition was bold, but the contentious thread stretching between the art and the architecture was slender, and Stevens's emphasis that 'there was a dialogue that was going on' between the two disciplines of art and architecture is not borne out. My analysis of the arrangement of the works on display (see Appendix F, page 257) confirms that there was very little, if any, interaction between the artists and the architects. Quite how this 'intense dialogue' between artists and architects leading to a 'new, revolutionary language' manifested itself was never explained by the writer of the press release and neither was it realised in the exhibition. Pare's photographs showed typical Constructivist architectural styles, for example, horizontally banded fenestration, whitewashed concrete surfaces, geometrically formed balconies and the inclusion of

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[58] RA (2011).

[59] Stevens (2011). My transcription from the audio recording.

interior shared social spaces. But how this was meant to be mapped from the earlier Russian and Soviet avant-garde art was never made clear.

Paradoxically the show displayed the buildings as neither conserved nor protected, yet in Pare's meticulous images – always taken in fine weather – they are preserved as if in aspic. As well as the perfect weather conditions on show, the lack of people contrived to give us a similar, yet ultimately false, impression of the state of these important buildings. The fine weather suggested that it should be an easy matter to prevent these buildings from further decay, and the lack of people in most of the photographs emphasised the idea of desolation. Since Pare had decided, in the main, to exclude people from his photographs, and since the few figures that did appear were incidental, this offered visitors both a similarity to Constructivist art and a difference to the art that followed its demise. Pare had elected to display his photographs that related, albeit only in a very small way, with the Constructivist art that was nearby within the exhibition. Whereas, by contrast, Socialist Realist art regularly used deep pictorial space with the inclusion of representations of people. (See for examples depictions of Stalin in paintings such as those by F.S. Shurpin, reproduced in Appendix A, Figure 54, page 212 and by Aleksandr Gerasimov in Figure 55, page 212.) Problematically for the critical success of the exhibition, this was the only tenuous point of visual similarity between Pare's images and the artworks of the early Russian and Soviet avant-garde.

Robert Hewison, referring to Britain's heritage industry and the potential for a continued misrepresentation of the past, wrote:

> The past is made more vivid than the present. It never rains [...]. The past becomes more homogeneous than the present, it becomes simply 'yesteryear'; if there is development it is 'progress' where continuity is discovered in place of chance, and where rooms and houses are restored to a uniform conception of a period, and objects are standardised by their display.[60]

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[60] Hewison (1987: 137).

And so it was for *Building the Revolution*. The political as well as the artistic and architectural should have been foregrounded in the exhibition. Pare and the exhibition's curators delivered their overarching theme of the failed revolution in the corresponding failure of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde. But without reminding us of the fact that the revolution and the political situation that followed its failure resulted in an enormous human cost.

The decision to put together art and architecture in this exhibition was undoubtedly influenced by the configuration of Pare's previous show, initially held at MoMA, *Lost Vanguard: Soviet Modernist Architecture, 1922-1932*[61] (which itself evolved from his earlier Moscow exhibition *The Lost Vanguard*[62]). Unfortunately, the curators decided to amalgamate these two disparate disciplines and this decision was justified by their publication and promotion of the erroneous message that there was a 'dialogue' between the artists and the architects. Russian and Soviet avant-garde art in the past has been paid a great deal of attention and has featured in many shows, so there seemed to be little need for this early avant-garde art to be reinvigorated by such an exhibition. In what was a worshipping of Constructivist architecture, *Building the Revolution* was an ill-conceived exhibition that fundamentally failed the Constructivist art of the Costakis collection by treating it as a minor player alongside the modernist architectural movement.

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[61] At MoMA, New York, NY between 18 July and 29 October 2007. See Appendix A, Figure 52, page 212 for an installation view.

[62] At the Ruina Annexe of The Shchusev Architectural Museum, Moscow, 15 April to July 2006. See Appendix A, Figure 53, page 212 for an installation view.

Alternative collections

From 1978 the Costakis collection was the main Western repository of Russian and Soviet avant-garde art, but later in the twentieth century, two further collections became accessible; the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection and the Khardzhiev collection. The former was installed permanently in Madrid in the Summer of 1992 and the latter has been on display at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam since 1997.

In the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection of 775 paintings and drawings only fifty-nine items can be attributed to Russia and Eastern Europe, and of these – because of chronology, subject matter, or the use of representation – just twenty-six of these works are useful in a study of Constructivism.[63] Although the art in the collection ranges from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, much of it was acquired before the 1970s. However, the Russian and Soviet avant-garde examples were purchased in the 1970s and the 1980s. For instance, two works by Malevich were acquired in 1980 and 1981 and similarly, three inclusions from Popova were obtained between 1976 and 1977. The difficulty here, as the curator Irene Martin has expressed, is that works that have appeared more recently carry question marks over their authenticity.[64] So much so, that John Bowlt and Nicoletta Misler indicate that three of the works that they have studied – belonging to the collection and acquired between 1975 and 1983 – should no longer be attributed to Klutcis, Kagan and Rodchenko.[65]

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[63] The total figure of 775 is the number of works purchased by the Spanish government in 1993. Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza (2009). Fifty-nine is the total number of works in Bowlt and Misler (1993). My analysis of Bowlt and Misler (1993) reveals that twenty-six of these are useful for any study of Constructivism.

[64] Martin (1993).

[65] These are Bowlt and Misler (1993) catalogue references 27, 28 and 48. For consistency, I refer here to Klutcis and Kagan, whereas Bowlt and Misler (1993) list these same artists as Klucis and Kogan.

In 1993 the Russian Nikolai Khardzhiev emigrated to the Netherlands and took much of his collection with him.[66] The Khardzhiev collection now held by the Stedelijk Museum, which contains 742 works, might fill some of the gaps which are evident in the Costakis collection. For instance, the Khardzhiev collection includes 184 examples of art created by Malevich and a further forty-four pieces from Lissitzky.[67] But on closer examination a total of only around 100 pieces of art are useful in terms of an understanding of Constructivism and the Russian and Soviet avant-garde. Nevertheless, the Malevich and Lissitzky works are significant in terms of building on the works held in the Costakis collection.

Chapter conclusion

Although these two more recently available collections assist the art historian – in particular with regards to the Suprematism-inspired work of Ilya Chashnik (in the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection) and the examples of Malevich and Lissitzky (in the Khardzhiev collection) – difficulties still remain with the lack of resources related to certain artists. This situation becomes especially problematic for any study of Khaia (Anna) Kagan (a follower of Malevich) or David Kakabadzé, since neither the Costakis, the Thyssen-Bornemisza nor the Khardzhiev collections contain any useful examples of their work.[68]

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[66] Although, like the Costakis collection, the history is convoluted. See Norman (1998) for an initial assessment.

[67] From my analysis of Imanse and van Lamoen (2013).

[68] The Thyssen-Bornemisza collection contains one example from Kakabadzé, but the 1920 painting has more in common with Cubist collage than Constructivism. (I refer to Kakabadzé's *Untitled*, reproduced in Bowlt and Misler (1993), catalogue reference 23.) Much of Kagan's work, is held by private collectors in Moscow.

As can be concluded, the Costakis collection, with its 1009 examples of Russian and Soviet avant-garde art (by contrast the Tretyakov holds 152 works formerly from the Costakis collection),[69] is an extremely valuable resource. Although other collections have become more accessible, the Costakis collection remains the foremost resource, both numerically and qualitatively. As such, Constructivism – and more widely, the Russian and Soviet avant-garde – will continue to be seen through the prism of the Costakis collection. In the future expect Kliun and Klutcis to figure alongside the already popular artists Rodchenko and Popova, but more of a concern is the excessive reliance on the Costakis collection as a resource for the study of Constructivism, which effectively warps its perception.

Having explored the Costakis collection and its importance and influence in the Western reception of Constructivism, this thesis will now return to the United States and discuss the way in which American artists were influenced by, and appropriated from, the art of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists. Three sections make-up the next chapter. The first of which is a discussion of six United States' artists who were not Minimal artists in the way in which Minimal art is now categorised, but nevertheless these artists created the ideal conditions for the Minimal artists that followed. The second section is a close examination of the exchanges between Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton in the early 1960s. Details of Constructivism's impact in the United States in the 1960s are revealed through Andre and Frampton's textually-based conversations. The third and final section is concerned with the 'monument' series of sculptures produced by Dan Flavin. These were works created with his signature fluorescent light fittings between 1964 and 1990. This section serves to demonstrate Flavin's repeated reference to the Russian avant-garde artist and designer Vladimir Tatlin.

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[69] By my analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

Constructivism's reception in the United States (pre- and post-World War II)

Introduction

By the use of a series of brief case studies, here I will explore several US artists and their artistic output and, where appropriate, their textual output too. I intend to show how Constructivism eventually impacted on the practice of United States' artists in the post-World War II period. Six American artists will be discussed – Alexander Calder, John McLaughlin, David Smith, Agnes Martin, Anne Truitt and Kenneth Snelson[1] – and there will be two further and more specific case studies. The first of these is an examination of Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton's *12 Dialogues*, a record of musings by these two artists in 1962 and 1963, edited by Benjamin Buchloh and published in 1980. The second additional case study is my consideration of Dan Flavin's 'monument' series of artworks, executed between 1964 and 1990. Looking at the work of these six artists and these two further case studies, reveals the impact of Constructivism in the United States in the pre- and post-war period.

[1] Listed here chronologically. (First by year of birth and then by date of death. Although presently not well, Snelson is alive.)

Six Americans

My selection of these particular artists in this section is not meant to be exhaustive, but is intended to explore the pre- and post-World War II practices of American artists with particular attention, where appropriate, to the influence of the Constructivists and International Constructivists.

Alexander Calder[2] graduated from the Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, NJ, situated on the west bank of the Hudson River, with a view towards Manhattan on the opposite side.[3] He left in 1919 with a degree in mechanical engineering. In 1921 Calder worked as a hydraulics engineer, but by 1923 had decided to become a painter and began classes at the Art Students League in New York, NY.[4]

In the mid-1920s he experimented with sculptures constructed from wire and continued to use wire as a medium throughout his life. He also created and performed with his *Cirque Calder*, a large model of a circus, including numerous animal and human figures, with many parts made of wire enhanced with various found parts (see Appendix A, Figure 56, page 212). As the curator James Johnson Sweeney would later write, 'The fame of Calder's circus spread quickly between the years 1927 and 1930. All the Paris art world eventually came to know it.'[5] Calder publicised the New York, NY performances of his Circus with his own linocut prints (see Appendix A, Figure 57, page 213 for a 1929 example). He travelled to France on many occasions. In 1928 he visited Joan Miró at his Montmartre studio and in 1930 paid a visit to Mondrian.[6] Writing in 1937 Calder recalled:

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[2] Born 1898, died 1976.
[3] Sometime later, reinforcing its status, the institute added the subtitle 'The Innovation University'.
[4] The League seem to prefer their name without the apostrophe.
[5] Sweeney (1951).
[6] Sweeney (1951).

> […] I went to see Mondrian. I was very much moved by Mondrian's studio, large, beautiful and irregular in shape as it was, with the walls painted white and divided by black lines and rectangles of bright colour, like his paintings. It was very lovely, with a cross-light (there were windows on both sides), and I thought at the time how fine it would be if everything there moved; though Mondrian himself did not approve of this idea at all.[7]

He also said that this visit provided 'the necessary shock' to further his development as an artist.[8] Calder was fascinated with using movement. To make his *Red Frame Construction* of 1932 (see Appendix A, Figure 58, page 213), he suspended a thin painted rectangular frame from a wire. An obvious representation of a picture frame perhaps, but he incorporated coloured discs of painted flat metal elements fixed to the frame by the use of fine wires. Just viewing a photograph of the work conveys the impression of the movement that the piece displayed when examined by visitors to the gallery.

The title of this work hints at a connection with the Constructivists and the work itself is reminiscent of Suprematist works by Malevich. Sweeney indicated the link between Calder's work and that of the earlier work by Russian artists, when he wrote in the catalogue for the 1934 exhibition *Mobiles by Alexander Calder*:

> Finally a new fusion of these elements into forms interesting not so much in their representational character as for themselves. And it is in the ability to effect this fusion that Calder's quality lies. Moscow as early as 1921 had seen constructivism a realization. But Tatlin's and Obmochu's [*sic*] constructions remained architecture and machines. Calder personalizes his "mobiles" with a lyricism entirely his own – a freshness, gaiety and charm.[9]

For Sweeney then, Calder's work is more dynamic that that of Tatlin and that of the students of OBMOKhU. But this account shows the lack of knowledge of Russian

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[7] Calder (1937).
[8] MoMA (1943: 4).
[9] Sweeney (1934). Exhibition held at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York, NY 6 to 28 April 1934.

Constructivist work at this time, since Sweeney has not referenced Rodchenko's hanging constructions. These constructions, produced in the early 1920s (see Appendix A, Figure 13, page 203 for an example), only began to be more widely seen in in the West with the publication of the catalogue for the *Cubism and Abstract Art* exhibition of 1936, curated by Alfred H. Barr Jr.[10]

Another work I want to examine here is Calder's *Elephant* of 1936 (see Appendix A, Figure 60, page 213). Again the work is suspended from a fine wire. Calder worked the parts into a defamiliarised Surrealist vision of the mammal of his title. The white component is unmistakeably a representation of a tusk. This element passes through the main part of the work, the metal sheet that stands for the body of the animal which is painted an earthy red, redolent of an African mud-hole. But then Calder, to keep his viewer guessing, painted the representation of the ear of the Elephant in yellow. There can be no doubt that the assemblage of these components correlates to the given title, and there can also be no doubt that this is a work influenced by Surrealism.

For some of Calder's works, and especially with his earlier sculptural pieces, the decisions he made result in works that clearly reference earlier movements or categories of art. For *Red Frame Construction* it is Suprematism and for *Elephant* it is Surrealism. In the 1940s, although still continuing to paint, often in a style influenced by his friend Joan Miró (see Appendix A, Figure 61, page 214), Calder began to further explore his manufacture of mobiles.[11] With works like *Red Ghost* (see Appendix A, Figure 62, page 214), Calder transcribed his Miró-like paintings into Miró-like mobiles. By 1951, when

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[10] This MoMA exhibition was on display between 2 March and 19 April 1936. Rodchenko's *Hanging Construction* is shown in catalogue reference 130, Barr (1936: 134), although the work was not on display in the exhibition. (See Appendix A, Figure 59, page 213 for a better photograph of the same work.)

[11] The term 'mobiles' was famously coined by Duchamp in 1931. Sweeney wrote, 'when Calder, shortly before the Galerie Vignon exhibition, asked Duchamp to suggest a name for the new constructions Duchamp without hesitation proposed "mobiles."' Sweeney (1951). The exhibition in Paris was a group show displayed between 15 and 28 January 1932.

Calder exhibited his work in a group exhibition at MoMA,[12] in the catalogue introduction Sweeney wrote:

> […] Calder's concern as an artist with mechanical forms and mechanical organizations, and his use of new or unconventional materials link him with the Russian constructivists of the early twenties. […] Their aim was to expand the conception of sculptural form, so long tied to nature and to conventional materials.[13]

In the 1960s Calder turned to more monumental structures. The manufacturing methods used to create his *La Grande Voile* of 1965 (see Appendix A, Figure 63, page 214), were those used for shipbuilding. The units that comprised the final sculpture were produced from pieces of rolled steel, some braced by ribs, and all joined by hundreds of rivets. Despite its evident dimensions, and assisted by its title (*The Large Sail*[14]), the work defies its size and mass to give viewers circling the work the suggestion of the movement experienced on board a sailing ship.

Calder remained committed to an exploration of real movement with his mobiles in the 1960s, but these too had become monumental in size. His *Ghost* (see Appendix A, Figure 64, page 214), was originally suspended within the central space of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY in 1964 and 1965 during Calder's one-man show.[15]

Calder, an experienced engineer, became an artist. His work shifted back and forth between several forms and often carried the hallmarks of his friend Miró. He continued to paint, but his great love was to create sculptures. At the same time as creating large

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[12] The exhibition *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America* was on display between 24 January and 25 March 1951. Over 100 works by eighty-five artists were on show. MoMA (1951: 1).

[13] Sweeney (1951).

[14] Calder titled many of his works in French. He regularly travelled to France and lived there for long periods.

[15] The show *Alexander Calder: A Retrospective Exhibition* was on display between 6 November 1964 and 31 January 1965. The work was purchased by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1965 (in Appendix A, Figure 64, page 214 the work is pictured on display over the Great Stair Hall in the Museum).

mobiles, he also produced monumental static sculptures, which Jean Arp dubbed 'Stabiles'.[16] And he continued to produce work on a grand scale until his death in 1976.

By contrast with Calder – an East Coast American looking eastwards towards Europe – John McLaughlin[17] was a West Coast American artist who looked to Japan for his inspiration. Born in Massachusetts to middle-class parents, McLaughlin was exposed to Asian art from an early age. He became fluent in Japanese and used his language skills in the US Marine Corps in World War II. He was later awarded a Bronze Star Medal[18] for his work in military intelligence in Asia.[19] By 1946 McLaughlin had relocated to live on the Southern California coast. Here he worked as an artist full-time for the first time.

McLaughlin's early Californian works were bold. His *Untitled* of 1951 (see Appendix A, Figure 65, page 215) was an arrangement of two rectangular shapes on a white ground, the larger of which also carried a smaller rectangle painted in a mid-grey tone. With the prior knowledge of McLaughlin's interest in Japanese culture, it is tempting to link this and many of his later works to Zen. Here the composition of the solid colours was organised in a balanced way, yet with an asymmetry and irregularity in keeping with the Japanese aesthetic principle, Fukinsei.[20]

McLaughlin exhibited his work alongside that of Karl Benjamin, Lorser Feitelson and Frederick Hammersley in a 1959 exhibition, organised by the Los Angeles County Museum, titled *Four Abstract Classicists*.[21] In the show's catalogue the curator Jules

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[16] In a 1962 interview Calder said, '[…] Duchamp named the mobiles and Arp the stabiles.' Calder and Kuh (1962).

[17] Born 1898, died 1976.

[18] US military medal for 'heroic or meritorious achievement or service'. US Army (2015: 50).

[19] McLaughlin's honour was mentioned in *India-Burma Theater Roundup*, a newsletter of 22 November 1945. US Army (1945).

[20] In Japanese kanji 不均整, which translates to 'asymmetry' or 'unbalance'.

[21] The exhibition predates the creation of Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The exhibition was first shown at the San Francisco Museum of Art (now the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art), before moving to the Los Angeles County Museum in Exposition Park. Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2014).

Langsner used the term 'hard-edged painting'[22] in an attempt to categorise this Californian style of geometric abstraction. When the exhibition travelled to London and Belfast, it was curated by Laurence Alloway and given the title *West Coast Hard-Edge: Four Abstract Classicists*.[23] Alloway recollected (in his introduction to the catalogue for the 1966 Guggenheim exhibition *Systemic Painting*), that his 1959/1960 use of the term 'hard-edged', 'was to refer to the new development which combined economy of form and neatness of surface with fullness of color. without [*sic*] continually raising memories of earlier geometric art.'[24] This was his attempt to arrive at a term without confusing the works with those of the Abstract Expressionists. In 1974 Feitelson, describing the grouping of the four artists in the exhibition, recalled, 'at that time we said the one thing we have in common, that the art has in common, is that it's calculated, it's deliberated, and it is anything but accidental'.[25]

With his painting *#6*, of 1959 (see Appendix A, Figure 67, page 215), constructed by his use of shades of grey with two black rectangles, McLaughlin teases the viewer of his work. If the viewer reads the painting as we read English, from left to right, then we first encounter a full rectangle which covers about a third of the canvas. The remainder of the canvas is given over to three distinct sets of features, each comprising a rectangle which runs from the top edge of the painting to the bottom edge and, positioned slightly in from the top and bottom edges of the work, a narrower rectangle. The initial reading of the work then concludes with a narrow rectangle, which again extends over the full height of the canvas. In an attempt to make sense of the painting, on initial examination

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[22] Although Langsner has been credited with the first use of the term (OED (2015)), there have been arguments over this attribution, in particular those invoked by Gerald Nordland in 1964 and, since Langsner's death (in 1966), by Peter Selz. Feitelson talks of the controversy at length in his interview of 2 March 1974. UCLA (1974).

[23] Laurence Alloway wrote the preface for the catalogue and was involved with curating the UK versions of the show. [London, Institute of Contemporary Art – 24 March to 14 April 1960 and then Belfast, Queen's University – 1960 precise dates not known.] ICA (2012). The incongruous phrase 'Four Abstract Classicists', inherited from the title of the US version of the exhibition, was minimised by the use of typography for the cover of the ICA catalogue. (See Appendix A, Figure 66, page 215.)

[24] Alloway (1966: 14). This is recorded in Battcock (1968: 45) with the word 'which' replaced by the word 'that'. However, in Battcock a comma replaces the errant full stop.

[25] UCLA (1974).

the three features appear similar, the second of which appears to be a negative of the earlier feature (albeit slightly stretched on its right edge). Then the viewer encounters the last of these features, and they are thrown completely off balance. Inevitably, they will repeatedly cycle through looking at the three features, in an attempt to rationalise what is displayed before them.

Another work in a similar vein is McLaughlin's *Number 16 – 1963* (see Appendix A, Figure 68, page 215). Again the artist sets out to confuse his viewer. The obvious first reaction is to consider the arrangement of the dark area of the painting to be a representation of a window frame which carries two panes of glass. This interpretation, when presented with a work like this, is something that we have been conditioned to see, because of the prevalence of conventional windows in Western architecture.[26] This dark area is coincident with the picture plane, and it appears that through each 'pane' there is daylight, or a half-light to be experienced. (Naturally this is all supposition based on the experience of the individual viewer, but please bear with me.) To the left of the central member in the painting is a rectangle that is painted in a tone which is, both tonally and positionally, between the dark central vertical member and the leftmost 'window pane'. With this arrangement, McLaughlin has effectively shifted the notional position of the viewer to something that feels as if they looking at the 'window' from a position that is left of centre, where this mid-tone rectangle is representing the visible reveal of the window itself. All of this happens in a split second, and again, all is well until the viewer tries to reconcile the right edge of the painting, for they expect to see a similar rectangle showing the window reveal there too, but there is nothing of that kind in this position. Now the viewer shifts their gaze from the right edge of the right hand 'pane' back to the central member in an attempt to reconcile these two ostensibly disparate messages from their eye that their brain is attempting to process.

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[26] Especially following improvements in the field of glassmaking from the mid-nineteenth century, which enabled the manufacture of large sheets of glass.

In both of these cases, the viewer's examination of each painting initially goes to plan, but then the assessment of the painting is jolted by the arrangement on the right hand side. The reaction that the work instils within a reader (that reads left to right), is one of befuddlement. McLaughlin's works confuse, but that is the reaction that he is seeking. McLaughlin himself said, 'I have gone to considerable pains to eliminate from my work any trace of my own identity with the view to making the observer the subject of the painting'.[27]

These works by McLaughlin share similarities with art produced by Josef Albers in the 1930s and 1940s. This is unsurprising, since Albers left Germany in 1933 (where he taught at the Bauhaus) for the United States (where he taught at Black Mountain College and then later at Yale University). For example, the earlier paintings by Albers, *Light Construction* of 1945 (see Appendix A, Figure 69, page 216) and *Neither…Nor* of 1948 (see Figure 70, page 216), each play on the ambiguity of the depicted space in a similar way to that used later by McLaughlin. Furthermore, in order to underscore the possible influence of Albers, McLaughlin's *Untitled* lithograph of 1963 (see Appendix A, Figure 71, page 216), uses the 'reversed grounds' optical phenomena that Albers explained in his book *Interaction of Color*[28] published in the same year. The single stroke on the right half of McLaughlin's print (effectively a negative of the image on the left half), appears to be a different shade when the viewer concentrates their gaze on the white stripe generated by the printing process on the left half of the print. The ink is the same on both halves, yet the arrangement of the print changes that which is perceived by the viewer's brain. The observer does indeed become the subject of McLaughlin's work.

By contrast with the cerebral interactions created by McLaughlin, the sculptor David Smith[29] had more in common with Calder. Both Smith and Calder had engineering

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[27] Archives of American Art, John McLaughlin papers, roll 1141, frame 993, as cited in Larsen and Selz (1996: 28).

[28] Albers (1963). In the revised and expanded edition of 2006, the 'reversed grounds' section is on pages 84 and 85.

[29] Born 1906, died 1965.

experience, but Smith's work was more rugged and his philosophy of art showed a greater affinity with Constructivist ideas and ideals.

In 1965 Smith suffered severe injuries in a car accident. Following his sudden death his work became more widely known. Clement Greenberg had earlier obliquely praised some of Smith's work, 'Smith's taste can still be bad, but somehow it no longer gets in the way very much [...]'[30] and after Smith's death his work was lauded by Greenberg. In a piece immodestly titled 'America Takes the Lead' Greenberg wrote that Smith was 'the only American sculptor whose art has attained a resonance like that of leading Abstract Expressionist painters.'[31] Greenberg subsequently became one of the executors for Smith's estate.[32]

David Smith is something of an enigma. In his youth he was a spot-welder and fabricator in the Studebaker car factory in Indiana,[33] undoubtedly learning the metalworking skills that would assist him later in his life. During World War II he worked on the production of railway rolling stock as well as M7 tanks, but by 1944 he was a full-time artist living in upstate New York.[34] In 1954 he wrote:

> The sculpture possesses nothing unknown to any man. I want the viewer to travel by perception the path I travelled in creating it. [...] But its understanding can only come by affection and visual perception, which were the elements in its making. My own words cannot make it understood and least of all the words of others.[35]

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[30] Greenberg (1964b: 188).

[31] Greenberg (1965: 216). Neatly, Greenberg managed to praise his favoured group at the same time as offering plaudits for the recently-deceased Smith.

[32] Robert Motherwell and Smith's lawyer acted as the other executors, but all was not well. See Hamill (2011) and Scordia (2015) on the mismanagement of the estate and on how Smith's works were variously left unprotected and actively interfered with, with Greenberg's full knowledge and involvement.

[33] David Smith Estate (2015).

[34] Details extracted from 'Chronology' in Hunter (1957: 34).

[35] Smith (1954a: 100).

Smith decried the use of language to interpret his works at the same time as indicating his agreement with some of the ideas of Clement Greenberg. Greenberg's emphasis on the visual appears to be acceptable to Smith, but he remained resolute in wanting to avoid any prescription, especially those offered by critics, in relation to the viewing and interpretation of his works. His artworks, particularly the later larger pieces, are earnest and express the physical endeavour expended in producing them.

It is something of a cliché that Smith's work can be likened to that of Pablo Picasso and Julio González, and inevitably Smith was influenced by his tutor at the Art Students League, Jan Matulka.[36] But these details are not what I want to explore here.

As Rosalind Krauss has explained, assessment of Smith's sculpture in the 1950s and 1960s had erroneously leaned heavily towards the idea that his work was non-representational.[37] Krauss also explained that Smith's *Cubi* series can be divided into two main groups, the 'upright totem figure' and the 'altar table/still life'.[38] And she said that his *Zig* series show evidence of his 'theme of the phallic cannon'.[39] On several occasions Krauss asserted that Smith's work is not like Constructivist works.[40] But I would like to argue that they are. Not in the manner in which Krauss has described Smith – having avoided that 'technological content that characterized orthodox constructivism'[41] – but certainly in other Constructivist ways. Especially with *Sentinel V* (see Appendix A, Figure 72, page 216) – one of the precursors to his *Cubi* series – Smith expresses a great deal of concern about the construction, the selection and use of materials, and over the surface finish which these materials allow him to show to great effect. Specifically, his use of

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[36] Details extracted from 'Chronology' in Hunter (1957: 34). Again, the League seem to prefer their name without the apostrophe.
[37] And she notes Greenberg in particular. Krauss (1977a: 295 n. 3).
[38] Krauss (1977a: 165).
[39] Krauss (1977a: 295 n. 3).
[40] Krauss (1977a: 158, 159 and 161).
[41] Krauss (1977a: 161).

stainless steel[42] and the burnishing of the outer faces of these works allowed him to display a shimmering overall structure, momentarily distracting the viewer from the form of the work by concentrating the viewer's gaze on the details created by the surface finish.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, in attempting to explain Constructivism, Alexei Gan discussed 'Tectonics, *Faktura* and Construction'.[43] The welding and hot-forging techniques that Smith embraced fit neatly with Gan's description of tectonics, 'the purposeful use of industrial material'.[44] And Gan's description of *Faktura*, 'the factual substance of this or another specific body or material' also matches Smith's use of wrought iron and steel without attempting to hide the materials he used. Smith often described himself as a welder[45] and with his art practice actively presented his use of welding techniques, in 1952 he wrote:

> My aim in material function is the same as in locomotive building: to arrive at a given functional form in the most efficient manner. The locomotive method bows to no accepted theory of fabrication. It utilizes the respective merits of casting, forging, riveting, arc and gas welding, brazing, silver soldering. It combines bolts, screws, shrink fits all because of their respective efficiency in arriving at an object or form in function.[46]

Smith was an ardent union member and, as Paula Wisotzki has written, he:

> saw this achievement as an acknowledgment of his skill at the 'craft' he utilized in making art. It functioned to affirm his identification with 'working men', therefore providing

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[42] By the late 1940s welding systems had been developed using an inert gas, usually Argon, to shield the molten weld from contamination from the constituent elements in the surrounding air. These new systems enabled the successful welding of stainless steel components.

[43] Gan (1922: 56). Gan's italics. See page 3.

[44] Gan (1922: 61). Gan's emboldening removed.

[45] Particularly with his artwork *Home of the Welder* of 1945.

[46] Smith (1952: 20).

> another point at which Smith could weave together the notion of artist and worker in his conception of self.[47]

Although Smith propagated the myth of him being a welder (rather than an artist),[48] Smith did meet with Gan's criteria for Constructivism. Specifically, he had an affinity with the idea of the worker, and at the same time had an interest in the political strength of the worker embodied in collectivisation. Although Smith's work can be seen as representational to a greater or lesser degree, I maintain that his work remains Constructivist in deed and in thought. The rugged and masculine art that Smith became renowned for contrasts dramatically with the art created by two female artists whose practice I want to discuss here: Agnes Martin and Anne Truitt.

A relative latecomer to the exhibition of her works, Agnes Martin[49] continued to explore the idea of the grid from the 1950s. Her graphical and serial repetitions created by crossing fine lines, and later by pale bands of colour, became her trademarks. Martin herself said, 'acceptable compositions arouse certain feelings of appreciation in the observer. Some compositions appeal to some and some to others'.[50] Briony Fer wrote that looking at the surface of Martin's *Leaf* (see Appendix A, Figure 73, page 216) of 1965, 'invites a contemplative gaze, bolting the viewer to it, as if the *work* of the work were to open on to an immaterial and meditative space.'[51] Martin's grids force the viewer to attempt to understand the struggle with media that the artist has experienced. Furthermore, Martin's grids – and especially her ruled grids of graphite on canvas, like *Leaf* – carry a subtle human variance. As Fer alludes to when she writes:

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[47] Wisotzki (2005: 356).

[48] Especially since many of the cuboids and cylinders for the *Cubi* series were manufactured by a New York contract metalworking company. As noted by Mulholland (2010: 183 n. 115).

[49] Born 1912, died 2004. Her first exhibition was in December 1958 at the Section Eleven Gallery, in the Betty Parson's adjunct space in New York, NY. Morris (2015: 57).

[50] From a lecture first given by Martin at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, NM, in April 1989 titled *Beauty is the Mystery of Life*, reproduced in Morris and Bell (2015: 158-59). This extract is from page 159.

[51] Fer (2004: 47). Fer's italics.

> What Martin does is to isolate something precarious – like the infinite differences of her grids – and make of them something temporarily cohesive that enables the loss of oneself in the infinite fabric of surface.[52]

Martin gives us a subtle human variance, yet a remarkably pure form of non-representational abstraction that makes use of repeated units generated by the artist. Similar in effect to the stripe paintings of Frank Stella (which will be discussed later). Although Stella's units are painted individually rather than generated as a result of Martin's grid lines, the inference remains the same, humanity is signified by both forms of repetition.

Like Martin, Anne Truitt[53] also came relatively late to the exhibition of her work. Truitt's first commercial exhibition, which opened a few weeks before her forty-second birthday,[54] displayed large monolithic sculptures produced from poplar, painted in dark colours. An installation photograph of the arrangement of one of the rooms of the exhibition space (see Appendix A, Figure 74, page 217), includes Truitt leaning against a wall, arms folded, quite some distance from the camera. It is as if she is mouthing, "it's not about me, it's about my art". A few years later Truitt settled on the formula for what was to become her signature style of artwork, exemplified by her 1968 sculpture *Morning Choice* (see Appendix A, Figure 75, page 217). Again, like Martin, Truitt's art is enigmatic. Yet the precise finish and the painstaking application of colour by Truitt does not distract the viewer to think of the production process, as does the work of Martin. But it is notable that many of Truitt's painted columns are around the height of a human. Describing her work in the Summer of 1974, Truitt wrote:

> I am only just now realizing now how inorganic, unnatural, my work is. Like the straight lines on the desert, what is clearest in me bears no relation to what I see around me. This

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[52] Fer (2004: 58).
[53] Born 1921, died 2004.
[54] Held at the André Emmerich Gallery, New York, NY, 12 February to 2 March 1963.

> is paradoxical, since everything I make in the studio is a distillation of direct experience, sometimes even specific visual experience.[55]

She then talked of her upbringing as a child, close to the water, in Maryland. Conceivably, her art of upright pillars could be likened to the mooring posts partially submerged in the creeks and inlets of the waters of the Tred Avon River. But, later, in a 2002 interview, she indicates that her work is based on Latin language constructions, when she says, 'The Latin sentence is a very plain sentence. They're clear-cut. The nouns are nouns. They stand up straight.'[56] and shortly afterwards goes on to say, by way of expansion:

> It's blocks. They're in rectangular, in square blocks. So that the nouns and the verbs and adjectives, everything has a place and it's orderly. And it's expressive, but the expression is not necessarily in the words themselves, but in their juxtaposition, their connection, to make sense.

Truitt talks of the structure of Latin, but this appears to be a manifestation of her clever playfulness, since her statements can easily be attributed to her own creations too. We want to impose our own allusions onto Truitt's work, and that is because we need something to hang on to in describing her abstraction. In 1974 she accepted that there is a paradox between what she experiences and those same experiences captured by her in her art, and by 2002 she was keen to liken her art to that of the constructions of sentences in the Latin language. It is fair to say that there can be many interpretations of Truitt's work, nevertheless, she wrote that she:

> abandoned all play with form for the austerity of the columnar structure, and let the color, which must have been gathering force within me somewhere. Stream down over the columns on its own terms.[57]

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[55] Truitt (2013: 35), writing on 25 July 1974.
[56] Archives of American Art (2002).
[57] Truitt (2013: 78), writing on 12 October 1974.

As well as a fine artist, Truitt was also a fine writer, but here her prose gets the better of her. Her perfect timber constructions and the immaculately banded multiple coats of paint could never really be so fluid as she describes. Rather than such an apparently haphazard arrangement, I would like to suggest that Truitt built on the geometric works of earlier artists such as Malevich and Ellsworth Kelly. For Greenberg, Truitt first gave him the 'effect of *presence*'[58] and undoubtedly Truitt created art that moved modern art forward. Donald Judd may have lambasted her first show in his short but harsh review,[59] but I think that Judd subsequently drew strength from her ideas for his sculpture.[60] Truitt's work is a three dimensional manifestation of rigidly geometric forms of two-dimensional abstraction. After this, things were never going to be the same. And the last of the six American artists discussed here also broke new ground.

Kenneth Snelson[61] created his *Early X-Piece* (see Appendix A, Figure 76, page 217) in 1948. This work, suspending one wooden cross shape above another by the use of taut nylon thread, was crucial in propelling Snelson to experiment further. Later his works were made with a combination of multiple units of slender metal components held apart by tensioned steel wires, as in his *Cantilever*, a dramatic work projecting out from the roofline of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1967 (see Appendix A, Figure 77, page 217) for the duration of the exhibition *American Sculpture of the Sixties*.[62] Snelson's artworks – which at times (like Tatlin) combine elements of art, architecture and civil engineering – are often referred to as examples of tensegrity. The compound word tensegrity, produced from the concatenation of the words tension and integrity, was

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[58] He wrote, 'Truitt's art did flirt with the look of non-art, and her 1963 show was the first occasion on which I noticed how this look could confer an effect of *presence*.' Greenberg (1967a: 26), Greenberg's italics.

[59] Judd (1963: 85). Neither was he pleased by her work as displayed as part of the *Black, White and Gray* exhibition in his review of the show in March 1964, Judd (1964: 117-19), Truitt mentioned on page 118.

[60] Especially evident with his multi-coloured floor and wall pieces of the 1980s.

[61] Born 1927.

[62] At Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 28 April to 25 June 1967. The show later travelled to Philadelphia Museum of Art.

made popular by Richard Buckminster Fuller.[63] The use of the word was, in the main, avoided by Snelson, he preferred to refer to his work simply as structures.[64] His dislike of the term was as a result of his annoyance with Buckminster Fuller who purloined Snelson's earlier ideas.[65]

Notwithstanding the arguments between Buckminster Fuller and Snelson over who was the originator of the idea of tensegrity, as Maria Gough has observed,[66] both of these protagonists developed ideas that were first made physical by the Russian Constructivist Karl Ioganson in 1920 and 1921 in a series of Spatial Constructions.[67] With his *Construction in Space* (see Appendix A, Figure 78, page 218), displayed at the OBMOKhU exhibition of 1921, Ioganson managed to create a free-standing and self-supporting structure using a minimal amount of mass. This work also had capability of producing movement within the work by the introduction of a force applied, by the viewer, to the loop of thread pictured on the left.[68] Likewise, Snelson produced free-

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[63] Buckminster Fuller's first recorded use of the term is in 1961 (Buckminster Fuller (1961)), whereas the explanation of the term is mentioned in the 1964 publication of his 1963 lecture. He said, 'This principle is one which I call "tensegrity." The word is an invention – it is a contraction of a tensional integrity, a structure the shape of which is guaranteed by the tensional behaviors of the system, and not by the compressional behaviors.' Buckminster Fuller (1963: 28). Buckminster Fuller's underlining. He also created other words and phrases to describe certain features or phenomena. For instance, 'vertexial', and the 'locked kiss' among many others (see footnote 65 below, for three other examples).

[64] By 2012, in his article titled 'The Art of Tensegrity' (Snelson (2012)), he no longer avoided the term.

[65] Snelson, in his letter to René Motro of 1990, when writing of the way in which Buckminster Fuller failed to acknowledge Snelson publicly in the 1950s (although he had privately in a letter to Snelson in 1949, see Snelson (1990) for details) said, 'What Bucky did, however, was to coin the word tensegrity as he did octet truss and geodesic dome, dymaxion, etc., a powerful strategy for appropriating an idea. If it's his name, isn't it his idea?' Snelson (1990). So much so that Snelson, on the 14 March 1960, felt the need to file a patent application for his 'Continuous tension, discontinuous compression structures'. Snelson (1960).

[66] Gough (2005: 89-92) and as presaged in Gough (1998: 110).

[67] In the 1940s Snelson was familiar with the work of the Russian Constructivists, but crucially, he had not seen Ioganson's work (other than photographs of the OBMOKhU exhibition of 1921) until the 1960s. He wrote that he, in the 1940s and 1950s, 'knew nothing about Ioganson's history or his particular pieces'. Snelson (2016).

[68] Gough has suggested that one of Ioganson's other works expressed ideas that were later explored by Snelson, especially with her citation of the reproductions created by Viacheslav Koleichuk in 1991. Gough (2005: 87-93). But this assertion is based on the insubstantial evidence of a single grainy photograph of a particular installation view of the OBMOKhU exhibition, and it is doubtful that the precise arrangement can be accurately discerned from this image. However, Koleichuk's model has become something of a certainty in Gough's chapter. Snelson, in his letter to Gough, also had misgivings

standing works too, such as his *V-X* of 1968 (see Appendix A, Figure 79, page 218), a simple and sublime piece of art. But Snelson's structures have exceeded the bounds of Ioganson's experimentations.[69] Snelson has developed more complex and precisely taut structures, by the use of his repeated and exacting modules, which have been assembled into powerful pieces of art. Conversely, Ioganson, who died just eight years after the OBMOKhU exhibition of 1921, neglected his earlier forms of experimentation for reasons that remain unclear.[70] Whereas Snelson, with the good fortune of a long life, continues to remain engaged with his artistic ideas and methods.

This section has explored the way in which Constructivism has overtly or surreptitiously affected American art practices of the pre- and post-World War II years. The works that these artists drew from, and which they themselves subsequently created, would become important precursors for the works of Minimal art that would follow. There now follows discussions of two further case studies, Carl Andre and Hollis Frampton's *12 Dialogues* followed by an examination of Dan Flavin's 'monument' series. Both of these studies are exemplars of the influence of Constructivism on Minimal artists.

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about the recreation by Koleichuk of what Gough refers to as *Spatial Construction (IX)*. Snelson wrote, 'even I wouldn't have been able to make out from that famous jumbled 1921 exhibition photo that Ioganson's piece (marked number IX) was indeed a three-strut tensegrity structure'. Snelson (2003).

[69] Gough has argued (Gough (1998: 112-13) and Gough (2005: 92)) that Snelson's art was more advanced because of the materials available to him, but this is a repeat of the commonplace assertion that the work of the Constructivists is often subjected to, referencing the quality and availability of materials. Snelson's art was far more technically advanced than that of Ioganson's, since Snelson's art was much more exacting, in its concept, in its design and in its execution. Furthermore, Snelson has disagreed with Gough's assertions as to Ioganson's lack of materials in his letter to Gough of 2003, where he stated, 'This is less than convincing since he would have had sticks and strings, the materials he already was using, that I was using at the beginning. Would he not have asked, "What if I use four sticks instead of three, will that work?"' Snelson (2003) and Snelson (2016).

[70] Snelson, again in his letter to Gough, musing on Ioganson's lack of development of his structures, wrote, 'Perhaps some political pressure ended his quest or perhaps his inventiveness or inquisitiveness simply had its limits.' Snelson (2003). And as Lodder indicates, 'Little is known of Karl Ioganson […]'. Lodder (1983: 244).

Andre and Frampton: dialogues

Beginning in autumn 1962, and on at least twelve occasions until the autumn of 1963,[71] the twenty-six-year-old United States' photographer and film-maker Hollis Frampton made his weekend journey from his lower Manhattan accommodation, south over the East River to the small apartment of Rosemarie Castoro in Brooklyn. Frampton and Carl Andre (who was the older by only a few months) were friends from their schooldays – they shared a flat in 1958[72] – and Castoro was Andre's girlfriend.[73] In their get-togethers in 1962 and 1963 the two men had many 'conversations' – later referred to as 'dialogues' – on subjects related to art and culture that were conducted by the use of Castoro's typewriter. As Andre explained in a 2012 interview:

> the dialogues happened because Hollis and I used to meet every Saturday evening at a small apartment in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, which I shared with the painter Rosemarie Castoro. It was something to do between drinking sessions.[74]

In the same interview, Andre indicated his apparent lack of interest in retaining the dialogues as well as confirming the ad-hoc nature of their creation. Reflecting on his view of their ephemerality, he said that they 'would be lost if Hollis hadn't kept them. You might say that it was our way of spending time together, having fun and figuring things out at the same time'.[75] Andre went on to say:

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[71] To the question 'Why did you and Frampton stop the dialogue?' Andre replied, 'Hollis got a girlfriend. He didn't need to kill time anymore so he stopped coming over on Saturday nights'. Klein and Bui (2012).

[72] Tomkins (2011).

[73] Andre and Castoro married in 1963.

[74] Andre interviewed by Klein and Bui (2012). Most of the sessions were on Sundays. Only two of the twelve published dialogues were on Saturdays. It is fair to say that Castoro was a successful sculptor as well as a painter.

[75] Andre interviewed by Klein and Bui (2012).

> Hollis and I had an agreement that once one of us was typing we would not discuss aloud what was transacting between us. It's not a transcribed conversation; it's a conversation in typing. And each visit might last two or three hours, but it would be about an hour's worth of typing. Actually, towards the end of some of the dialogues, you can tell both of us were a little tipsy [*laughs*].[76]

As Andre indicates, these debates between him and Frampton were lubricated by their alcohol consumption. Andre in 1979, reflecting on the dialogues, wrote, 'It is a good thing to declare your interests and these were the interests of Carl Andre at the age of 24'.[77] Notwithstanding the pair's drinking and Andre's statement about his changed view of things, these written conversations between these artists remain useful as a record of their views in the early 1960s.

These discussions created by the use of a typewriter – an incomplete collection[78] of which were edited by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and eventually published in 1980 – were given the title *12 Dialogues 1962-1963*,[79] reinforcing the idea that these were in the same Greek tradition as philosophical discussions between Socrates and Plato. Frampton and Andre testing and challenging each other with their chosen form, based on the Socratic method of continual questions and answers, attempted to arrive at logical, empirical or experiential conclusions.[80] Their use of the typewriter to mediate their discussions transformed their exchanges into more measured, sometimes pedantic and often hilarious explorations of the ideas of these two young artists.

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[76] Andre interviewed by Klein and Bui (2012).

[77] Buchloh (1980: ix). Andre was being a little disingenuous here. It is worth noting that at the time of the first published dialogue, 14 October 1962, Andre (born on 16 September 1935), would have been twenty-seven.

[78] Buchloh suggests that there were further typewritten records between Andre and Frampton that were 'lost or discarded', and that 'others remain as fragments'. Furthermore, Buchloh records that 'two complete dialogues were withdrawn from the manuscript upon Carl Andre's request.' Buchloh (1980: vii).

[79] Buchloh (1980). This is the title carried on page i (the page is unnumbered). The full title, as indicated on page iii, is *Carl Andre Hollis Frampton: 12 Dialogues 1962-1963*.

[80] Although often these dialogues did not always conclude successfully.

I want to concentrate here on some elements of these discussions between Frampton and Andre, because their wide-ranging debates include an engagement with Constructivists and Constructivism. As part of one of Andre's pronouncements on Constructivism, he typed:

> The innovation in twentieth-century western painting, Constructivism, provides the suggestion of an aesthetic which could be the basis for a kind of plastic poetry which retained the qualities of both poetry and painting. I am experimenting towards that end anyway.[81]

Not only does Andre assert that Constructivism was innovative, he also indicates that he wants to build on the dialectic offered by his analysis of Constructivism. As if prompted by Constructivism, Andre was looking to create his own process to combine written language with two dimensional representation. This kind of union was achieved poetically in Andre's typed works such as his *Essay on Sculpture for E.C. Goossen* of 1964 (see Appendix A, Figure 80, page 218), where his arrangement of words on the page appear as textual variations of his earlier wooden sculptures such as *First Ladder* of 1958 (see Figure 81, page 218).[82]

By way of reply Frampton produced an entertaining ramble, in the first sentence he stated, 'let me toss out antecedents' and went on to list typographical works by Apollinaire, Marinetti, Mallarmé and then, more topically, Robert Indiana. Frampton ended this section of his contribution with the question, 'But why "Constructivist"? You flood me with the yellowed celluloid of Gabo and Pevsner.'[83] Frampton provoked Andre by referring to the degraded state of Gabo's oft-chosen material, cellulose acetate. This was a relatively new and modern material in the early part of the twentieth century,

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[81] Buchloh (1980: 34-37).

[82] Which itself was a reference to the work of Constantin Brancusi and in particular his *Endless Column* (the first version of which was created in 1918), as Rider has explained. Rider (2011: 61).

[83] Buchloh (1980: 37).

which by the time of the 1960s had been recognised as being ephemeral. Frampton's statement was ingenious by its cross-reference.

Andre's retort began, 'Let me indicate some shadow of what I mean by a Constructivist aesthetic. Frank Stella is a Constructivist. He makes paintings by combining identical, discrete units.'[84] And, in the same contribution, Andre aligns himself with the Constructivists when he typed, 'My Constructivism is the generation of overall designs by the multiplication of the qualities of the individual constituent elements.'[85] With his use of examples of his own and Stella's artistic practices, where they both used repeated units, Andre refuted Frampton's intimation that the work of the Constructivists was tired and in the past.

In the late 1950s Frampton had taken many photographs of Stella at work (see Appendix A, Figure 82, page 219 and Figure 83, page 219 for two examples), and Buchloh used many of Frampton's images in *12 Dialogues 1962-1963*. Four reproductions depicted Stella in 1959 working on his *Getty Tomb (second version)*[86] and were interspersed within the dialogue titled 'On Painting and Consecutive Matters'.[87] In deciding to use these images – which resulted in an effective display of time-lapse photographs of the progress of the production of one of Stella's black paintings – Buchloh reinforced pictorially Andre's assertions about Stella and his use of repeated units. In these images Stella is not seen painting his work in a conventional painterly manner. Instead we see that he has begun his work at the outer three edges (left, top and right) of the stretched canvas and he paints each 'n' shape of *Getty Tomb* individually as a unit, moving concentrically inwards.

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[84] Buchloh (1980: 37). The sentence 'Frank Stella is a Constructivist' was used by Maria Gough as a title for her article on Stella's work. Gough (2007).

[85] Buchloh (1980: 37).

[86] Buchloh (1980: 32, 35, 36 and 39). For the images on pages 36 and 39 see Appendix A, Figure 82, page 219 and Figure 83, page 219).

[87] Which carried the date 'November 4, 1962'. Buchloh (1980: 33). The titles of eleven of the twelve published dialogues ended with the phrase 'and Consecutive Matters'.

Frampton continued by stating, 'Here is a case where the readymade word fails us. You mean "built art". Not nailed or glued up, but *built* up of discrete fully isometric elements.'[88] A few lines later Andre begins his reply to Frampton by typing, 'One of the functions of definition is limitation. Constructivism could be extended to include all art anywhere.'[89] To clarify and reinforce his point he makes use of the examples of Cézanne and Renoir, 'But Cézanne is a Constructivist and Renoir is not. Cézanne's brushstroke is the atom of which his paintings are composed. Renoir's stroke by comparison is miasmic, a mist lost among mists.'[90] Now there can be no doubt. Stella is a Constructivist, Cézanne is a Constructivist and, thanks to his earlier assertion, so is Andre.

Dan Flavin's 'monuments'

Vladimir Tatlin designed and produced his scale model of his intended *Monument to the Third International* in 1920. When the model was first displayed in Moscow, the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky pronounced it to be, 'the first monument without a beard',[91] a jest which commented on Lenin's Plan for Monumental Propaganda and its resultant preponderance of representations of Marx and Lenin atop plinths. Tatlin's proposed monument to the October Revolution, spanning the river Neva in Petrograd, was designed to be used as the central offices for the various legislative bodies of the new state. The edifice was never built, but it has remained a fascinating remnant of the post-revolutionary urge to combine art, engineering and architecture in a structure which intended to serve a political as well as a utilitarian function. Tatlin's unmade *Monument to*

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[88] Buchloh (1980: 37). Buchloh's italics.
[89] Buchloh (1980: 37).
[90] Buchloh (1980: 37).
[91] As cited by Lodder (1983: 61).

the Third International had an impact on the United States' artist Dan Flavin, since he was preoccupied with referring many of his artworks back to Tatlin.

Between 1964 and 1990 Dan Flavin generated no less than fifty unique schemes for his 'monument' series. In 1984, as part of an exhibition with the title *"monuments" for V. Tatlin from Dan Flavin*,[92] one of the display explications carried the following statement:

> My concern for the thought of the Russian artist-designer Vladimir Tatlin was prompted by the man's frustrated, insistent attitude to attempt to combine artistry and engineering. The pseudo monuments, structural design for clear but temporary cool white fluorescent lights, were to honor the artist ironically.[93]

Of the fifty 'monument' schemes that Flavin designed, at least 122 completed artworks were produced and sold, or otherwise distributed. Of which, 113 were conceived and created between the years 1964 and 1970.[94] Flavin created a maximum of five editions from each of his fifty schemes. And as was usually the case with Flavin's work, each of the editions was supplied with a signed certificate of authenticity. In 1965 Flavin wrote:

> Thus far, I have made a considered attempt to poise silent electric light in crucial concert point to point, line by line and otherwise in the box that is a room. This dramatic decoration has been founded in the young tradition of a plastic revolution which gripped Russian art only forty years ago. My joy is to try to build from that "incomplete" experience as I see fit.[95]

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[92] On display at the Temporary Contemporary, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA (MoCA) from 21 April to 24 June 1984. MoCA (2015) and Cohn (2016). Govan and Bell (2004: 239, 240, 262 and 265) report the end date as 17 June 1984.

[93] Muchnic (1984: G2). Govan and Bell (2004: 112) reproduce this with some typographical differences citing a 1989 exhibition catalogue. Govan and Bell (2004: 128 n. 4).

[94] From my analysis of Govan and Bell (2004).

[95] Flavin (1965: 72), cited in Deutsche Guggenheim (1999: 68) and Govan and Bell (2004: 44 and 2004: 106 n. 53), where they cite Flavin's 'The Artists Say' in *Art Voices* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1965), p. 72. Fer (2006: 37) records the quote as ending with 'as I see it.'

The large number of 'monuments' that Flavin created, and the way in which his work was bound up with references to the earlier work of Tatlin, demonstrates how Flavin's thoughts were regularly directed towards this Russian avant-garde artist.

Forty-nine of the schemes for the 'monument' series were created by positioning seven or eight cool white fluorescent tubes, each held in conventional white painted steel light fittings fastened directly to the wall.[96] These kinds of work from Flavin effectively made his certificates essential for the work to be considered authentically his. There was no object that could be neatly packaged up for the buyer of his works; these works existed in their intended arrangement only when the light fittings were affixed directly to the wall. (And that could be the wall of a gallery, the wall of a studio or the wall of the owner's home.) Furthermore, anyone could decide to attempt to copy his artworks by buying the necessary fittings and cables and by spending some time studying Flavin's original pieces. Therefore, the works can never be treated as auratic. What I mean here is that these kinds of works of art by Flavin are relatively straightforward to replicate (both for him and for others) and, because of this relative ease of reproduction, they do not carry an aura in the experiential sense.[97] Viewers see them and recognise them as being produced from familiar materials, but crucially not with materials familiarly used for works of art.

Unsurprisingly the ephemeral nature of the materials used by Flavin leads to failure of tubes, and less often failure of the components within the fittings (chokes, starters, connectors and so on). Flavin stated in his Los Angeles show of 1984, 'I always

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[96] Only one version used more than eight tubes. This was the last in the series, produced as a single edition in 1990. This final version, first exhibited in 1994, used nine cool white tubes [528: 372]. Only three of the schemes used tubes other than cool white and all of these three schemes used five tubes or fewer. These were created in 1981 [434: 349 and 435: 349] and 1982 [439: 351] and all of these works included red and daylight white tubes. The last two of these three also incorporated a yellow tube. All from my analysis of Govan and Bell (2004). References in brackets are catalogue references/page numbers in Govan and Bell (2004).

[97] Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno have both tackled the idea of the aura. In particular, for this context, see Benjamin (1936: 31) and Adorno (1970: 369-70), but I do not have sufficient space to devote to this here.

use “monuments” in quotes to emphasize the ironic humor of temporary monuments’.[98] Flavin embraces the oxymoron of the temporary monument. Their initial life is finite, yet their mode and moment of failure is unpredictable. Flavin’s ‘monuments’ are indeed short-lived, but these works refer to the unfulfilled too – with their reference to the unmade *Monument to the Third International* which Tatlin aspired to build.

Furthermore, because of the brief lifespan of the original artworks, in an effort to maintain their investment, any purchaser of Flavin’s work would feel the need to also own the certificate, signed by the artist, not only to secure provenance for the piece, but also to allow the renewal of the parts as necessary. The issue and use of certificates are something I shall return to later in this thesis, when I discuss Flavin and Donald Judd’s arguments with Giuseppe Panza (see page 162). But unauthorised reproduction will inevitably be more of an issue with Flavin’s work than is the case with most of Judd’s output, since more of Judd’s art was individually manufactured, rather than assembled from readily available hardware.

With his multiple homages to Tatlin, Flavin’s use of relatively short-lived fluorescent tubes was counterpoised with the regular use of the word ‘monument’ in the title which was always surrounded with quotation marks. But Flavin’s use of the word was effectively subverting the conventional idea of the monument. Ordinarily a monument is intended to be long-lasting and rooted firmly in the ground. As discussed, these works produced by tubes of light were ephemeral and could easily be moved around. Although this series of works, by means of their titles, did share one aspect of the conventional static monument; they were artefacts produced with a direct reference to one person.

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[98] Cited in Muchnic (1984: G2). It is not clear from the passage in Muchnic’s article whether this was received directly from the artist or if this was carried on an information board within the exhibition space.

As well as Tatlin's eventual failure to complete the *Monument to the Third International*, Flavin reiterated another of Tatlin's setbacks. Again in 1965 he wrote:

> *Monument 7* in cool white fluorescent light memorializes Vladimir Tatlin, the great revolutionary, who dreamed of art as science. It stands, a vibrantly aspiring order, in lieu of his glider, which never left the ground.[99]

Although he sought to honour Tatlin, Flavin balances his praise with the reminder that ultimately he failed.

As well as emphasising the ironic nature of Flavin's works – these cannot be treated as monuments, in the true sense of the term, since they are ephemeral – his use of quotation marks acts as a device with which Flavin highlights the situation to the attuned viewer. At the same time – with the parallels between his works and the life of Tatlin – Flavin hints at the short-lived nature of the human condition.

The first 'monument' to be publicly displayed by Flavin, now regularly referred to as *'monument' 7 for V. Tatlin* (see Appendix A, Figure 84, page 219), was on show at the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA between 18 March and 10 May 1965 in an exhibition titled *Current Art*.[100] Here Flavin affixed seven light fittings to the wall of the gallery. Each of these fittings carried cool white fluorescent tubes. The organisation of the essentials – the cables, the fuses, the interconnections – supplying the power to the fittings of all of Flavin's 'monuments' were hidden from view. Flavin's arrangement, without any visible source of electricity to the fittings, lends the work an air of ethereality. His works appear to draw their power from an unknown source and the effect is something approaching the magical. This produces a

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[99] Reproduced in Govan and Bell (2004: 44 and 106 n. 3), where they cite Flavin's 'The Artists Say' in *Art* Voices 4, no. 3 (Summer 1965), p. 72.

[100] This *'monument' 7 for V. Tatlin* is catalogue reference 59 in Govan and Bell (2004: 236-37) and was completed in 1964. The artists included in the exhibition were, Billy Apple, Chryssa, Flavin, Charlotte Gilbertson, Preston McClananan, Martial Raysse, Richard Smith, Robert Smithson, Michael Steiner and John Willenbecher. ICA University of Pennsylvania (2015). The dates of the show are incorrectly listed on the ICA's website. ICA University of Pennsylvania (2015). According to Govan and Bell (2004: 237) and the cover of the catalogue, the dates of the show were 18 March to 10 May 1965. These dates have been checked with, and confirmed by, Siyona Ravi of ICA, University of Pennsylvania. Ravi (2015).

paradox when compared to the short-lived life of the fluorescent tube and fittings. Perpetual power is provided unseen, but the artist insists on using the humble and ephemeral fluorescent tube as his vehicle for his magic show. In choosing to use conventional fluorescent tubes, Flavin effectively restricted himself to a limited selection of light fittings. Since he used standard off-the-shelf electrical fittings, then his 'monument' series were always constructed from lamps, each of which was a multiple of whole feet in length.[101] In assessing Flavin's notebook sketches Jeffery Weiss wrote, 'he generally thought in terms of the lamp as line, [...] each "monument" the reconfiguration of an identical or nearly identical number of fixtures represented on the sheet with single straight strokes of the pencil.'[102] Confirming his process, in a 1972 interview Flavin stated, 'The diagrams are a minimal, graphic rendering of the equipment in locale. The simplest easiest form is laying this out on graph paper'.[103]

Flavin's decision to use the reduced selection offered by industrial standardisation, together with his decision to, mostly, gather together seven or eight fittings in total for each execution, gave the 'monument' series a characteristic look. There were fifty different schemes, but they were easily recognisable as part of the same series. Flavin used the mass-produced fluorescent light fitting, a product made available by technological advances of the 1940s, to create his art. An art that initially confounded many. In referring to Tatlin, Flavin borrowed from the Russian and Soviet avant-garde, but also offered a series of complications. Tatlin was dead, his ideas live on and are celebrated by Flavin. Yet the *Monument to the Third International* was never realised in its final form, and his *Letatlin* never did fly. The tubes flicker and fail too, but the ideas live on.

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[101] For instance, in the example of *'monument' 7 for V. Tatlin* (see Appendix A, Figure 84, page 219), the work consisted of one eight-foot fitting, two six-foot fittings, two four-foot fittings and two two-foot fittings arranged to achieve a work of ten feet in height.

[102] Weiss (2006a: 52).

[103] Interview with Phyllis Tuchman on 9 March 1972, reproduced in Govan and Bell (2004: 194).

Chapter conclusion

The Minimal artists Carl Andre and Dan Flavin each engaged with the ideas of Constructivism, with their utterances and in their work. I maintain that these two Minimal artists could not have begun to have explored Constructivist ideas without the earlier work of American artists such as I have explored earlier. (Alexander Calder, John McLaughlin, David Smith, Agnes Martin, Anne Truitt and Kenneth Snelson.) Calder made hanging constructions similar to those of Rodchenko. McLaughlin supplied visual ambiguity in an effort to force the viewer of his paintings to work hard at understanding what they saw. Smith used modern materials and techniques in a similar fashion to that of the Constructivists. Martin's grids enabled her to produce art which showed the details of subtle human variations. Truitt used blocks of colour to create three dimensional manifestations of rigidly geometric forms, drawing from two-dimensional abstraction. And Snelson developed complex and precise structures, by the use of repeated modules. Each of these artists created powerful pieces of art, and each has been allowed to engage in their forms of practice because of the works of their predecessors.

In a similar way, Andre and Flavin's work has also been enabled by the kinds of work that these six Americans (and others of course) created, as well as the more obvious references to the works of the Constructivists. The influence of Tatlin on Flavin is explored further in the next chapter, in a section which closely examines Flavin's 1973 representation of Tatlin. The chapter then continues with a section which includes an assessment of Gregory Battcock's 1979 thesis – a text heavily affected by the cold war environment – and further sections discussing Minimal art and its links to Constructivism.

CHAPTER FIVE

From Constructivism to Minimal art: denials and open engagement

Introduction

The reception of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde as evinced in the works of Minimal artists is my primary concern here. I will show that Russian and Soviet Constructivism has influenced the art of the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s. Often this influence was denied or quietly avoided, but here I highlight the impact on United States' artists and on the works that they produced.

Carl Andre has discussed the work of Rodchenko and acknowledged the influence of the Constructivists on his art.[1] And a similar situation is apparent with Dan Flavin. As discussed in chapter four, Flavin repeatedly mentioned the Russian Vladimir Tatlin in the titles of the 122 editions of his 'monument' series.[2]

Nevertheless, there remains a lack of emphasis placed on the Russian and Soviet avant-garde as reference points for American art. I will argue here that this reticence of artists to acknowledge their Russian and Soviet influences was an effect of the cultural and political climate of the 1960s.

Art of the twentieth century often resulted from reactions to art produced beforehand. Minimal art was, in part, a reaction to art prevalent in the late 1950s: Abstract Expressionism. Thanks to the cold war and what amounted to a state

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[1] Meyer (2001: 144), see page 152 for details.
[2] From my analysis of Govan and Bell (2004).

sponsorship of this type of art, coupled with the critical acclaim it received, Abstract Expressionism came to be seen as the art movement to exemplify 'freedom'. As a result of this situation, references to Russian and Soviet avant-garde art were to be avoided.

I will demonstrate in this chapter that there are similarities between Constructivism and Minimal art, particularly in regard to the avoidance of composition, the avoidance of naturalistic reference and with the use of repetition. Repetition has been identified within works of Minimal art and Constructivist art, but with an avoidance of the specific and with few attempts to grapple with understanding the artist's intentions (if any) for their works. Although, as the Frankfurt School theorist and philosopher Theodor Adorno warned in his book *Aesthetic Theory*, first published posthumously in German in 1970, 'The intention of the work is, however, not equivalent with its content, and thus its understanding remains provisional'.[3] Nevertheless, this chapter will correct the tendency to merely describe the notion of repetition.

I argue that Minimal artists drew from the work of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde and that often this correlation was obscured by the cold war. In order to posit my case, written works by, and interviews with, critics, historians and artists will be referred to, along with an examination of examples of art produced by the Russian and Soviet avant-garde and by Minimal artists. In particular, I examine Dan Flavin's homages to Tatlin and assesses Gregory Battcock's thesis of 1979. These studies show, in the former, the interest in Russian and Soviet art that was evident, and, in the latter, how the continued cold war affected academic discourse concerning the influence of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists.

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[3] Adorno (1970: 457).

Flavin's 1973 representation of Tatlin

By 1971, Dan Flavin had already made 113 of the 122 editions of his 'monument' series, each of which referred to Vladimir Tatlin.[4] At this time the connection between Tatlin and Flavin had become more widely recognised and Flavin's works became increasingly devoted to the use of coloured fluorescent lamps. Only six of his 'monument' schemes had yet to be devised, and half of these used coloured lamps too. By 1971 it appears that Flavin had more or less exhausted this phase of his work.

Immediately prior to 1973 Flavin produced the artwork which was intended to be used to create a small run of prints for sale. Presently referred to as *Untitled (from Works by artists in the New York Collection for Stockholm)* (see Appendix A, Figure 85, page 219), this print was his contribution to a portfolio of examples of American art.

Early in the 1970s, the loose grouping of artists and engineers, known as Experiments in Art and Technology (EAT),[5] sought to assemble a representative collection of art, created by American artists, with a view to donating the collection to an overseas museum. And initially at least, this might seem to have been a reasonable philanthropic idea, but this was more than a little self-serving. There was the notion of a donation to another country's prestigious gallery, but this was also a chance for United States' artists to sell their work and to gain further notoriety in Europe. This project engaged with the idea that New York was now the centre of modern art, and this export of US artists' work reinforced that idea. Greenberg's hegemony of American art now usurped the former cultural power of Europe.

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[4] From my analysis of Govan and Bell (2004).

[5] The group was founded in 1967 by engineers Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer and artists Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman. Tate (2015a).

To fund these purchases (reportedly needing a total of $1.5 million[6]), the idea of a portfolio of small-scale works of art was mooted. The museum declared as recipient of the original art pieces was Stockholm's Moderna Museet.[7] As part of the brief, thirty US artists[8] each supplied a design which was eventually reproduced in a limited edition of 300, with each contribution measuring around nine by twelve inches in size.[9] Flavin's submission was his *Untitled (from Works by artists in the New York Collection for Stockholm)*, which depicted Vladimir Tatlin as a young man. The collection of prints and photographs[10] in the portfolio, comprised of works from twenty-eight male and two female United States' artists, was given the label *The New York Collection for Stockholm*. Each set was presented in a pristine mahogany box (see Appendix A, Figure 86, page 220). The portfolio was intended to include examples of typical American modern artists' work of the 1960s and early 1970s. Flavin used this opportunity to show how his practice – especially with his 'monuments' – had been influenced by an early twentieth-century Russian artist.

The main area of Flavin's print was a reproduction of a photograph of Tatlin, taken by an unknown photographer in 1916.[11] The use of this photograph, together with Flavin's selection of magenta[12] for the colour of the media used in the screenprinting

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[6] Rose (1972: 90).

[7] This decision was probably influenced by the co-founder of the group, Billy Klüver, who emigrated from Sweden to the United States in his twenties. New York Times (2004).

[8] The thirty artists were, Lee Bontecou, Robert Breer, John Chamberlain, Walter De Maria, Jim Dine, Mark di Suvero, Öyvind Fahlström, Flavin, Red Grooms, Hans Haacke, Alex Hay, Donald Judd, Ellsworth Kelly, Sol LeWitt, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Morris, Louise Nevelson, Kenneth Noland, Claes Oldenburg, Nam June Paik, Robert Rauschenberg, Larry Rivers, James Rosenquist, George Segal, Richard Serra, Keith Sonnier, Richard Stankiewicz, Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol and Robert Whitman. MoMA (2015), although MoMA only list twenty-nine artists (they omit Larry Rivers from their list).

[9] About 229 mm × 305 mm.

[10] The collection is described as containing, 'seventeen screenprints, nine lithographs, two lithographs with screenprint, one photocopy, and one photograph'. MoMA (2015).

[11] RGALI (Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Lituratura i Iskusstva [Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts, Moscow]), their reference (f.2089 inv. 2). Reproduced as Figure 94 in Zhadova (1984: 127).

[12] Although MoMA (2015) and Museum Museet (2015) both describe the print as 'red'.

process,[13] resulted in an unusual representation of Tatlin. Flavin, talking of the influence of the Russian avant-garde, said, 'My joy is to try to build on that "incomplete" experience as I see fit'.[14] This influence of Tatlin on Flavin is certainly apparent by his use of the photograph of Tatlin for the print, but Flavin's selection of ink for the print is also a subtle reinforcement of his view of Tatlin's unfinished business. It is my view that this use of magenta, a single component ink in the widely used four-part printing process, can be interpreted as an interruption in that same process.[15] It is as if the print was extracted from the print shop before it reached the yellow, cyan and black stations. This notion of incompleteness created by Flavin highlighted the idea of Tatlin's work as remaining unfinished.

Occupying the lower right corner of the print is a black and white diagrammatic representation of one of Flavin's artworks. This corner of the print appears to have been executed by the use of the lithographic process.[16] My research leads me to the conclusion that Flavin's diagram represents, to scale, the full lengths of each fitting of his *'monument' for V. Tatlin*[17] of 1970 (see Appendix A, Figure 87, page 220), but this is not the case with the width of the strokes that he uses in the diagram (see Figure 88, page 220 for a graphical confirmation). At first sight the representation in the print appears to have been stretched vertically when compared to the light-based artwork itself; however, this impression is caused by the effective shortening created by the arrangement of the light fittings and the fluorescent tube ends. Because they do not contribute to the illuminated

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[13] All artworks in the portfolio were created at the Styria Studio in New York, NY. MoMA (2015) and Museum Museet (2015).

[14] Flavin (1965: 72), cited in Deutsche Guggenheim (1999: 68) and Govan and Bell (2004: 44 and 2004: 106 n. 53), where they cite Flavin's 'The Artists Say' in *Art Voices* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1965), p. 72. Fer (2006: 37) records the quote as ending with 'as I see it.'

[15] Although the original Tatlin photograph was conventionally monochrome (black and white), this remains my view.

[16] This is my assessment of the reproductions of the print coupled with the indications given by MoMA (2015) and Museum Museet (2015).

[17] This is the title from Govan and Bell (2004: 291). Moderna Museet (2015) report the title as *'monument' 7 for V. Tatlin*. (See Appendix A, Figure 84, page 219.) Govan and Bell also record this alternative title but indicate that 'this work has been mistakenly titled *"monument" 7 for V. Tatlin*.' Govan and Bell (2004: 291).

areas of the work, this arrangement gives the impression of less height for every element in the work. This shortening effect, together with the close positioning of each vertical stroke in Flavin's diagram, initially gives rise to doubts over which of his works Flavin was alluding to. Nevertheless, I am confident that his design for his print of 1973 – Flavin's contribution to the portfolio – was referring to his 1970 arrangement of eight cool white fluorescent tubes. This is the same artwork that was bought from Flavin by the EAT group and donated to the Moderna Museet in 1973. Of the thirty artists who contributed to the portfolio, only Flavin had the temerity to refer to his own work, purchased from him and destined for the Stockholm museum. As Lucy Lippard wrote, 'I wasn't always patient with Flavin's high flown narcissism'.[18] And this self-referential work from Flavin ably demonstrates this aspect of his personality. The print was a homage to Tatlin which contained a homage to himself. An obvious personification of Tatlin was prominent in this work, but this work was also a manifestation of Flavin's ego.

In October 1972 an exhibition was held over two days at the Castelli Gallery in New York, NY in order to bolster funds for the EAT cause.[19] In a review of this small show, talking of the collection destined for Stockholm, Barbara Rose wrote:

> It […] represents the first public acknowledgement on the part of a European country of the importance of recent American art and of New York as an art center.[20]

The portfolio was always intended to be a representation of the work of American artists, and this exporting of United States' art chimed with Greenberg's ambitions. In his choice of image and colour for his contribution, Flavin offered to the portfolio a Russian artist feted by an American. The young Tatlin held himself in a confident pose, hat in one hand, looking outwards beyond the picture frame with a steely gaze. Flavin was forcing the

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[18] Lippard (2013).
[19] This event was held on 27 and 28 October 1972. Govan and Bell (2004: 155).
[20] Rose (1972: 90).

viewer to engage with the earlier avant-garde and, albeit obtusely, attempted to show graphically the incompleteness of the avant-garde too.

Battcock's thesis

Cold war politics were evident in a further pertinent written text; Gregory Battcock's own doctoral thesis. Battcock who, by the time of his submission in 1979, was a writer, artist and critic, received his doctorate from New York University. His thesis carried the title 'Constructivism and Minimal Art: Some Critical, Theoretical and Aesthetic Correlations'. The title is a little misleading since Battcock suggested that Minimal art was not influenced by Constructivism. In his thesis abstract he asserted that:

> Constructivism is found to be a socially oriented, revolutionary art style that refects [*sic*] the art of the past. Minimal artists, however, are concerned with the history of art and do not view their art as a radical rejection of the past.[21]

I do not believe that Constructivism necessarily rejected[22] the art of the past. It is fair to say that the Constructivists rejected the apparatus that constituted the institutions of art, but the art of the Russian Constructivists was initially influenced by Picasso and Braque and this influence was not denied. Certainly Minimal artists were concerned with the history of art and how their practice related to what went before, but the notion that Minimal artists 'do not view their art as a radical rejection of the past' is questionable. Battcock's idea that Minimal artists embraced the past is in direct contradiction to Judd's exchange with Glaser (which never appeared in the WBAI broadcast of 1964, but was

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[21] Battcock (1979: Abstract – 2).

[22] Assuming that Battcock's intention was to use the word 'rejects'. Which seems likely, since later in his thesis he repeats similar assertions. Battcock (1979: 69 and 99).

published in *ARTnews* in 1966 and reproduced in Battcock's 1968 anthology[23]), which was presented like this:

> Glaser: Don't you see art as kind of evolutionary? You talk about what art was and then you say it's old hat, it's all over now.
> Judd: It's old hat because it involves all those beliefs you really can't accept in life. You don't want to work with it any more. It's not that any of that work has suddenly become mad in itself. If I get hold of a Piero della Francesca, that's fine. [...].[24]

In his thesis Battcock also stated that:

> Constructivists composed their works whereas Minimalists avoid even the possibility for composition and think of the work as a whole.[25]

The suggestion that 'Constructivists composed their works' is incorrect. To use the example of Gan again, when he reported that 'Construction must be understood as the unifying function of constructivism' and that 'construction reveals the process of structuring itself',[26] he promoted the idea of construction as a schema for their art. The Constructivists only rarely created works that could be deemed to have been composed. They composed a limited number of works around 1920 and 1921, but only to offer a comparison to, what for them were, the works that were superior; works of construction. (However, Battcock did not have the later scholarship that has engaged with the 1920 and 1921 'composition versus construction' debate available to him.[27]) The Constructivists abhorred composition. For example, Stepanova presented her views on the debate like this:

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[23] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964), Glaser (1966) and Glaser (1968).
[24] Glaser (1966: 60) and Glaser (1968: 160-61).
[25] Battcock (1979: Abstract – 3).
[26] Gan (1922: 62). Gan's emboldening removed.
[27] The 'composition versus construction' debate is discussed by Lodder (1983: 83-88), Margolin (1997: 14-15), Gough (2005: 21-59), Kiaer (2005: 155) and Taylor (2014: 44-47). See 'Literature Review' section, page 26 onwards, for discussion.

> Only construction demands the absence of both excess materials and excess elements. In composition, exactly the opposite is the case – there, everything is based upon excess.... The little flower on the side of a teacup is absolutely unnecessary for its constructive purposefulness, but it is needed as a tasteful element, as a compositional element. [...].[28]

And it is true to say that Minimal artists also wanted to avoid composition, as this passage from the WBAI radio broadcast shows:

> BG: Why is it that you want to avoid the so-called compositional effects, Don?
> DJ: Well, it has all the structure that I was feeling and everything, the whole European tradition which suits me fine it's down the drain.[29]

Battcock concluded the abstract of his thesis with the following pronouncement, 'Thus Minimal Art is found to be an authentically new and unique style very much related to its time and place'.[30] This one sentence offers us a view on the politics of the 1970s with Battcock's reiteration of earlier ideas that prevailed with the promotion of the Abstract Expressionist agenda. American art was promoted as new and whole-heartedly American. The cold war politics of the time were about to reach another heightened series of action, reaction and counter-reaction. The United States boycotted the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow[31] (because of the Soviet Union's military involvement in Afghanistan that began in December 1979). In 1984 the Soviet Union and many of its allies retaliated with a boycott of the Los Angeles Olympic Games.[32] As well as echoing the cold war theme, Battcock reflected the prior notions of Minimal art and of critics such as Greenberg and Fried. Battcock believed that Minimal art was purely American and that it evolved without the possibility of any influence from Russia and the Soviet Union. Rather than offering a measured approach towards the more meaningful possibilities on offer with an

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[28] Stepanova cited in Gough (2005: 44).
[29] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 2, 8:02-8:43). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.
[30] Battcock (1979: Abstract – 3).
[31] Held between 19 July and 3 August 1980.
[32] Held between 28 July and 12 August 1984.

open-minded examination of Constructivism and Minimal art, his thesis was based on a cold war agenda that had already been set many years before.

Minimal art and the revisiting of the earlier avant-garde (part 2)

Discussions on Minimal art and especially its influences, both in the 1960s and since, have often been nebulous and problematic. Examination of the ideas of the neo-avant-garde, as evidenced by the writings of the artists, is also fraught with difficulties and contradictions.

Carl Andre in a letter to James Meyer in 1991 – in which he discussed Rodchenko's work seen by him at an art history survey presented at Philips Academy – stated that Rodchenko's work 'cannot be overestimated as an influence. My awareness of the art of our century sprang from it and that includes the revolutionary art of Russia from 1915 to 1925'.[33] And Frank Stella wrote in praise of his predecessors, yet somewhat obtusely:

> To do what I was able to do, and what I am able to do now, I walk on roads built by others. It seems obvious that all that effort preceding me should have taken its toll, yet the image I held of successful artists (one mostly taken from magazines) always showed them poised and healthy.[34]

Stella acknowledged his debt to those that went before him, but he also argued that although Mondrian, Kandinsky and Malevich, being 'grounded in the abstraction of the north' as 'antimaterialists' were seen as precursors of abstraction, artists also drew

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[33] Meyer (2001: 144).
[34] Stella (1986: 146).

strength from the 'realism of the south – the tough, stubborn materialism of Cézanne, Monet and Picasso' for their inspiration.[35]

Similarly, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Dan Flavin has shown a regard for his predecessors with his series of homages to the Russian artist Vladimir Tatlin. Tatlin's designs and models for his massive, yet unmade, monument were regularly referenced by Flavin with his works using fluorescent lighting. Flavin, in a letter of 12 April 1972, described Tatlin as a 'prospective, unassuming, artist-engineer away from the usual institutional confines which are supposed to identify art as especially apart from daily concerns'.[36]

In discussing the curator Enno Develing and his bias towards the three-dimensional for his promotion of Minimal art in Europe in the 1968 to 1969 exhibition titled *Minimal Art*[37] – which included works by Andre, Flavin, Judd, Robert Morris, and Robert Smithson – Meyer wrote:

> Where Develing linked minimal anti-compositionality and factory production to Soviet constructivism, Ursula Meyer, evidently unaware of this precedent, decried minimalism's complicity with the system. [...] However, Develing's positive social reading was unusual among European viewers: hostility toward minimal work was not confined to the conservative critics of *Le Figaro* and English newspapers. Leftist activists in Holland and Germany viewed the new art as "American" in a negative sense. The circulation of minimal art in Europe in 1968-69 became a pretext for contesting US military policy at the height of the Vietnam War.[38]

According to James Meyer, there were threads which indicated a Minimal art practice that was predicated on the work of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde along with the idea of an implied social impact attached to works of art. But, as Meyer said, this was

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[35] Stella (1986: 160).

[36] Cited in Alley (1981: 219).

[37] The Gemeentemuseum's show opened at The Hague in March 1968, travelled to Städtische Kunsthalle and Kunstverein in Düsseldorf, and the Akademie der Kunste in Berlin in early 1969. Meyer (2001: 262).

[38] Meyer (2001: 262-63).

'unusual'. Also, Meyer, confirms that the reactions in Europe to Minimal art contributed to the continued European aversion towards the United States-led war in South East Asia at the time.

Hal Foster also offered his comments on the reception of the avant-garde when he wrote, 'Western institutions either recoded Productivist Constructivism to suit capitalist modes or revised laboratory Constructivism to fit aesthetic categories'.[39] Foster went on to explain – by making reference to his own diagrammatic representation[40] (see Appendix A, Figure 89, page 220) – that 'The Constructive Idea' as espoused by Naum Gabo, was embraced by the West and the 'Culture of Materials (Vladimir Tatlin)', 'Productivism' and 'OBMOKhU/Laboratory (Rodchenko)' were all 'repressed'.[41] By his use of this diagram, Foster showed that Constructivism is not a phenomenon to be explained by a linear assessment, as previously espoused by Alfred H. Barr Jr and Camilla Gray, but is a set of practices and interactions that are better explained by use of a semiotic square (or 'semiotic rectangle' as Foster chooses to call it).[42] As Foster noted, 'I present Constructivism in this way so as not to reduce its development to a teleological line (e.g. from Cubist relief to counter-relief to non-utilitarian construction) and to suggest that it is more structured than it appears'.[43] Foster, as part of his explanation, states that Gabo and his brother, Antoine Pevsner, adopted a form of art in a 'technological guise' which was 'for years the primary form of Russian Constructivism known to the West'.[44] This is not surprising, since Gabo and Pevsner were, in the West, among the most well-known of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde. Foster's use of the semiotic square gives him the

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[39] Foster (1990: 244).

[40] Diagram in Foster (1990: 242). Inspired by the work of the semiotician Algirdas Greimas.

[41] Foster (1990: 244).

[42] Foster (1990: 242).

[43] Foster (1990: 243 n. 7). Rosalind Krauss used a similar figure to analyse landscape, architecture and sculpture in her 1979 essay 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field'. Krauss's graphical device (which she referred to as a 'Klein group') gave an explanation of her 'logically expanded field'. Krauss (1979: 37). And this phrase, 'logically expanded field', is also an apt phrase to better understand Foster's diagram too.

[44] Foster (1990: 242).

ability to record Gabo's contribution without having Gabo's work dominate the way in which Constructivism has been received in the West, as Gabo himself managed to do. As discussed in chapter two, Gabo achieved his dominant position thanks to his emigration from Russia to the United States, via Germany, France and England,[45] and also by his self-promotion and self-congratulatory writings evident in 1920 in *The Realist Manifesto*[46] and especially in his 1937 piece 'The Constructive Idea in Art'.[47] Gabo left Russia for Berlin in 1922, delivered a series of papers at the Dessau Bauhaus in 1928 and became involved with the Abstraction-Création group (between 1932 and 1935).[48] He lived in England between 1936 and 1946 and during this time formed friendships with Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth. For much of Gabo's time in England all three artists were based near St Ives.[49] Nicholson had been influenced by Gabo's ideology, since, as Virginia Button has explained (at the same time as aiming a thinly disguised potshot at the Russian and Soviet forms of Constructivism), 'Nicholson consistently used the term "constructive idea" to represent an attitude to life, rather than an aesthetic dogma'.[50] In 1937 Nicholson, Gabo and the architect J. L. Martin collaborated on the publication of *Circle: International survey of constructive art*[51] and it is interesting to note that Nicholson's use of the term 'constructive idea' correlates with Gabo's essay published in *Circle*.[52] As Bann has clarified, 'The ethos of *Circle* was entirely opposed to the materialism of Russian constructivism [...]'.[53] Also Nicholson and Hepworth were, as Button wrote, 'keen to disassociate themselves publicly from Constructivism [...]'.[54] In 1946 Gabo left Cornwall

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[45] Bann (1974: xviii).
[46] Bann (1974: 3-11).
[47] Gabo (1937).
[48] Bann (1974: 4), Lodder (1983: 243), Bauhaus Dessau Foundation (2013) and Tate (2013).
[49] Button (2007: 49).
[50] Button (2007: 62).
[51] Martin *et al* (1937). The subtitle only appears once on the inside title page. Martin *et al* (1937: iii). J. L. Martin is referred to as Leslie Martin by Button (2007: 42).
[52] Gabo (1937).
[53] Bann (1974: 202). Bann's italics reversed.
[54] Button (2007: 62).

to settle in the United States.[55] Gabo's migration to the West, his philosophical standpoint, artistic practice and his consequent trajectory resulted in a corruption of the Constructivist ideal as transmitted by him. This is particularly in evidence in his essay 'The Constructive Idea in Art' of 1937, where he talks of 'the Content and the Form'[56] and in his letter to Herbert Read of 1942.[57] Despite the glaring difference between Russian and Soviet Constructivism and its reception via the writings of Gabo, the influence of Gabo on the Western reception of Constructivism was long-lasting.

Repetition, composition, construction

Minimal artists regularly used repetition in order to explore ideas based on mechanistic variation. Non-interventional variation by an artist was employed to avoid the earlier expressionistic artistic practices that preceded Minimal art, in particular with Abstract Expressionism. The expression of the spiritual or transcendental had no place within Minimal artists' practice, therefore overt composition was something to be avoided. This concentration on construction rather than composition was something that had already been explored by the Constructivists. For instance, Aleksandr Rodchenko used repetition within and between artworks in creating his hanging constructions. With these mobile-like constructions Rodchenko explored a different presentation of art, and consequently opened-up sculptural space. This methodology was used in several of his early 1920s variants, the extant one being the elliptical version, now referred to as *Spatial Construction No. 12* (see Appendix A, Figure 13, page 203). He applied his 'system' to

[55] Bann (1974: 215).
[56] Gabo (1937: 6).
[57] Bann (1974: 215-20), particularly pages 217 and 219.

square, circular and hexagonal variations too (see Appendix A, Figure 90, page 221; Figure 59, page 213 and, for an installation photograph of all three, Figure 12, page 203). By necessity each work was suspended by a thread when being displayed.[58] The use of repetition within the work – along with the idea of a collection of works in a series – tended to focus the viewer's mind on the ideas of materiality and the specifics of industrial production, as well as alluding to the idea of the communist collective made physical. The selection of plywood as the raw material for the some of these works (arguably others were produced from sheet metal[59]) – and the paint finish of parts of these hanging constructions – also emphasised the modernity of these pieces.[60] The multiplicity of components and the ever-changing position of the work, created by its elements and its presentation, offered several further ideas for the viewer to engage with. The work becomes fluid and temporal by any movement of the air in the room in which it is displayed, as well as by the movement of the viewer around the work. Also the work (nowadays at least) offers a metaphorical comment on the short-lived revolutionary moment by its perilous position at the end of a slender thread. Notwithstanding metaphor, the means of display was certainly a challenge to the earlier academic plinth-based sculpture. And, since they were often painted with aluminium-based paints (see Appendix A, Figure 92, page 221), these works offered a thoroughly modern object for the viewer to contemplate. These new and modern offerings by Rodchenko, which displayed order and containment, chimed with the political mood of industrialisation promoted by Lenin for the common good. Discussing Rodchenko's contribution to the 1921 'composition versus construction' debate at INKhUK (Institut khudozhestvennoi kultury [Institute of Artistic Culture]), Brandon Taylor wrote:

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[58] When not displayed, the works occupied very little space. Rodchenko is shown in his studio with some of these constructions in the background of the photograph in Appendix A, Figure 91, page 221.

[59] See Henry Art Gallery (1990: 57), where the work depicted in Appendix A, Figure 59, page 213 is deemed to have been produced from 'Metal'.

[60] Especially since plywood was still a relatively new building material in the early twentieth century.

> he finally takes an ideological position, suggesting that just as *organisation* had created the Revolution, so *organisation* of the elements of art would produce 'pure construction'. [...] [S]uggesting the *organisation* of energy at the level of the organism, the social collective, even of the state, of an order and rationality that could form the essential bond between avant-gardist politics and the work of art.[61]

As well as a correlation with the collective, seriality across separate works produced by the same artist also had the effect of reducing the aura that might otherwise have surrounded a singular precious work by that same artist. A similar situation occurred with Minimal artists. As Rosalind Krauss wrote, they 'insisted on making work that would refute the uniqueness, privacy, and inaccessibility of experience'.[62] And Krauss added that 'they [Minimal artists] are asking that meaning be seen as arising from [...] a public, rather than a private space'.[63] These are reasonable statements to be applied to the aims of the Constructivists too, especially when considering their keenness to promote their political aims. Once again the ethos of Minimal artists corresponds to that of the Constructivists. For both forms of artistic practice, the auratic work was seen as something to be avoided, and the idea (initially at least[64]) of the privately-coveted work of art was anathema to both the historical avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde.

'What you see is what you see',[65] Frank Stella's much-quoted remark, is one example of a negation of the idea of an auratic type of art. Artists' reactions against the idea of art as commodities to be traded also resulted in the creation of artworks such as those categorised as Conceptual art and, more particularly, Land art. In the case of Conceptual art, the work could often easily be replicated without a great deal of skill or

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[61] Taylor (2009: 5). Taylor's italics. Endnote reference removed.

[62] Krauss (1977b: 259).

[63] Krauss (1977b: 262).

[64] I say 'initially at least' because later in Minimal art practice the work of art tended towards the commodity. Nowadays Judd's 'works' are being reproduced and sold with the blessings of the Judd Foundation. Judd Foundation (2011).

[65] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 3, 1:11-1:44). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

equipment, and Land art was usually built on such a scale to preclude any possibility of the work being traded.

The use of repetition within the output of artists like Rodchenko emphasised the materials in use and reinforced the idea of industrial production. A focus on materials and production were, of course, matters that Minimal artists were keen to explore with their works too. Discussions surrounding what might or might not constitute a work of art were put back onto the popular media's agenda with the eventual reaction to The Tate Gallery's 1972 purchase of the recreation of Carl Andre's 1966 work *Equivalent VIII*[66] (see Appendix A, Figure 93, page 221). Andre's use of building materials brought into question the idea of what types of works could constitute works of art. Here 120 firebricks were laid directly on the floor.[67] The low height of the work emphasised to the interested gallery-goer standing alongside, or moving around the work, their own verticality. The arrangement of these modular elements by Andre also questioned the gallery environment itself. Building materials were arranged on the gallery floor as art, yet if they were arranged in a different context (say, on a construction site) they would cease to be treated as art. In the early 1970s, and again more recently, Andre also used larger identically-proportioned units of timber arranged within the gallery space (see Appendix A, Figure 94, page 222 and Figure 95, page 222 which was one of his *Element Series*).[68] Again there are parallels that can be drawn with the art of the Constructivists, specifically to Rodchenko's timber-based constructions. Although the scale of these assemblages, when compared to Andre's, was much-reduced (see Appendix A, Figure 96, page 222 and Figure 97, page 222), and the works, in places, are fastened together with screws, nails or

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[66] Following the news of the Tate's acquisition and eventual display, the *Daily Mirror*'s front page headline of 16 February 1976 read, 'What a Load of Rubbish: How the Tate dropped 120 bricks'. Mellor (1976).

[67] The Tate Gallery's 1972 purchase was created with firebricks, but, as Rider (2015: 13) has expounded, the original work was produced with sand-lime bricks which were shorter in length.

[68] Andre continued to add further works to his *Element Series* in the 1970s and 1980s. For instance, *Trabu* (presently in the Guggenheim, New York, NY), was created in 1971 and *Furrow* was created in 1981 (presently in Fisher Collection, Cantor Arts Center (formerly Stanford Museum), CA), although these works are often annotated as if they were conceived in the 1960s too.

adhesive, Andre has confirmed that he saw these Rodchenko works reproduced in Gray's 1962 book.[69] Taylor referred to Rodchenko's timber assemblies as '*Equal Form* constructions'[70] and explained that:

> Echoing the Taylorist work principles being advocated at the highest level by Lenin, and by the organisation enthusiast Alexei Gastev, the *Equal Forms* anticipate an entire ethos of mass-manufacturing and pre-fabricated industrial design, while no less importantly they inaugurate a practical engagement with mathematical principles that would recur in the aftermath of constructivism throughout the decades to come.[71]

Naturally enough these assemblies of identical units can be viewed as an experiment in sculpture, but they can also be seen as a metaphor for the Soviet state. (The use of the mathematical by Minimal artists will be discussed later in this chapter.) This assembly of identically formed components can readily be mapped onto the communist collective, and it is the collective – not the ideals of the individual – that is paramount in the minds of Constructivists like Rodchenko. I argue that Minimal artists would also have liked to have echoed the idea of the collective in their writings, especially considering the political climate changes of the 1960s. In France in 1968 there were student riots followed by a prolonged general strike. In the same year in the United States there was growing unrest and protests over the continuing war in Vietnam. As Francis Frascina has explained, 'the response to militarism and racism in the late sixties [...] is powerfully symbolized by the 90,000-strong siege of the Pentagon on Saturday 21 October 1967, in the USA's seventh national protest against the Vietnam War'.[72] And Frascina further emphasised the turmoil, when he wrote that:

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[69] In talking of these works of Rodchenko's, Andre, in conversation with Maurice Tuchman, said, 'they looked big but you could tell they were not from the end-grain'. Tuchman (1980: 120). Tuchman notes that various interviews and conversations happened between August and November 1979. Tuchman (1980: 118 n. *).

[70] Taylor (2009: 5). Taylor's italics.

[71] Taylor (2009: 5-6). Taylor's italics.

[72] Frascina (1993: 93).

> By the end of 1968, 30,500 Americans had died in the Vietnam War. A mark of the escalation from initial involvement in 1962 is that almost half of this number had died in the previous twelve months. […] In the previous year eighty people had died in riots in more than 100 cities, and after [Martin Luther] King's death there was further widespread rioting.[73]

Frascina also cited Judd's response to the question posed by *Artforum* in September 1970 regarding artists and their political responses. In speaking of the war in Vietnam, mentioning his frustration with the politics of the day and with McCarthy (referring to the anti-war Democrat politician Eugene J. McCarthy),[74] Judd explained:

> I've always thought that my work had political implications […]. Also, I've thought that the situation was pretty bad and that my work was all I could do. My attitude of opposition and isolation, which has slowly changed in relation to isolation in the last five years or so, was in reaction to the events of the fifties: the continued state of war, the destruction of the UN by the Americans and Russians, the rigid useless political parties, the general exploitation and both the Army and McCarthy.[75]

The circulation of works of Minimal art at this time was seen in Europe as objectionable by the gallery-going public and curators alike, as Meyer has explained.[76] But paradoxically – since Minimal artists were on the whole sympathetic to the revolutionary undercurrents at the time – at home Minimal art fared no better.[77] The political climate in the United States in the 1960s was hostile to all things Soviet and the extremes of McCarthyism still held sway. In a 1966 *ARTnews* article – purporting to be a textual

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[73] Frascina (1993: 93).

[74] Not to be confused with the Republican politician Joseph McCarthy (infamous for his brand of 1950s anti-communism known as McCarthyism).

[75] Judd (1970). Cited in Frascina (1993: 97) and Frascina (1999: 138).

[76] See reference 38 on page 153.

[77] See also the wide-ranging interview with Carl Andre which appeared in Autumn 1970, where he aligned himself with Marxist ideas and he stated, 'I would like to think that my work was in the tradition of the Russian Revolutionary artists, Tatlin and Rodchenko.' Béar and Sharp (1970: 26).

record of a 1964 radio interview conducted by Bruce Glaser[78] (and again Gabo and Pevsner are used here as useful examples of Constructivists) – Judd firmly rejected any idea that he was influenced by the Constructivists:

> Glaser: You obviously have an awareness of Constructivist work, like Gabo and Pevsner. What about the Bauhaus? You keep talking about spareness and austerity. Is that only in relation to the idea that you want your work "whole," or do you think there was something in Mies's Bauhaus dictum that "less is more"?
> Judd: Not necessarily. In the first place, I'm more interested in Neo-Plasticism and Constructivism than I was before, perhaps, but I was never influenced by it, and I'm certainly influenced by what happens in the United States rather than by anything like that. So my admiration for someone like Pevsner or Gabo is in retrospect. I consider the Bauhaus too long ago to think about, and I never thought about it much.[79]

But, as is often the case with Judd, the potential for confusion arises. He declared that he was 'never influenced' by the Constructivists yet he professed an 'admiration for someone like Pevsner or Gabo'.[80] Here Judd was only admitting to admiring the Americanisation of Constructivism as propounded by Gabo and his brother; admitting to have been influenced by Soviet artists was probably a step too far at the time. Also he suggested that the Bauhaus, the existence of which overlapped the Constructivists' period of practice, was 'too long ago to think about'.[81] There is no doubt that he wanted to emphasise his notion that his work was categorically an art grounded in the United States. But much of this sort of pronouncing by Judd was due to the political difficulties of the cold war and

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[78] Interview recorded on 15 Feb 1964 and broadcast on 24 March 1964, by the New York, NY radio station WBAI. Pacifica Radio Archives (1964). At the time Glaser was a lecturer in art, Glaser (1968: 148), and is currently an Adjunct Professor of Art History at Norwalk Community College, CT. Norwalk Community College (2016). The interview in its written forms, Glaser (1966), Glaser (1968), Meyer (2000) is the subject of much editing by Lucy R. Lippard and Glaser. Jones (1996), Lippard (2013) and Glaser (2013). Issues surrounding this radio interview, its subsequent editing, original and further publication, and its veneration as a canonical text are discussed in detail in chapter six of this thesis.

[79] Glaser (1966: 58). Glaser's emboldening of contributor's names removed.

[80] Glaser (1966: 58).

[81] Glaser (1966: 58).

the subsequent cultural pressure placed on American artists of the 1960s, rather than his actual views on the matter. The beginning of Glaser's question, 'You obviously have an awareness of Constructivist work [...]',[82] goes some way to confirm that others had already recognised Judd's work as being influenced by the Constructivists. And in answer to Glaser's next question, '[...] What are you after in the way of a new space?'[83] Judd replied:

> [...] I'm using actual space because when I was doing paintings I couldn't see any way out of having a certain amount of illusionism in the paintings. I thought that also was a quality of the Western tradition and I didn't want it.[84]

Although, as I have argued, Minimal artists were often making reference to the works of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde – and this was alluded to in their art – in their texts, any inference was frequently subtle and asymptotic. And, as with these examples from Judd's contributions to the article that was eventually published in *ARTnews*, sometimes confusing and misleading.

Spaces between elements of a Minimal artwork often determined the type of repetition within an artwork itself. For example, Judd used spaces between elements of his works and often varied the spaces between features. With his *Untitled (Progression)* of 1965 (see Appendix A, Figure 98, page 223) made of galvanised iron with a red lacquered finish, Judd initially experimented with a unitary form which presented progressive solid features and an opposing progression of gaps between the solids. By 1967, with his *Untitled* (see Appendix A, Figure 99, page 223), Judd's experimentation resulted in an assembly of painted steel boxes suspended beneath a brass tube of rectangular cross-section, with a similar dichotomous progression being displayed. This idea was extended (excuse the pun) further in his composite anodised aluminium work *Untitled* (see

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[82] Glaser (1966: 58).
[83] Glaser (1966: 58).
[84] Glaser (1966: 58).

Appendix A, Figure 100, page 223) of 1970, which was over twenty-one feet (6.4 metres) long. In a 1971 interview, when discussing his use of the mathematical, Judd said:

> In one of the progressions I used the Fibonacci series. In another I used the kind of inverse natural number series: one, minus a half, plus a third, a fourth, a fifth, etc. No one other than a mathematician is going to know what that series really is. You don't walk up to it and understand how it is working, but I think you do understand that there is a scheme there, and that it doesn't look as if it is just done part by part visually. So it's not conceived part by part, it's done in one shot. The progressions made it possible to use an asymmetrical arrangement, yet to have some sort of order not involved in composition.[85]

Here Judd alludes to the idea of construction without composition. For Judd composition is to be avoided, and so it was for the Constructivists. Each one of these works by Judd offers the viewer a number of notable experiences. The works are mounted on the gallery wall; this subverts the idea of 'traditional' art. These works are not paintings, yet they are affixed to the wall as if they should be afforded the same space (and often much more space) in the gallery as easel art. But crucially, they are not to be regarded in the exact same way. They are certainly sculptural, yet they are not free-standing and avoid the use of the 'classical' pedestal for their display. These features of Minimal art have also been seen in the works of the Constructivists. For example, in the suspended corner-reliefs of Vladimir Tatlin, where the plinth is eliminated and the corner created by two walls becomes the support for the artwork, as in his *Corner Counter-Relief* of 1915 (see Appendix A, Figure 1, page 200). In addition to questioning the gallery setting, by the use of the gallery wall as a direct support for these sculptural works, the organisation of the elements within these three examples of Judd's work offer the viewer a compressive or expansive effect. This effect is created by Judd's carefully selected width

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[85] Coplans (1971a: 47 and 49). The interview appeared in *Artforum* a few weeks after the opening of the exhibition titled *Don Judd*. Coplans (1971b). The interview also appeared in the catalogue of the exhibition. Coplans (1971c). This show was on display at Pasadena Art Museum, CA, between 11 May and 4 July 1971. Artists such as Sol LeWitt, Mel Bochner and Robert Smithson also experimented with ideas based on mathematical progressions in the 1960s.

of each element, as well as by the spaces between those elements. This gives the viewer the suggestion of movement within the artwork.

A concentrated effort was made by Minimal artists to emphasise to the viewer the notion that this art was different from the art that went before. Ambiguity embedded within the art object piqued the viewer's interest. And this interest was a counterpoint to the art that was practiced and promoted prior to their ascendance. Minimal artists offered a different experience to the gallery-going public. Again this notion is one that echoes the work of the Constructivists.

Constructivist art remained stoical in its emphasis on an exploration of materials and in the display of industrial production techniques.[86] Whereas Minimal artists commented on the capitalist tendency for art to become a commodity. In particular, this was evident with the eventual shift towards Land art where the gallery space is necessarily avoided because of the size of the art project and the commodification of the art object is also avoided, since the art can no longer become enmeshed within the institution of the gallery. Here though there is still a direct similarity between Minimal art and Constructivism; they are both avoiding representation and they are both questioning the gallery space. Paradoxically however, Minimal art – or at least those works that could be displayed within the gallery space – eventually became seen as another commodity to be traded. Judd and Flavin regularly signed schematic drawings of their works in order to give their patrons a form of 'signature' and thereby attached a provenance to their works.

Meyer in his *October* essay 'The Minimal Unconscious' described Judd's and Flavin's arguments with their patron Giuseppe Panza over the latter's desire to reproduce works similar to those created by Flavin and Judd without gaining their express

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[86] This is particularly evident in the work of Rodchenko, Vladimir Stenberg and Tatlin. (See Appendix A, Figure 11, page 203, Figure 19, page 205 and Figure 1, page 200 for examples.)

authority.[87] 'Certificates' produced by Flavin and Judd then became sought-after items too. Panza's response was similar to the response of the media to Andre's *Equivalent VIII*; seemingly anyone can make this art if they have access to the raw materials.[88] As Meyer wrote, 'Minimal Art was advanced, according to Panza, because it transfigured the modernist work into a concept, a concept that he could mentally grasp and render in material form. It was an art he could make'.[89] However, as recently as 1990, in reported exchanges with Thomas Krens (then director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY) and Panza, Judd continued to argue that schematic works conceived by him must also have some involvement by him in their creation, in order for them to become valid works that might carry his name.[90]

Nevertheless, and especially with the works of Flavin, there hangs a paradox. Flavin, in making use of everyday fluorescent light fittings and tubes, avoided the idea of making something from scratch.[91] Flavin's distancing of himself from hands-on creation fits very much with the output from his fellow Minimal artists, as is evident in the Krens/Panza argument. However, it could be argued that Flavin's assemblages by their nature relied a great deal on composition to produce their effect. In the discussion reproduced in the 1966 *ARTnews* article, Judd explained why he avoided composition:

> Well, those effects tend to carry with them all the structures, values, feelings of the whole European tradition. It suits me fine if that's all down the drain. When Vasarely has optical effects within the squares, they're never enough, and he has to have at least three or four

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[87] Meyer (2009).

[88] For an example of the UK's media response see footnote 66, on page 159.

[89] Meyer (2009: 146).

[90] Glueck (1990), reporting on the Guggenheim's acquisition of works by Flavin and Judd (and others) from Panza, some of which were in schematic form. As Glueck has explained, the Guggenheim was exploring the possibility of constructing and displaying these works without assistance from the artists. Judd was opposed to this suggestion, but Flavin was more phlegmatic. Glueck (1990).

[91] Although previously he did demonstrate the necessary skills to produce well-crafted works, such as with his *Icon* series of wall-hung works of the early 1960s.

> squares, slanted, tilted inside each other, and all arranged. That is about five times more composition and juggling than he needs.[92]

Judd did succeed in avoiding compositional effects, especially with his creation of a large wedge created from three similar units of utilitarian perforated steel, *Untitled* of 1966 (see Appendix A, Figure 102, page 223), and with his four closed metal cuboid boxes with connecting rail, also *Untitled* of 1966 (see Figure 103, page 224). These are effective assemblies of parts, but they do not typify compositions. Robert Morris's *L-Beams* of 1965 also avoided any compositional regard (see Appendix A, Figure 104, page 224), other than a loose arrangement on the floor of the gallery. And so it was for the Russian and Soviet historical avant-garde too. Construction was prized over composition.

Chapter conclusion

Artists seek to explore and re-explore ideas and methods with their works and with their words. At moments throughout the history of art critical urges existed that sought to challenge the art that had gone before. As well as my argument that the ideas of the Constructivists were revisited and re-examined by Minimal artists, it is also important to remember that Minimal artists were driven to produce art that was a reaction to artists and critics that went before them. Minimal art was a challenge to those who practiced Abstract Expressionism, in particular the proponents of colour field works and the critics that supported them. These kinds of works, with their concentration on their all-over

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[92] Glaser (1966: 56). Judd's name removed. The audio recording from 1964 (Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 2, 8:07-8:43), see Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript) indicates that Judd is referring to Victor Vasarely's *Eridan C+* of 1962 (see Appendix A, Figure 101, page 223 for image) which was on display as part of the exhibition *The Classic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art* (catalogue reference 35) held at the Sidney Janis Gallery between 4 February and 29 February 1964. Sidney Janis Gallery (1964).

effect along with the apparent dreaminess that they sought to imbue in their viewers, were also deemed to have a spiritual quality. These works were feted and used to keep Russian and Soviet avant-garde art off the American exhibition circuit in a cultural reinforcement of the cold war.[93]

By contrast with Abstract Expressionism, Minimal art – with its pared-down production, emphasised by the use of industrial materials and techniques – assaulted the viewer in the gallery space. In addition to offering a re-examination of Constructivist ideas, albeit surreptitiously – since the United States was (and arguably still is) in the wake of McCarthyism – Minimal art was also a reaction against the ethereal and spiritual canvases created by artists such as Mark Rothko.[94] There existed in the late 1960s a series of complicated issues and counter-issues, not least of which was a near-revolutionary fervour in France, along with anti-war protests in the United States and elsewhere. The political and cultural establishments were attempting to influence the type of art to be promoted and artists, curators and critics were fighting to hold their ground.

As discussed, the cold war had an impact on the artistic and cultural climate in the 1960s and 1970s. Nevertheless, the representation of Tatlin, used by Flavin and explored in this chapter, indicates the awareness of the work of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists. I argue that this knowledge has impacted on the work of Minimal artists and led to the more widespread acknowledgement of the ideas of the earlier avant-garde.

Despite Battcock's thesis assertions, there were similarities between Minimal artists and the Russian and Soviet Constructivists. These similarities are particularly evident with the use of repetition. Modular elements were used by the Constructivists as a metaphor for the collective, and as has been discussed, Minimal artists used repetition

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[93] As explained by Guilbaut (1983).

[94] Since Rothko was born in Latvia, at that time part of the Russian Empire (he and his family left for the United States when he was aged ten (Clearwater (2012)), and given his political leanings, it is now incongruous that his brand of spiritual Abstract Expressionism was treated as an example of the art of America and used to promote the 'land of the free'.

for the same, albeit often occluded, effect. Once again everything changes and nothing changes.

In a similar vein to the distortions seen in Battcock's thesis, the following chapter will forensically examine a 1964 radio broadcast to show how a single original source – which contained useful insights into the practice of Minimal art, its influences and its reception – was manipulated into what culminates in a series of misrepresentations. This radio broadcast has become a canonical text in relation to the study of Minimal art. Unfortunately, as the next chapter will show, this text has been overedited and otherwise modified so as to corrupt the original impact of the recording. In assessing this radio interview (and its later reincarnations), I will reset the way in which this important text has been reproduced and understood.

CHAPTER SIX

Canonical realism: what can we take as 'real'?

Introduction

Recorded and broadcast in 1964, and reproduced in several textual forms since, a radio interview with Flavin, Judd and Stella has formed the grounds for our understanding of Minimal art. The original interview became more widely known following its 1966 appearance in *ARTnews* and the inclusion of the *ARTnews* piece in Gregory Battcock's 1968 anthology. Thanks to its reproduction in Battcock's book, the interview – in its various written incarnations – has become an important text closely linked with the Minimal art moment.[1] Here I explore these various iterations of the original interview, and provide a detailed analysis of how this interview was edited, published and republished in the years since its original recording. This investigation ultimately leads to discoveries about the previous reproductions of this text: 'all that is solid melts into air'.[2] Especially in its written forms, this text has often been taken as immutable and wholly authentic. This chapter aims to expose those assumptions.

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[1] Introducing the 1995 reissue of Battcock's anthology, Anne Wagner wrote, 'To see Battcock's anthologies in general – and *Minimal Art* in particular – as constitutive elements in the archive of modern art is not, I think, to grant them too weighty a status. On the contrary, it is to see them anew and to recognize how much they shaped and were shaped by the protocols of a system – of language and viewing and description and reception and sales – simultaneously and in flux.' Wagner (1995: 6).

[2] 'All that is solid melts into air' appears in *The Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels (1848: 6).

‘One thing after another’: 1964 to 1968*

‘New Nihilism or New Art?’ of 1964[3] compared to ‘Questions to Stella and Judd’ of 1966[4] and 1968[5] and the subsequent citation and analysis by Wagner (1995), Jones (1996), Rosenblum (1997), Meyer (2000), Meyer (2001), Weiss (2006a), Foster (2006), Thierolf and Vogt (2009) and Meyer (2010).

An engagement with contemporary criticism was a particular characteristic of Minimal art discourse. On Saturday 15 February 1964, three young artists were assembled in a New York City studio to record a panel discussion for the WBAI radio station’s series titled *Art Forum*. These three artists were Donald Judd, Frank Stella and Dan Flavin (who were, at the time, aged thirty-five, twenty-seven and thirty).[6] The discussion, given the title ‘New Nihilism or New Art?’, was moderated and produced by art historian Bruce Glaser. The resultant radio programme, created from Glaser’s interview, was broadcast on Tuesday 24 March 1964. (My transcription of the audio from this transmission can be found in Appendix B, page 226 onwards.) This interview and its subsequent iterations, since the time of its original transmission, have come to be seen as a canonical piece of art history. There are several reasons for this incorporation of the text into the annals of Minimal art. The interview was broadcast at a time in which interest in Minimal art was increasing. Also, before this recording, opinions on Minimal art were mainly confined to

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* ‘One thing after another’ is from Judd’s reference to the work of Stella in ‘Specific Objects’. Judd (1965: 184).

[3] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964).

[4] Glaser (1966).

[5] Glaser (1968).

[6] Although Jones (1996: 169) mistakenly reports Stella as being twenty-eight at the time (he was born on 12 May 1936).

publications from critics. The interview contains the familiar sound bite, extracted from Frank Stella's comments, 'What you see is what you see',[7] which encapsulated the attitude of Minimal artists. In a single phrase Stella debunks the writings of critics and calls for art to be judged on a visual basis. This interview gathered together three talented Minimal artists at an early stage in their careers and gave them a chance to get across their points of view. The capturing of this early moment, especially with the way in which the artists explain their practice, has led to this interview becoming a regular source of reference for discussions of Minimal art. However, as will be explained, the later versions of this interview are dramatically different to the experience of listeners to WBAI in March 1964. The changes wrought include omissions and in most versions the complete removal of Flavin's contributions; over-zealous editing with the changing of the ordering of artists' comments and their replies; the incorporation of further material provided by Judd generated over a year after the original broadcast, and the attempt to reintroduce some of Flavin's comments back into the written version of the interview. Because of these changes applied to the original interview, and apparent in its subsequent iterations, the text has become inaccurate and misleading. There are several points that need to be explored further to highlight these difficulties and to show how the flawed representations of this interview have evolved. This is important since, as I have suggested, the 1964 interview – particularly in its 1966[8] and 1968[9] published forms – has become a widely-cited text in relation to Minimal art. Yet, as I will show, these and later versions all exhibit serious problems.

The first written publication of material from the radio transmission appeared in *ARTnews* of September 1966.[10] This article 'Questions to Stella and Judd' carried the

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[7] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 3, 1:11-1:44). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.
[8] Glaser (1966).
[9] Battcock (1968).
[10] Glaser (1966).

subheading 'Interview by Bruce Glaser, Edited by Lucy R. Lippard'.[11] After noting the provenance of the radio programme in his first endnote of the article,[12] Glaser continued by sharing two important pieces of information with his readers:

> [...] Dan Flavin also participated in the program, but his few statements are omitted here. Supplementary statements made by Donald Judd in December, 1965, are included in this revision.[13]

Firstly, this statement appears to be an adequate explanation of the removal of Flavin's comments. Flavin's contribution to the discussion was limited (and this has been noted by several writers including Caroline A. Jones and James Meyer[14]). Jones in particular was quite rightly disparaging in her assessment of Flavin's contributions. She wrote, 'I suspect that the decision to remove himself was Flavin's, since he does not come off as either integral to the discussion or articulate within it'.[15] By way of an example, in answer to Stella's statement in the 1964 radio broadcast, 'I don't go out of my way to be economical in any way',[16] Flavin uttered the following hesitant comments:

> Yeah, that's what I, you have discussed before, reducibility [FS *yeah, yeah*] as far as I am concerned, it's a, irre, irre, you know, irre, irrele, irrelevant to me, it's no concern, you know, and I, I, I don't want you pin my ears back on it either. You know, you know, 'cause I, I'm thirty years old and I have a lot to do. [*laughter*] I hope.[17]

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[11] Glaser (1966: 55).

[12] Which began, 'This discussion was broadcast on WBAI-FM, New York, February, 1964, as "New Nihilism or New Art?", one in a series of radio programs on art produced by Bruce Glaser; [...].' Glaser (1966: 61 n. 1).

[13] Glaser (1966: 61 n. 1).

[14] Jones (1996: 415 n. 152). Meyer (2000: 201 unnumbered note following endnote 4) and Meyer (2001: 285 n. 55).

[15] Jones (1996: 415 n. 152).

[16] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 3:00-3:15). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[17] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 3:16-3:36). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

Flavin's contributions only amounted to a small percentage (around nine per cent [18]) of the complete discussions in the radio broadcast, but Glaser's endnote deserves further investigation. The excision of Flavin's comments from the *ARTnews* article has been highlighted in texts by Jones,[19] Robert Rosenblum,[20] Meyer,[21] Jeffrey S. Weiss [22] and Foster.[23] Here the difficulties of dealing with disparate accounts of events that occurred in the 1960s come to the fore when attempting to ascertain the details behind Glaser's endnote. Rosenblum explained that Flavin 'subsequently withdrew his own remarks from the publication of this early document of minimalism'.[24] And according to Meyer's own endnote 'Glaser noted that Flavin had asked to have his comments removed'.[25] Also, Weiss stated that '[…] Flavin's participation was, at his request, edited out.'[26] However, in my 2013 discussions with Glaser he explained that:

> Dan Flavin was also present at the original meeting but because his few remarks did not seem particularly pertinent he was edited out of the discussion. Dan, who was a closer friend to me than the other two, felt, not surprisingly, betrayed and I had qualms about omitting him but regrettably succumbed to the exigencies of a concise interview.[27]

When asked to clarify the differences between his account and the account as presented by Meyer in 2001, Glaser later gave the reply:

> James Meyer communicated with me in his research for his book and was kind enough to send me a copy when it was published but I confess that, as I was preoccupied with very

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[18] Calculations based on my transcription of the interview.
[19] Jones (1996: 415 n. 152).
[20] Rosenblum (1997: 11).
[21] Meyer (2000: 201 unnumbered note following endnote 4) and Meyer (2001: 285 n. 55).
[22] Weiss (2006a: 78 n. 4).
[23] Foster (2006: 148 n. 7).
[24] Rosenblum (1997: 11).
[25] Meyer (2001: 285 n. 55).
[26] Weiss (2006a: 78 n. 4) is reflecting his reading of Meyer (2000: 197-201), since later in the same note he cites Meyer (2000) as his source of what Weiss refers to as 'the full interview'. See later in this chapter for my refutation of this statement.
[27] Glaser (2013).

> different matters, I didn't more than skim it and did not notice his report on Dan's rationale.[28]

With the knowledge of this Glaser comment, doubts are cast on texts that refer to Flavin's removal from the *ARTnews* article. Jones and Rosenblum suggest that Flavin decided to have his utterances removed from the published version of the interview and both Meyer and Weiss indicate something similar.[29] Even Foster, referring to the Battcock version of the interview, notes that 'Flavin participated in this conversation but edited his remarks out of the transcript'.[30] More recently however, Glaser has confirmed that the decision to leave Flavin out of the published article was made as a result of the editing process, when he wrote:

> Dan, with whom I was most friendly, was never a big talker nor an effective speaker in a public situation. I expected more from him at the discussion because I knew him very well and perhaps imagined my knowledge of what he was about would manifest itself in this case with Don, who was one of his very best friends, and Frank, whom he knew well enough. Unfortunately, his comments were insignificant and it seemed better, in the published version of the interview, that he be edited out. When it appeared with him left out, it led, in part, to his withdrawal from our friendship and there was a considerable period when our contact with each other was attenuated.[31]

Secondly, and in a similar vein, returning to his *ARTnews* endnote one once more, Glaser wrote, 'Supplementary statements made by Donald Judd in December, 1965, are included in this revision'.[32] Once again there are conflicting written accounts of this situation too. Jones indicates that 'Don Judd added one and a half pages of text that were inserted in

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[28] Glaser (2013).
[29] Jones (1996: 415 n. 152), Rosenblum (1997: 11), Meyer (2001: 285 n. 55) and Weiss (2006a: 78 n. 4).
[30] Foster (2006: 148 n. 7).
[31] Glaser (2013).
[32] Glaser (1966: 61 n. 1).

dialogue form'.[33] Any reading of Jones's assertion would seem to suggest that the additional material included in the *ARTnews* article was inserted from a written submission by Judd. However, Meyer indicates that there was a second interview with Judd conducted with Glaser and Lippard 'recorded in Judd's studio'.[34] A point confirmed by Glaser; 'Lucy having heard the broadcast interview thought that it needed more commentary from Judd in order to make it publishable'.[35] And he also wrote (when recalling his discussion with Lippard), 'I don't remember how or why our discussion on that matter came about but we both did, indeed, meet with Don and recorded more of his views which were incorporated into the original discussion'.[36] Although more of Judd's comments were used in the later *ARTnews* article, the precise method of amalgamation with the content of the earlier interview remains uncertain.[37]

To examine this additional Judd material – added to the radio interview and that made it into the published article in *ARTnews* – this thesis contains a differential document (see Appendix C, page 247 onwards) containing what I refer to as 'Judd additions'. These being the *ARTnews* article without the text that could be attributed to the content of the radio broadcast (see Appendix B, page 226 onwards). Several of these 'Judd additions' brought out by this differential analysis raise questions about the original interview, the further interview with Judd alone, and the editing process generally. The first of these is related to the line supposedly uttered by Judd, 'There's

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[33] Jones (1996: 415 n. 152).

[34] Meyer (2001: 285 n. 55).

[35] Glaser (2013).

[36] According to Glaser (2013) and Meyer (2001: 285 n. 55), the whereabouts of the tape from this second recording session is not known.

[37] As far as this detail is concerned, Glaser's recollection of events appears to be correct. However, to get clarification on this matter, I have been in discussions with Caroline A. Jones, with regards to her endnote, 'Don Judd added one and a half pages of text that were inserted in dialogue form'. Jones (1996: 415 n. 152). She confirms that she did not intend to give the impression that the Judd additions were text based. Jones (2013).

nothing sacrosanct about materials'.[38] In the *ARTnews* article this line is presented as a reply to this statement from Stella:

> You want to get rid of things that get you into trouble. As you keep painting you find things are getting in your way a lot and those are the things that you try to get out of the way. You might be spilling a lot of blue paint and because there's something wrong with that particular paint, you don't use it any more, or you find a better thinner or better nails. There's a lot of striving for better materials, I'm afraid. I don't know how good that is.[39]

However, in the radio recording immediately after the equivalent statement by Stella, Glaser then changes the subject with a lengthy question (directed towards Stella) on simplicity and the viewer's reaction to Stella's works.[40] This, coupled with the fact that the second interview without Flavin and Stella took place in December 1965 (one year and nine months after the radio broadcast), suggests that the second interview was arranged with the express intention of giving Judd the opportunity to react further to the original recorded material. Judd's line (presented as a reply), 'There's nothing sacrosanct about materials',[41] appears in *ARTnews* as a riposte to Stella's meandering about paint, thinner and nails, and Judd's terse statement denigrates Stella's concerns.[42] Crucially, since he is not a party to the second interview, Stella does not get a chance to defend his position. This situation shows the relative importance of the protagonists in the written form of the interview as presented in *ARTnews*. Judd was – one way or

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[38] Glaser (1966: 60).

[39] Glaser (1966: 60). Stella's name removed.

[40] The equivalent Stella statement is, Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 4:00-4:43), and the Glaser change of subject follows as, Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 4:44-5:45). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[41] Glaser (1966: 60).

[42] Furthermore, Judd appears to have merely suffered the presence of Stella in the interview. In 1993 Judd took another chance to denigrate Stella's practice, when he wrote, 'Some in New York in the sixties looked at Pollock and the others and made passable work for a few years and then once secure did what they wanted to do in the first place, as did Warhol, or they didn't know what to do, as Stella doesn't.' Judd (1993: 40).

another – given the chance to reinforce his first set of recorded remarks by further comments that Glaser and Lippard were happy to use. Whereas Stella was not afforded this facility. Likewise, the apparent status of Flavin was that of a lesser contributor, since the strained and hesitant efforts from Flavin never made any of the written versions of the interview that were published in the 1960s. A further example of this sort concerns an apparent expansion of one of Judd's answers. In the *ARTnews* piece, Judd appears to be responding to Stella's reaction to Glaser's mention of 'economy of means'[43] when he is reported as having said:

> You're getting rid of the things that people used to think were essential to art. But that reduction is only incidental. I object to the whole reduction idea, because it's only reduction of those things someone doesn't want. If my work is reductionist it's because it doesn't have the elements that people thought should be there. But it has other elements that I like. Take Noland again. You can think of the things he doesn't have in his paintings, but there's a whole list of things that he does have that painting didn't have before. Why is it necessarily a reduction? [44]

But this reply is a composite. The first two sentences are similar to that uttered in the radio interview of February 1964 (Judd actually said 'You're reducing the things that people earlier thought were essential to art, [FS *yeah*] that's what you're getting rid of [FS *yeah, yeah, you*] But, that's only incidental'[45]). This was followed by what was presented as a more considered and fuller reply (beginning with 'I object to the whole reduction idea […]'), that was added following the second interview with Judd twenty-one months later. Also the published response to this composite statement of Judd's as presented in *ARTnews*, is the reply by Stella about the difficulties with materials, as discussed above (reference 39 on page 174). As well as this being another example of the reordering of the

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[43] Glaser (1966: 59).

[44] Glaser (1966: 59-60). Judd's name removed.

[45] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 3:54-3:59). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

interview, in this case it would also seem that Judd has had sight of a transcript, or has heard a recording of the original interview[46] and has decided to expand on his initial thoughts. Whatever the mechanism by which these changes were instigated, we can safely assume that Lippard and Glaser accepted his revised ideas and used these in their editing of the *ARTnews* piece. Similarly, Glaser and Lippard rearranged many of Stella's replies so that he appears to have answered Judd in ways that were not intended by him. As a further example, in this same extension to his answer, Judd includes the phrase 'Take Noland again'. But there are no other references to Noland anywhere else in the additional material from Judd (see Appendix C, page 247 onwards). The use of this phrase reinforces the idea that either Judd was positioning his replies in this additional material based on a full knowledge of the contents of the earlier interview – where Stella is the only artist that mentions Noland by name (in four places)[47] – or, that this phrase was added by the editors in an attempt to make the piece coalesce. Either way, these kinds of changes give a misleading impression to anyone who makes a detailed reading of the 1966 publication.

In her introduction to the 1995 reissue of Battcock's anthology, Anne Wagner used a section from the earlier 1968 book, when she included extracts from conversation between Glaser and Judd.[48] Although Wagner was reflecting on the earlier reproduction of the interview, the passage she cited was also a composite piece manufactured from part of the original 1964 radio transmission and which included 'Judd additions' which were gathered and inserted later.[49]

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[46] Neither Glaser nor Lippard can recall the precise details behind Judd's additional material. Glaser (2013) and Lippard (2013).

[47] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 2, 0:41-1:32, Track 2, 1:36-2:29, Track 3, 2:31-3:47 and Track 6, 3:56-4:51). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[48] Wagner (1995: 11) used extracts from Glaser (1968: 160-61) which themselves were from Glaser (1966: 60).

[49] The majority of the discussion cited by Wagner can be seen in my 'Judd additions' labelled as [Group 5] in Appendix C, on page 247 of this thesis. The last of Wagner's cited questions from Glaser and the reply from Judd are from the WBAI radio broadcast. Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 4, 0:25-0:35). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

In 1996 Jones published a limited analysis of how the WBAI broadcast was edited to produce the *ARTnews* article. She was the first person to indicate how Glaser and Lippard's editing made a dramatic difference to the presentation of the interview. In an endnote she explained that:

> Sections of the interview were transposed, as follows: if the separated segments of the radio interview are coded in sequence as they originally appear: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K; then the printed interview is A, [Judd insert], I, [Judd insert], B, G, [Judd insert], more of G, K, C, [Judd insert], D, F, E, J, H. Stella's responses are not altered as much as Judd's, but certainly their context has been radically altered.[50]

In her note Jones shows that the *ARTnews* article of 1966 was created from the 1964 WBAI radio broadcast via editing by Lippard and Glaser. But Jones's presentation of this information does not adequately translate the enormity of the editing that was performed on the original source material.[51] To this end I have made my own assessment by comparing my transcription of the WBAI audio (see Appendix B, page 226 onwards) with the published *ARTnews* article. The resultant analysis (detailed in Appendix D, page 250 onwards) shows that the ordering of the interview material in the *ARTnews* article bears little resemblance to the radio interview. This severe reorganisation, along with the excision of Flavin's comments, leaves the published article of 1966 in a precarious state. For example, the deletion of Flavin's comments presents the editors with several difficulties. In the radio interview Flavin stated:

> I've always felt, in my own work, also, to start another side of another side, [*laughs*] is that, is that there is a physical element, a distinct physical element, I think Don is, we've mentioned this one time up to four o'clock in the morning, I remember, and I think it has to be called up, I think it concerns him very much, even more than it does me. You know,

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[50] Jones (1996: 415 n. 152). Jones's brackets.

[51] There were also some oversights in the analysis by Jones, and this issue will be discussed a little later.

> and we were talking about the thick, the weight of Frank's canvasses, you know, the cut-out part, you know, this is all to call attention to this quality I think.[52]

And Stella replied:

> Well, you two make objects, I mean, it's, that's, it's that simple, I mean, so they are either objects, sculpture or something like this [BG *yes*], but the reason I make the canvas deeper, than ordinarily, is I didn't do it for any reason, I mean, it began accidentally, if you wanna call it that, I mean, I'm sure lots of people do it. I turn one-by-threes on edge, to make a quick frame, to butt-end them, and then when I first started stretching canvasses. And then I liked what that did, in a sense that, when you stand directly in front of the painting it gives just enough depth to, sort of, hold it off the wall, you're just conscious of a, sort of, shadow just enough depth, so that actually it emphasizes the surface. So, in other words, to make it more like a painting and less like an object. So, did it, again. It simply emphasizes the surface quality.[53]

Since Flavin's comment here is not to be included in the *ARTnews* article, the editors insert a statement beforehand purportedly posed by Glaser, 'Frank, your stretchers are thicker than the usual. When your canvases are shaped or cut out in the center, this gives them a distinctly sculptural presence'.[54] These two sentences, presented as being spoken by Glaser, never appear in the radio interview. Furthermore, Stella was not present at the second meeting of Glaser and Judd, so this is not material from that further interview session either. But the question, as if posed by Glaser, had to be created and inserted in order to allow the published article to make sense, otherwise Stella would have been seen to have gone off-topic. Stella's reply became:

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[52] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 4, 9:47-10:27). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[53] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 4, 10:28-11:14). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[54] Glaser (1966: 60).

> I make the canvas deeper than ordinarily, but I began accidentally. I turned one-by-threes on edge to make a quick frame, and then I liked it. When you stand directly in front of the painting it gives it just enough depth to hold it off the wall; you're conscious of this sort of shadow, just enough depth to emphasize the surface. In other words, it makes it more like a painting and less like an object, by stressing the surface.[55]

This record of Stella's utterance has been edited to become something quite different in its detail from that which he expressed. The phrase, 'emphasizes the surface quality' becomes 'stressing the surface' and 'you're just conscious of a, sort of, shadow just enough depth, so that actually it emphasizes the surface' becomes 'just enough depth to emphasize the surface'. If these were the only changes of this sort then it could be argued that this was forgivable, but this use of 'editor's licence' happens again and again. In the radio transmission Flavin and Stella have a discussion based around the idea of art and objects. Flavin struggled to get his point across when he said:

> Arhh, gee, no I mean, you know, consciousness of, of, you know, the way paint works, what you don't want to do with it, you know, what you've seen done with it, I don't even think about it, in a sense, you know, very really, I don't think about that, at all now. I think, you know, more like an arrangement of sticks, of, of color sticks or, you know, illuminous, if that, you know, the thing it's more and more [FS *what do you do*] an object for me.[56]

And Stella responded:

> Yeah, but what do you do with the, sort of, I mean, how do you, well I won't say rationalize, how do you deal with, sort of, structural things, or compositional things, for example, I mean [DF *yeah, but*], we're all left with that, that's what I want to say [DF *yeah*], part of the point about, sort of, the terms, I mean, it's sort of, I mean the problems aren't any different, I mean, for us, we have to, still basically all of us, well, I'll only talk about, well I have to compose a picture, and if you make an object, you have to organize it

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[55] Glaser (1966: 60).

[56] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 6:46-7:24). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

> or structure it and it seems to me that you're still, basically, I mean, all I'm saying is that finally, I don't think our work is that radical in any sense, [DF *mmm*] because, I mean that, between the three of us you can [*sic*] find any structure, any compositional element or any really new structural element. [BG *uhuh*] I mean, I don't know what that exists, it's like the idea of a color that you haven't seen before, I mean, is there something that's say, not a diagonal [DF *mmm*], or not a straight line, or not a compositional element that you can describe? [57]

Considering Flavin's comments, it is reasonable that this passage was not included in the *ARTnews* article since it is very hesitant and, in the main, introspective. It is probably the case that only the last line of Flavin's statement was really seen as usable as a contribution to the discussion. Therefore, it is understandable that this particular section from Flavin did not make the published piece. However, the editing process resulted in this part of the exchange being written as:

> Judd: I do think about it, I'll change it if I can. I just want it to exist as a whole thing. And that's not especially unusual. Painting's been going toward that for a long time. A lot of people, like Oldenburg for instance, have a "whole" effect to their work.
> Stella: But we're all still left with structural or compositional elements. The problems aren't any different. I still have to compose a picture, and if you make an object you have to organize the structure. I don't think our work is that radical in any sense because you don't find any really new compositional or structural element. I don't know if that exists. It's like the idea of a color you haven't seen before. Does something exist that's as radical as a diagonal that's not a diagonal? Or a straight line or a compositional element that you can't describe? [58]

As well as this comment from Judd also being an example of further 'Judd additions' (see Appendix C, page 247 onwards), the context of Stella's reply is changed, since in the edited piece he is now replying to a statement from Judd relating to the wholeness of the

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[57] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 7:25-8:27). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.
[58] Glaser (1966: 57). Glaser's emboldening of contributor's names removed.

work rather than the idea of objectness that Flavin was trying to enunciate. Another exchange, supposedly between Stella and Judd, appears near the end of the article as presented in *ARTnews*. Reading this section of the published piece suggests that the article that Stella cites is about Yves Klein:

> Judd: You don't feel the same about a Newman and a gold field because Newman's doing something with his field.
>
> Stella: Newman's is in the canvas and it really does work differently. With so-called advanced painting, for example, you should drop composition. That would be terrifically avant-garde; that would be a really good idea. But the question is, how do you do it? The best article I ever read about pure painting and all that was Elaine de Kooning's *Pure Paints a Picture*. Pure was very pure and he lived in a bare, square white loft. He was very meticulous and he gave up painting with brushes and all that and he had a syringe loaded with a colorless fluid which he injected into his colorless, odorless foam rubber. That was how he created his art objects—by injecting colorless fluid into a colorless material.
>
> Judd: Radical artist.
>
> Stella: Well, Yves Klein was no doubt a radical artist, or he didn't do anything very interesting.[59]

Flavin's excised contribution to this section of the broadcast was important because it introduced into the discussion the idea of 'trying to drop composition'[60] (an idea very much akin to the ideas embraced by the Russian and Soviet Constructivists) and then Stella picked up on Flavin's comment to say 'that would be terrifically avant-garde'.[61] This is another example of the editing process introducing the potential for a series of misconceptions within the mind of any reader of the article. The discussion between Stella and Judd in the audio recording evolved like this:

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[59] Glaser (1966: 61). Glaser's emboldening of contributor's names and footnote reference removed.

[60] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 6, 1:47-2:11). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[61] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 6, 2:12-2:22). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

DJ: It don't feel like that in a Newman like it would be in a plain gold field. Because Newman's doing something with this field.

FS: Yeah, yeah, it's in the canvas and all that [DJ *yeah*] it just wor…, really does work too.

DF: I didn't answer, I didn't answer Frank I think, [BG *uhuh*] and, [FS *yeah*] in fact I don't think I can right now, but one thing is, that I've tried, I was writing, trying to write, a letter to Bob Rosenblum about what I was thinking about, and I found out what I was saying, in fact, was I was trying to drop composition, and [FS *yeah, but that's*] I don't see how I can do it right now… [*laughter*]

FS: You know, but that's, I mean, that's the kinda thing you get in with so-called really advance painting, for example, would drop composition, that would be terrifically avant-garde, that's a really good idea, but the question is how do you do that.

DF: That's right. Yeah, yano, well.

BG: That goes even beyond eliminating nothing on the canvas, [FS *actually*] he's eliminating the canvas, isn't…

FS: The best article I ever read about, sort of, pure painting and all of that, was that thing that Elaine de Kooning wrote, in *ARTnews* years ago, 'Pure Paints a Picture', I don't know if any of you saw it?

DJ: Yeah, I saw that.

DF: I'm too young to read that.

FS: The guy was really fantastic, well, the way it ended was that Pure was very, very pure and he lived in a, you know, a stainless steel white loft, or something like that, but anyway, finally what he did was, he was very meticulous, and he gave up painting, and brushes and all that, and he had a syringe which he loaded with a colorless, odorless fluid which he injected into clear odorless styrene, that was how he created his art object by injecting colorless fluid into a colorless material.

DJ: Like Nick Klein, [DF *he was kinda breathing*] Yves Kline, he was kinda pretty radical artist.

FS: Well, Yves Klein was no doubt a radical artist, but a bad artis…, a bad artist, or he didn't do anything very interesting, but. But it wasn't so much, [DJ *groundbreaking*] but why is Yves Klein, sort of, not radical, it seems to me kinda interesting, I don't know. Like, I mean, I don't think, I mean, I could, like I have one of his paintings, which I sort of

> like in a way, but there's something about him that's not radical, I mean, what's not [*sic*] radical about the idea of selling air, it doesn't seem very interesting. [BG *uhuh*][62]

As well as losing the comments from Flavin that bring in the discussion about trying to avoid composition, the over-enthusiastic editing of this passage of the conversation also suggests to the reader that the Elaine de Kooning article, 'Pure Paints a Picture'[63] that Stella recalls, is related to Yves Klein. For any reading of the *ARTnews* article this would be a reasonable assumption to make. Although it could be argued that the de Kooning article could be something akin to the practices of Klein, 'Pure Paints a Picture' is a satirical tale of the artistic practices of Ad Reinhardt, not of Yves Klein.[64] This misleading editing of the flow of the conversation leading to the potential for misappropriation of the de Kooning article also gets repeated by James Meyer, in his book *Minimalism: Themes and Movements*[65] published in 2000. Although Meyer attempts to offer a transcription of the radio interview, his transcript is an amalgamation of the audio record along with sections from the *ARTnews* article. For example, there is an exchange in the radio interview between Flavin and Stella that went like this:

> DF: I want to say two things, which is off the track, in a sense, the thing is, first of all my work becomes more and more an industrial object, in this, in the way I accept the fluorescent light for itself. You see. It is an industrial object, it's just a reiteration of it, or a disorientation[66] of it. So, I let, I just wanted to put that in. [BG *uhuh*] And the other thing is, the thing I think it's important to talk about, I think Don has a sense of this, is that the painting-as-object, you know as, as a physical object, I think Frank is the farthest from that of us.
>
> BG: What do you mean by that then?

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[62] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 6, 1:35 – 3:37). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[63] de Kooning (1957).

[64] As confirmed, for example, by Edward Strickland. Strickland (2000: 43).

[65] Meyer (2000: 197-201).

[66] Jones (1996: 169) transcribes this as 'reorientation'.

> DF: Well, then let's find out. [*laughter*] [DJ *the Father, but the farthest…*] [FS *no that's*]
> FS: Well, it isn't, well anyway, any painting is an object, I mean, the argument that I always had, or that you always get into with people that want the old values in painting, essentially they're all the humanistic values, is that they always find on the canvas, if you pin them down, there's always something there, more than actually the paint and the canvas, in other words, that would not be, shall we say, Alexander Eliot,[67] or the general public, or any kind of really felt, any kind of really felt opinion has it, that there's always something there more than what's actually there. And certainly my paintings are, sort of, based on the fact that there's only what's there is there. [BG *uhuh*] And that makes it an object, I mean, 'cause it really is an object, and I think anyone that actually does it, or gets involved enough in it, finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever it is that he is doing, he's making a thing.[68]

But as an example of the way in which Meyer decided to reincorporate Flavin's comments – the first of which is a composite of two of Flavin's comments that were over seventeen minutes apart in the radio broadcast – this passage in Meyer's book is written as:

> *Dan Flavin* I wanted to say two things. First of all, my work becomes more and more an industrial object the way I accept the fluorescent light for itself. It is an industrial object; it's just a reiteration of it or disorientation of it. The other thing I think it's important to talk about – I think Don has a good sense of this – is the painting as object, as a physical object. I think Frank is the farthest away from this… I've been noticing [this] difference between Frank's attitude and mine. Bob Rosenblum said to me recently that I had destroyed painting for him. Well, I'm just getting a real sense of this. I don't communicate that much with Frank, and I can see I've done it for myself unconsciously. I don't think in the terms in which he's thinking at all, and it's [laugh] a surprise to me that I had considered myself a painter in a sense. But I can see the difference. That's good.
> *Stella* What are some of the differences?

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[67] Between 1945 and 1960 he was the art editor of *Time* magazine. Eliot (2012).

[68] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 2, 14:36 – Track 3, 0:57). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

> *Flavin* You know, consciousness of the way paint works, what you don't want to do with it, what you've seen done with it. I don't even think about it in a sense; I don't think about that at all now. I think more of an arrangement of sticks, of colour sticks that are luminous, if that. The thing is more and more an object for me [...]
> *Stella* But we're all still left with structural or compositional elements. The problems aren't any different. I still have to compose a picture, and if you make an object you have to organize the structure. I don't think our work is that radical in any sense because you don't find any really new compositional or structural element. I don't know if that exists. It's like the idea of a colour you haven't seen before. Does something exist that's as radical as a diagonal that's not a diagonal? Or a straight line or a compositional element that you can't describe? [69]

The difficulties with Meyer's attempt at recording the conversations between the artists become more apparent here. Meyer begins by the titling of the section of his book that included his 'transcription' as 'Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Frank Stella New Nihilism or New Art? Interview with Bruce Glaser'[70] indicating that this is to be a record of the radio interview which carried the same title. However, the ordering of the piece is as dictated by the arrangement of the *ARTnews* article with, by Meyer's own admission in his endnote, 'Additional remarks transcribed from the WBAI recording'.[71] In the 'transcription' reproduced in his 2000 book, Meyer elected to insert some, but not all, of Flavin's comments. From my analysis there were nineteen comments from Flavin that should have been inserted, but Meyer only inserted five (two of which were concatenated). Admittedly some of Flavin's comments are merely short asides. But nevertheless, Meyer's decision to combine the published interview with his limited use of

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[69] Meyer (2000: 198). Meyer's brackets and ellipsis. Meyer's emboldening of contributions by artists removed. Meyer reproduces his text of the radio broadcast with some English spellings. The first comment by Flavin (ending with 'That's good.') is a composite from two of his contributions which were 17 minutes 51 seconds apart. Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 2, 14:36-Track 3, 0:05) *and* Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 5:59 – 6:39). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[70] Meyer (2000: 197).

[71] Meyer (2000: 201 unnumbered note following endnote 4).

parts of the audio transcript – as a means of filling in some of the areas that were excised by Glaser and Lippard – results in neither one thing nor another. It is understandable that Meyer wanted to piece back in the utterances from Flavin, especially the way in which Flavin talks about his art as objects.[72] But the edited reordering of the original conversation, as presented in the *ARTnews* piece – as Jones originally highlighted[73] – was far removed from the recording of the radio transmission. And therefore, in deciding to retain the edited ordering of the *ARTnews* article, Meyer created a composite source that is not a reasonable enough record of the discussion between these artists. He must have suffered some terrible difficulties in deciding on the precise positioning of the previously excised Flavin comments. Especially when one understands the degree of the editing of the original radio interview. Surprisingly – given the problems that he must have experienced in assembling his 'transcription' – in his book of the following year, Meyer preceded his discussion in his chapter 'Flavin, Judd and Stella interviewed'[74] with the following statement:

> We thus have two versions of the interview, the taped recording and the text in the Battcock anthology. The discussion that follows draws from both documents, for, fine as it is, the published version omits significant comments by Flavin that I wish to address.[75]

Contrary to Meyer's assertion at the time of Meyer's book in 2001 there were four versions of the interview in existence. (The WBAI radio recording, the *ARTnews* article, the version of the article in Battcock and the composite version as published by Meyer.[76]) Furthermore, the *ARTnews* article is far from 'fine as it is' and to rectify this situation Appendix B (page 226 onwards) contains my complete transcript of the radio interview as recorded in 1964.

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[72] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 2, 14:36-Track 3, 0:05) and Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 6:46 – 7:24). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[73] Jones (1996: 415 n. 152).

[74] Meyer (2001: 87-93).

[75] Meyer (2001: 87). Endnote reference removed.

[76] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964), Glaser (1966), Glaser (1968) and Meyer (2000).

As indicated earlier, Jones provided an important analysis of the radio interview against that which appeared in print in *ARTnews*. She highlighted the comprehensive editing of the written piece, but only presented her findings in a textually-based endnote. The enormity and the brutality of the editing process inflicted on the original interview, to produce the manuscript for the *ARTnews* piece, is not conveyed by Jones's note. A detailed analysis of the of the WBAI transmission compared to the *ARTnews* article (see Appendix D, page 250 onwards, for full details) enables a graphical display of the artists' contributions and reveals the enormity of the editing process (see Appendix D, Image 1 on page 251 and Image 2 on page 252). These images show the progress of the radio broadcast on the left and the edited *ARTnews* article on the right. Arrows indicate the way in which the sections of the original interview were repositioned in the *ARTnews* piece and emphasise the dramatic way in which the original interview was modified. As a further result of my analysis I am also suggesting that Jones introduced several errors into her analysis. Specifically, there are oversights within Jones's analysis when she stated the reordering as, 'A, [Judd insert], I, [Judd insert], B, G, [Judd insert], more of G, K, C, [Judd insert], D, F, E, J, H.'[77]

Instead I propose that the interview should be labelled A to L and the *ARTnews* ordering is then, [Additional Glaser question], A, [Judd insert], J, [Judd insert], B, H, [Judd insert], more of H, [Judd insert], L, C, [Judd insert], D, G, E, F, K, I. These corrections may seem trivial, but there is an initial Glaser question at the beginning of the *ARTnews* article (which is presented as being answered by Stella; yet, Stella was not present at the recording of the later Judd tape), and a further 'Judd insert' that was overlooked and not labelled as such in Jones's analysis. Jones conflates two 'Judd

[77] Jones (1996: 415 n. 152). Jones's brackets.

insertions' into one.[78] However, from my analysis these have the comment 'more of G'[79] positioned between them (when continuing to use Jones's nomenclature).[80] Therefore, I conclude that Jones overlooked the additional 'Judd insertion';[81] the single sentence retort of Judd's 'There's nothing sacrosanct about materials'.[82] As discussed earlier, this additional comment was positioned as if it was Judd's denigration of Stella's concern over the materials he used.

The identification of these oversights – the mislabelling of one set of comments, the failure to mention the 'Additional Glaser question' and the further 'Judd insert' – is important for several reasons. It indicates further the extensive editing that the interview was subjected to in order to create the *ARTnews* article (there is a further Glaser question that did not exist in the radio broadcast, and there are now five 'Judd insertions' rather than four). The recognition of these difficulties allows for a correction of the historical record of the analysis of this interview and its later written iterations. I must emphasise again that Jones was the first writer to examine the radio interview and the *ARTnews* article in detail, and she, quite rightly, explained that the published interview was seriously affected by the omission of some of Flavin's contributions. She cited Flavin as saying:

> My work becomes more and more an industrial object in that I accept the fluorescent light for itself. It *is* an industrial object, it's just a reiteration of it or a reorientation of it. So I just wanted to put that in. And the other thing I think it's important to talk about – I

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[78] My references 'ARTnews 48b' and 'ARTnews 50' (see my 'POSITIONAL ANALYSIS CORRECTED' tab in the Microsoft Excel file embedded in Appendix D, on page 250, of the electronic version of this thesis).

[79] My reference 'ARTnews 49' (see my 'POSITIONAL ANALYSIS CORRECTED' tab in the Microsoft Excel file embedded in Appendix D, on page 250, of the electronic version of this thesis).

[80] See my 'POSITIONAL ANALYSIS (as Jones)' tab in the Microsoft Excel file embedded in Appendix D, on page 250, of the electronic version of this thesis.

[81] For a full explanation of the reasoning behind my relabelling, see the section headed 'Detailed conclusions from my analysis' in Appendix D, on page 250.

[82] Glaser (1966: 60). My label [Group 4] in Appendix C, on page 249.

> think Don [Judd] has a sense of this – is the painting-as-object, you know, physical object. And I think Frank is the farthest from that of us.[83]

As Jones has explained[84] Stella was exercised by Flavin's thinly-veiled insult of his artistic practice and this resulted in this passage (ending in the oft-quoted remark by Stella) being incorporated in the *ARTnews* article:

> Well, it seems to me we have problems. When Morris Louis showed in 1958, everybody (ARTNEWS, Tom Hess) dismissed his work as thin, merely decorative. They still do. Louis is the really interesting case. In every sense his instincts were Abstract-Expressionist, and he was terribly involved with all of that, but he felt he had to move, too. I always get into arguments with people who want to retain the old values in painting—the humanistic values that they always find on the canvas. If you pin them down, they always end up asserting that there is something there besides the paint on the canvas. My painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen there *is* there. It really is an object. Any painting is an object and anyone who gets involved enough in this finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever it is that he's doing. He is making a thing. All that should be taken for granted. If the painting were lean enough, accurate enough or right enough, you would just be able to look at it. All I want anyone to get out of my paintings, and all I ever get out of them, is the fact that you can see the whole idea without any confusion.... What you see is what you see.[85]

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[83] Jones (1996: 169). The italics and brackets are Jones's. However, Jones mistranscribed the audio in places. Flavin said, 'I want to say two things, which is off the track, in a sense, the thing is, first of all my work becomes more and more an industrial object, in this, in the way I accept the fluorescent light for itself. You see. It is an industrial object, it's just a reiteration of it, or a disorientation of it. So, I let, I just wanted to put that in. [BG *uhuh*] And the other thing is, the thing I think it's important to talk about, I think Don has a sense of this, is that the painting-as-object, you know as, as a physical object, I think Frank is the farthest from that of us.' Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 2, 14:36 – Track 3, 0:05). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

[84] Jones (1996: 170).

[85] Glaser (1966: 58-59). Glaser's italics. Stella's name removed.

However, again the published work is less than wholly accurate. The passage above is an edited concatenation of five statements from Stella.[86]

The editing and publication of this interview in its 1966 form was a step too far. This contemporaneous record of the discussion, the moment of Minimal artists' engagement with criticism and the citation process have led to this article becoming a canonical text. However, as highlighted by Jones and from my detailed analysis, this text is not as it should be. As I have shown, in its written forms, it is inaccurate and misleading. The problems were compounded further when the *ARTnews* article was reproduced in Gregory Battcock's 1968 collection *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*.[87] As well as the issues that have already been discussed, the typesetting of the reproduction in this anthology also resulted in several minor glitches being introduced into the text. Nevertheless, Battcock's publication has become a seminal work related to Minimal art. Battcock's book reproduced the dubious editing and induced errors from the earlier *ARTnews* article as well as introducing a few errors of its own. These difficulties were exacerbated by the fast moving art scene and the close proximity in time between the *ARTnews* article being published (September 1966) and the publication of Battcock's book

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[86] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 2, 13:17-13:22, 13:46-13:57, 14.00-14.35, Track 3, 0:12-0:57 and 1:11-1:44). In the last of these audio passages Stella says, 'That's the one thing I don't want, I think all of that should be taken for granted, like I mean, basically I think the discussion of the thing as object is sort of, in a, in a sense ridiculous, I mean, particularly as a painting, a painting, I don't know, is a, is a, is a painting, the thing that I would like to see is, sort of, if the thing is either lean enough, accurate enough, or right enough, you would just be able to look at it, in others words, all I want anyone to get out of my paintings, or [*Note A*] all I ever get out of them is the fact that you can see it all [*Note B*] without any confusion, in that sense. What you see is what you see.'

[*Note A* – Glaser ((1966: 58) and (1968: 158)) and Meyer (2000: 199) transcribe this 'or' erroneously as 'and'.]

[*Note B* – Glaser ((1966: 59) and (1968: 158)) transcribes 'see it all' erroneously as 'see the whole idea'. However, this is a result of Lippard's editing, according to the Archives of American Art extract seen in Dubay (2011: 199). [Unfortunately Dubay relies entirely on the Lippard transcript in the Archives of American Art for her source of the audio interview, rather than the audio itself. See her footnote 2 on page 156 of her thesis. In her footnote 8 on page 157 she effectively admits that she has not listened to the audio either. The audio has been available to the public since 1964. It was subsequently digitised and has been available on CD since 2004. DeShazor (2015).]

[87] Glaser (1968) in Battcock (1968).

(June 1968).[88] Battcock's anthology remains a good source for the study of Minimal art, but this particular article, Glaser (1966) and Glaser (1968), has been cited by many scholars without a great deal of concern as to the mechanisms behind the assembly of the article.[89]

One further and particularly inaccurate reference to the original interview is contained in the 2009 book *Dan Flavin: Icons*, in which Corinna Thierolf and Johannes Vogt wrote:

> It is hardly surprising that the opening question by Bruce Glaser in the legendary 1964 radio interview with Frank Stella, Donald Judd and Dan Flavin aimed at the link between the three artists and the work of Malevich and the Constructivists.[90]

As mentioned earlier, this 'opening question', to which Thierolf and Vogt refer, never appeared in the 1964 interview, it was added in the *ARTnews* incarnation of 1966.[91] Thus, it is now apparent that in Meyer (2000), Meyer (2001), Weiss (2006a), Foster (2006) and Thierolf and Vogt (2009) the representation of the interview has become corrupted.

The previous and continuing use of this work in its written form is fraught with danger. The editing of the original content of the 1964 radio broadcast – in a mistaken

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[88] Battcock was stabbed to death on Christmas day 1980. New York Times (1980). Douglas Davis, in his tribute to Battcock, wrote, 'He was too fast, sprinting with ideas faster than the world could follow. [...] The rapid flow of his anthologies was a symptom of his restlessness. They showed him swallowing up entire subjects, chewing, spitting them out a few months later, impatiently moving on.' Davis (1981). Battcock had worked as the New York correspondent for the Italian magazine *Domus*. The special correspondent of *Domus*, Pierre Restany, wrote in his obituary of Battcock, 'He bore the difficulty of his being with the frantic energy of those who love life for its risks and who wear to the point of hysteria the sense of their own fragility. [...] In leaving us, his supreme elegance will have been that of startling us without really surprising us'. Restany (1981).

[89] Also, it is worth noting here that none of the reproductions of the sources located near the back of Meyer's 2000 book made it into his abridged version published in 2010. Meyer (2000) and Meyer (2010).

[90] Thierolf and Vogt (2009: 26). Worryingly, and emphasising my point, they also cite their source of the interview as Meyer (2000). Thierolf and Vogt (2009: 32 n. 40).

[91] See my 'Judd additions' labelled as [Additional Glaser question] in Appendix C, on page 247 of this thesis. There was a preamble by Glaser in the 1964 transmission that mentioned Malevich and the Constructivists, but this was never phrased as a question. The first question posed by Glaser was, 'And I was just wondering what your reaction is to this exhortation and to this description of your work. Frank, do you have some ideas about this?' Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 1, 3:59-4:07). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

effort to render the discussion more palatable for the readers of *ARTnews* in 1966 – has led to a series of written representations of the interview which are not sufficiently accurate, and in places are misleading. Matters are made worse when one considers the mangled set of exchanges that Meyer assembled as his representation of the interview in 2000, in which he does the protagonists a great disservice. I am left wondering how many more sources of this type have been treated in a similar way to this discussion between these three artists in 1964. Things are often not what they seem.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Thesis Conclusion

From Romanticism to Postmodernism the urge to allocate names or labels to moments, movements, groups of artists or their forms of practice, has proven to be irresistible.

Constructivism was neither a close group of artists nor a category manufactured by curatorship. It became an ''ism' determined by the proponents of the 'ism, rather than by rules that might be applied to the art or the artists involved. Avoiding the use of naturalistic sources, Constructivism embraced the modern and the machine aesthetic, celebrated and promoted the ideals of the October Revolution and Lenin's vision of an industrialised Marxist state, but became outlawed in 1932 with the diktats enforced under Stalin's administration that led to the official art of Socialist Realism.

By contrast, Abstract Expressionism was promoted by the CIA during the cold war, contrasting the art produced in the 'land of the free' with the officially prescribed art of the USSR. The spread of International Constructivism to the United States also had an impact on the kinds of art practice categorised as Constructivist, as did the pronouncements by Gabo and Pevsner.

Reception of Constructivism in the West has been significantly influenced by the 1936 MoMA exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* (curated by Alfred H. Barr Jr), Camilla Gray's foray into Constructivism with her 1962 book *The Great Experiment* and furthered by Christina Lodder's book *Russian Constructivism*, as well as by exhibitions of the 1980s based on the Costakis collection. However, the major determining factor for the Western reception of Constructivism remains the cold war.

The labelling of Minimal art practice followed a course steered by critics. In the early 1960s the use of the term Minimal art or Minimalism had not yet been fully assimilated by art critics and the art establishment. In 1964 Barbara Rose referred to 'art stripped to its bare, irreducible minimum'.[1] And other phrases such as 'hard edge', 'post-painterly abstraction' and 'primary structures' were also put forward. Richard Wollheim, with his 1965 expression 'minimal-art content',[2] has been associated with the term, but, as discussed, Judd and Wagstaff used the words 'minimal' and 'minimum' in 1964.[3] Replying to Glaser's questions about the categorisation of these United States' artists, talking of critics and curators, Stella said :

> they wanna make it, I think, into a movement so that they can oppose it basically, to something like, you now would have pop art, and then if you could get a good name that would really stick you could then have this other new abstraction. [BG *Do you think*] Which would make everyone happy.[4]

With an apparent degree of irony, Stella rounded-off his comment by highlighting that definitions are often based on the pronouncements by critics and he showed his frustration at the need for labelling. For him 'Art' is whatever he produces and decides to show or sell. The definition of his practice does not seem to interest him too much. Critics want to attach labels, artists want to produce art. Moreover, Minimal art was, in part, a response to the art that went before it: Abstract Expressionism. As Stella explained:

> whenever painting gets complicated, say Abstract Expressionist, Surrealism, or something like that, you always get, immediately, or adjacent to it in some way there,

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[1] Rose (1965a: 277).

[2] Wollheim (1965). Originally published in *Arts Magazine*, January 1965, pp. 26-32. Although Wollheim later spoke of being inspired by a lecture presented by the British art critic Adrian Stokes. Colpitt (1990: 206 n. 14).

[3] Judd (1964: 118) and Wagstaff (1964: 38) as indicated by Strickland (2000: 18).

[4] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 1, 4:33-5:17). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

> there's going to be someone who's not painting complicated paintings, someone who's trying to simplify. [...].[5]

Minimal artists also wanted to avoid the spiritual experiences and contemplation offered to the viewer by works of the Abstract Expressionists. Minimal artists' works (as well as artists' discussions of their works) were sparse and they did not want to encourage too much pondering over their art. Also they railed against the dreaminess and spirituality that was on offer with the works of the Abstract Expressionists, for example, Stella said:

> one could be, if one wanted, to stand in front of Milton, any one of Milton Resnick's painting at the Wise now, for a long time, and walk back and forth in front of it and, and inspect the depths of the pigment and the sort of [BG *yes*] the inflections and [BG *yes*, *yes*] all the painterly brush work [BG *yes*] actually for hours, but I mean, I wouldn't particularly wanna do that. And I also wouldn't ask anyone to do that kinda thing in front of my painting and, I guess, to go further, I would like to prohibit them from doing that in front of my painting [...].[6]

When considering Minimal artists of the 1960s and 1970s, the numbers of artists accepted as Minimal artists were far greater at that time than the numbers of artists accepted as Minimal artists today. As we have seen, Judd in particular used a wide range of examples of artistic practice in his seminal 'Specific Objects' essay of 1965.[7] In the mid-sixties, if the work was using modern materials and/or was on a large scale then it might well have been accepted as Minimal art. Today, by comparison with the categorisation of artists who practiced Minimal art in the 1960s, the numbers are much reduced.

Critics, publications and curators were impacted by the cold war and, especially in the United States, this resulted in a dislike of all things Soviet. The cold war also gave Gabo a chance to promote himself and his brand of International Constructivism, leading to a misrepresentation of Russian and Soviet Constructivism. The cold war climate was

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[5] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 1, 6:19-6:35). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.
[6] Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 0:49-1:51). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.
[7] Judd (1965).

further encapsulated and reiterated in Gregory Battcock's 1979 thesis along with the notions of modern art previously applauded by critics like Greenberg and Fried. Battcock's was a thesis affected by the cold war years that preceded it.

As I have argued, as well as reacting to the type of art that the Abstract Expressionists created, Minimal artists drew from ideas used by Russian and Soviet Constructivists. Minimal artists wanted their art to be seen as different and separate from the previous European-based modern art, and the geographic shift towards the city of New York was promoted and accelerated by the writings of Clement Greenberg.

Minimal artists created sculptures which avoided the 'classic' plinth, moved away from the conventional wall-hung oil on canvas paintings, and produced art which attempted to escape the notion of composition. (See for example, some of Judd's work, such as reproduced in Appendix A, Figure 102, page 223, and in Figure 103, page 224.) Minimal art also avoided references to the naturalistic, as well as regularly making use of repetition with works such as those created by Andre (see Appendix A, Figure 94, page 222 and Figure 95, page 222) and Judd (see Figure 98, page 223 and Figure 103, page 224). Again these works shared characteristics with works by the Constructivists, as seen in Rodchenko's wooden unitary constructions. (See Appendix A, Figure 96, page 222 and Figure 97, page 222.) As I have argued in this thesis, Minimal artists avoided, downplayed or even denied, the influence of the Constructivists on their art. I contend that this was due to the political climate in the United States in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Following the October Revolution, Constructivist-inspired art spread across Europe and groups of artists were formed who regularly reinforced their creation of art with published writings and manifestos. After World War II, Constructivist ideas spread to South America – and further writings and manifestos were produced – to eventually reach the United States. As I have argued, American artists of the 1940s and 1950 drew from ideas of non-representational art that were practiced by the Constructivists, but once again the cold war affected the acknowledgement of this influence of Russian and

Soviet artists. As Foster has argued, the avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde are alike.[8] The six American artists examined in this thesis acted as a bridge between Constructivism and Minimal art. Constructivism is not a dead-end. Constructivism enabled non-representational art to be followed and to evolve into Minimal art practice.

As observed in this thesis, Minimal artists were influenced by the work of the Constructivists and they effectively reinvigorated and re-examined the stalled moment of Constructivism. Because of the possibility that this similarity raised, Minimal artists often avoided any confirmation of the influence of Constructivism. The cold war politics were such that they could not have confirmed that this was the case without affecting the acceptance of their work as authentically American, and therefore potentially impacting on their own livelihood or on their artistic standing.

Carl Andre and Dan Flavin were exceptions. Both admired and referenced Constructivists with their own art. Andre made use of repetition and arrangements of similar sized units in a further development of the assemblies of Rodchenko, and Flavin regularly referenced Tatlin and his unmade *Monument to the Third International*.

The idea of Constructivism in the West until 1991 was most often displayed via the use of examples from the Costakis collection. The use of this collection across a range of exhibitions has, I conclude, resulted in a misconstruing of Constructivism. Because of the relative ease with which examples from the Costakis collection could be used by curators, the collection has effectively become a pseudo-definition of Constructivism. Furthermore, at times the collection became a political tool. Use of the collection without the necessary caveats on its use could be misleading. Only after the collapse of the USSR did works of Constructivist art become more widely available to curators (as seen in the case of *The Great Utopia*). Despite the opportunities that this change in political climate engendered, *Building the Revolution* only borrowed works of art from the Costakis collection. The role of any curatorial team is challenging. The conflicting requirements of

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[8] Foster (1994: 16).

retaining integrity as well as balancing limited budgets, along with the need to create an innovative exhibition can lead to difficulties. The two exhibitions examined in this thesis highlight these issues. Each show included a large number of loans from the Costakis collection and each of these shows failed for different reasons. The Royal Academy exhibition *Building the Revolution* was based on a suspect premise and *The Great Utopia*, held at the Guggenheim, New York, NY, was too large and unwieldy to give visitors a rewarding experience.

One specific text that I have examined in detail in this thesis is the WBAI radio station's transmission of an interview which originally included Judd, Stella and Flavin. This text gives the views of these three, white male, Minimal artists and demonstrates their relative standings. Previous written publications of the transmission, by Glaser (1966 and 1968) and by Meyer (2000), have been treated as canonical examples of this important Minimal art text, yet these subsequent renderings of the original broadcast are not adequate representations of the 1964 interview. In order to redress the balance, this thesis includes the first full and accurate transcription of the original transmission, in an effort to reclaim the interview in its initial and unadulterated form and I also provide a careful examination of the various forms in which this interview has been presented.

I have exposed the way in which Russian and Soviet Constructivism has been denied as an influence on Minimal art in the United States due to the cold war. The overreliance on the Costakis collection has affected the West's perception of Constructivism, and texts and curatorial decisions have also played a part in the propagation of Constructivism. The common factor with all of these points is that of an evident misrepresentation. Minimal art has drawn from the ideas of the Constructivists; the repeated use of the Costakis collection has led to a skewed view of what constitutes Constructivism; one specific 1964 radio broadcast has been misrepresented in most of its subsequent manifestations, and two major Western exhibitions failed in differing ways to provide a reasonable visitor experience. Misrepresentations abound, but this thesis serves to right some of these misrepresentations. As explored here this is especially the

case with regard to the importance of the Russian and Soviet Constructivists and their influence on the development of Minimal art in the West. A better understanding of each of these moments allows a better understanding of each of these intrinsically linked forms of practice. Constructivist art and Minimal art are similar and the impact which Constructivism has had on Minimal art has been undervalued. This thesis attempts to settle the debt.

Appendices

Appendix A Figures

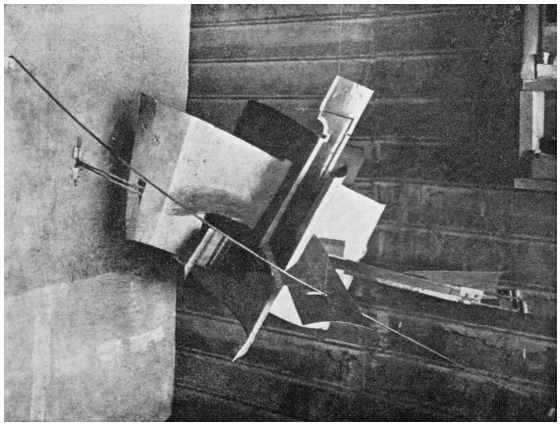


Figure 1. ***Corner Counter-Relief***
Vladimir Tatlin (1915), sheet materials with wire, precise materials and dimensions unknown, estimated (from the wood panelling of the wall) to be approximately 26” × 52” (660 mm × 1321 mm)
[Image extracted from Zhadova (1984: 204)]

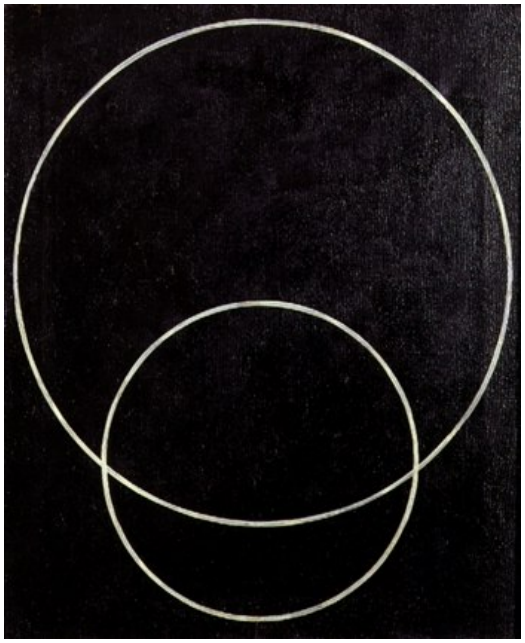


Figure 2. ***Construction no. 127 (Two Circles)***
Aleksandr Rodchenko (1920), oil on canvas, 24 ½” × 21” (622 mm × 533 mm)
[Image from <http://www.moma.org>]

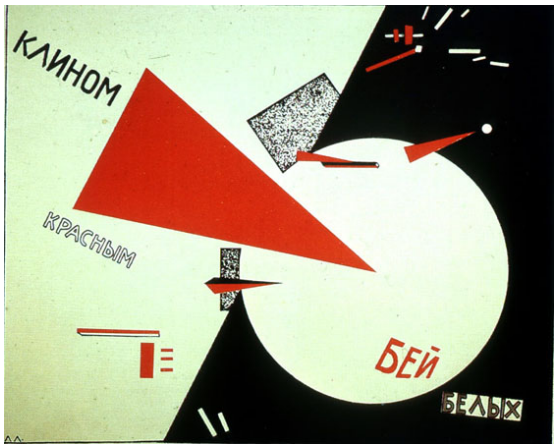


Figure 3. ***Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge***
El Lissitzky (1919), lithograph, ink on paper, 19” × 23” (493 mm × 584 mm)
[Image from <http://usc.edu>]



Figure 4. ***Textile Design***
Liubov Popova (*c.*1924), pencil and ink on paper, 9 ¼” × 7 ½” (234 mm × 191 mm)
[Image from <http://images.tate.org.uk>]



Figure 5. *Spatial Force Construction*
Liubov Popova (1921), oil with wood dust on plywood, 28” × 25” (711 mm × 635 mm)
[Image from <http://images.tate.org.uk>]

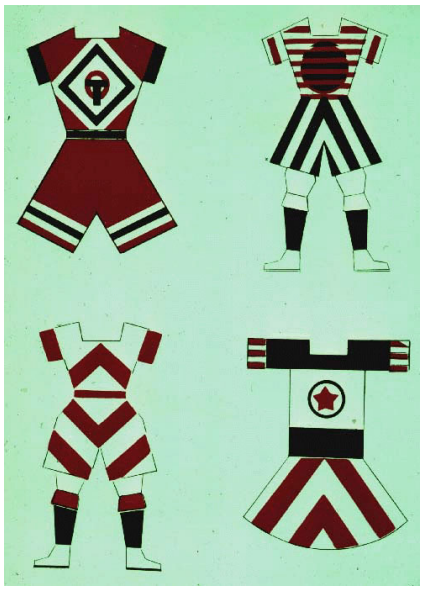
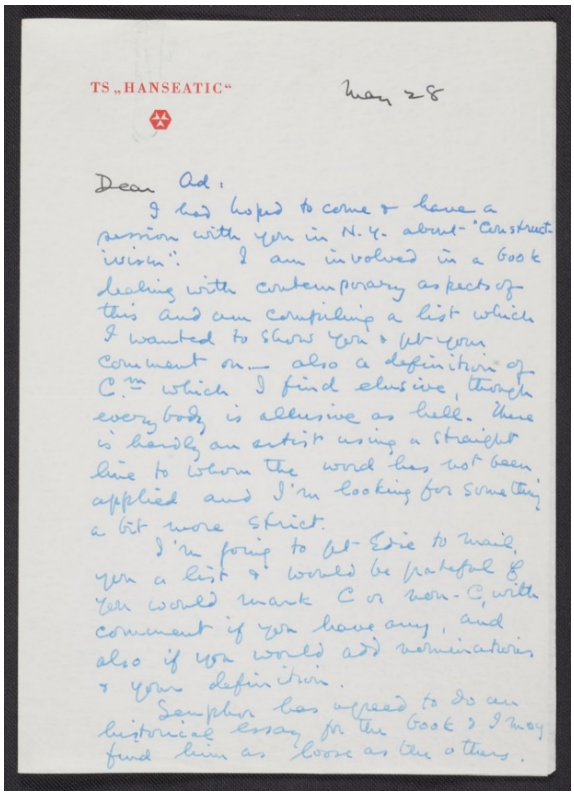


Figure 6. *Designs for Sports Clothing*
Varvara Stepanova (1923), dimensions unknown, but believed to be an image extracted from *LEF*, which was approximately 9” × 6” (229 mm × 152 mm)
[Image from <http://usc.edu>]



Figure 7. Cover of booklet *Da zdravstvuet demonstratsiia byta!*
(*Long Live the Demonstration of Everyday Life!*)
Aleksei Gan (1923), printed booklet, 8 ¾” × 7” (222 mm × 178 mm)
[Image from <http://www.moma.org>]


TS „HANSEATIC“ May 28

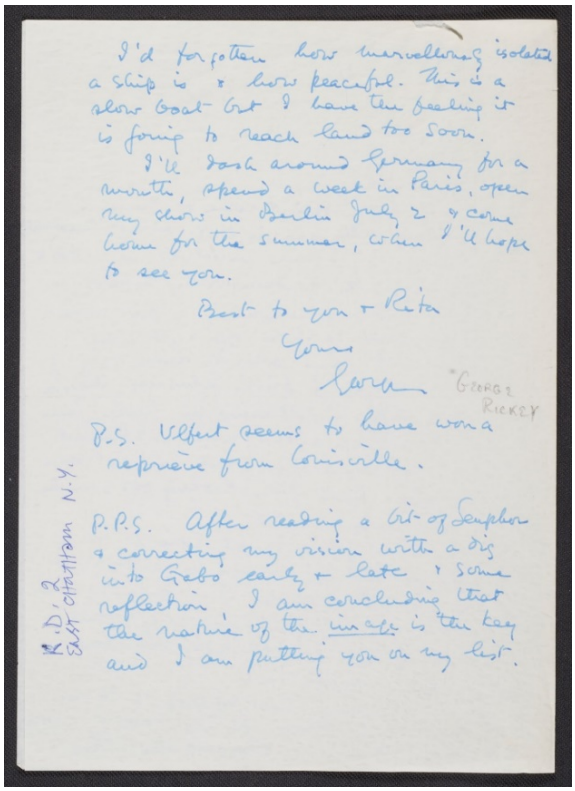
Dear Ad,

I had hoped to come + have a session with you in N.Y. about "Constructivism". I am involved in a book dealing with contemporary aspects of this and am compiling a list which I wanted to show you + get your comment on — also a definition of C.m which I find elusive, though everybody is allusive as hell. There is hardly an artist using a straight line to whom the word has not been applied and I'm looking for something a bit more strict.

I'm going to let Eric to mail you a list + would be grateful if you would mark C or non-C, with comment if you have any, and also if you would add nominations + your definition.

Seuphor has agreed to do an historical essay for the book + I may find him as loose as the others.

Figure 8. Recto of George Rickey's letter to Ad Reinhardt of 28 May 1962
George Rickey letter to Ad Reinhardt dated May 28, 196-. Ad Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.[1] Box 2, Folder 9, notepaper, 10” × 7” (254 mm × 178 mm)
[Publicly available index of image can be found from Archives of American Art (2014a) item 1.]


I'd forgotten how marvellously isolated a ship is + how peaceful. This is a slow boat but I have the feeling it is going to reach land too soon.

I'll dash around Germany for a month, spend a week in Paris, open my show in Berlin July 2 + come home for the summer, when I'll hope to see you.

Best to you + Rita

Yours

George

GEORGE RICKEY

P.S. Ulfert seems to have won a reprieve from Louisville.

P.P.S. After reading a bit of Seuphor + correcting my vision with a dig into Gabo early + late + some reflection I am concluding that the nature of the line is the key and I am putting you on my list.

R.D. 2 East Chatham N.Y.

Figure 9. Verso of George Rickey's letter to Ad Reinhardt of 28 May 1962
George Rickey letter to Ad Reinhardt dated May 28, 196-. Ad Reinhardt papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.[2] Box 2, Folder 9, notepaper, 10” × 7” (254 mm × 178 mm)
[Publicly available index of image can be found from Archives of American Art (2014a) item 2.]

[1] This is the precise wording that the Archives of American Art required as a condition of my use of their high-resolution image in this thesis.

[2] This is the precise wording that the Archives of American Art required as a condition of my use of their high-resolution image in this thesis.

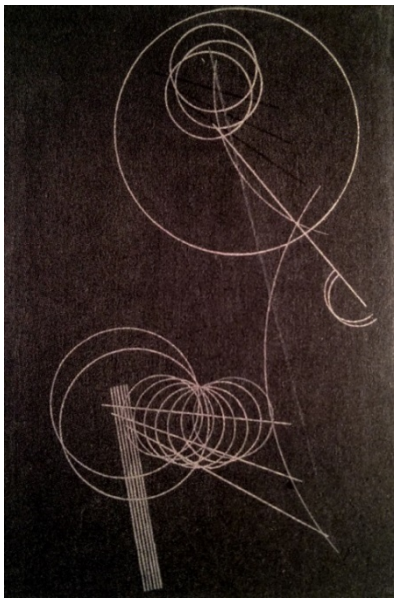


Figure 10. *Construction Number 106 (on Black)*
Aleksandr Rodchenko (1920), oil on canvas, 40" × 28" (1016 mm × 711 mm)
[Image extracted from Lavrentiev (2005: 124)]

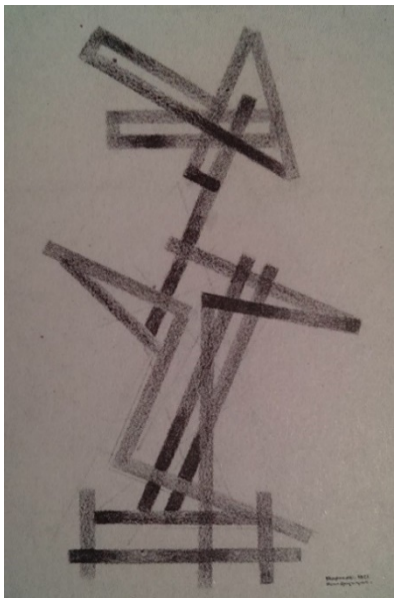


Figure 11. *Construction Number 17*
Aleksandr Rodchenko (1921), black and coloured crayon on paper, 20" × 13" (508 mm × 330 mm)
[Image extracted from Lavrentiev (2005: 125)]

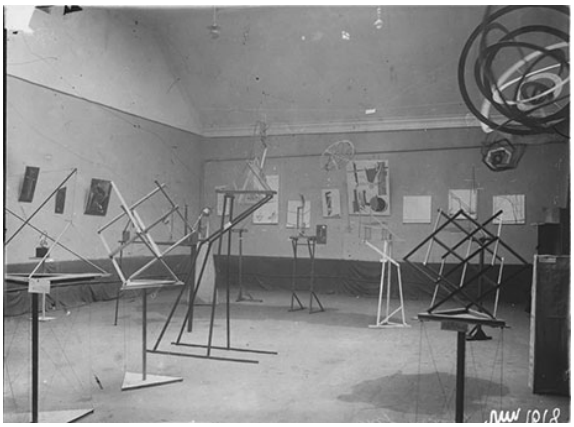


Figure 12. Installation view of the Second Spring Exhibition of the OBMOKhU[3] [Society of Young Artists], Moscow (1921)
Aleksandr Rodchenko (1921)
[Image from <http://www.henry-moore.org>]

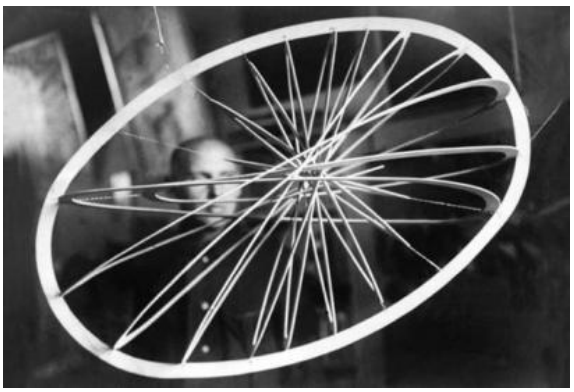


Figure 13. *Spatial Construction No 12, Oval in Oval* ¶
(with Rodchenko in the background)
Aleksandr Rodchenko (1920-1921), plywood, partially painted with aluminium paint, and wire, 24" × 33" × 18 ½" (610 mm × 838 mm × 470 mm)
See Figure 92 for a colour image of the same work
[Image from <http://www.usc.edu>, date from Lodder (1983: 27)]

[3] Three of Rodchenko's hanging constructions are included in this view (one each of his elliptical, circular and hexagonal versions).

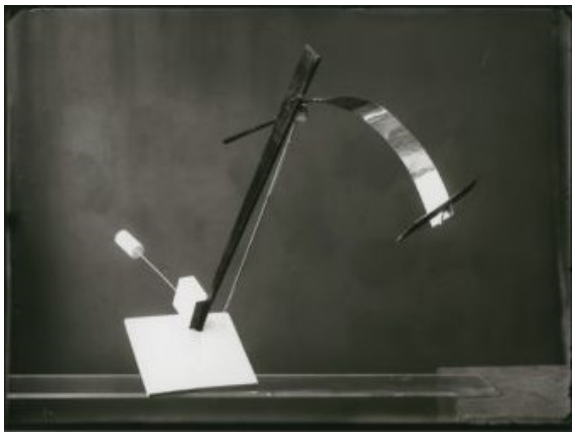


Figure 14. *Study in Equilibrium*
Marianne Brandt (1923), precise materials and dimensions unknown
[Image from <http://bauhaus-online.de>]



Figure 15. *Poster for Bauhaus Exhibition*
Joost Schmidt (1923), ink on paper, 23 ¾" × 19" (603 mm × 483 mm)
[Image from <http://bauhaus-online.de>]



Figure 16. Cover of catalogue for *Die Erste Russische Kunstausstellung*
El Lissitzky (1922), printed booklet, 8 ¾" × 5 ½" (222 mm × 140 mm)
[Image from <http://www.moma.org>]

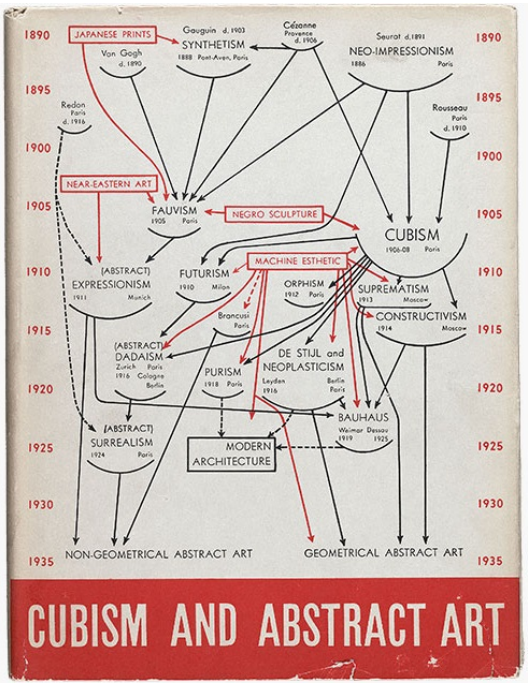


Figure 17. Front of the dust jacket from Barr (1936)
[Image from <http://www.artnews.com>]



Figure 18. ***Composition***
Vladimir Stenberg (1920), coloured pencil on paper, 8 ¼" × 5 ½" (210 mm × 139 mm)
[Image extracted from Cohen and Lodder (2001: 64 catalogue reference 33)]

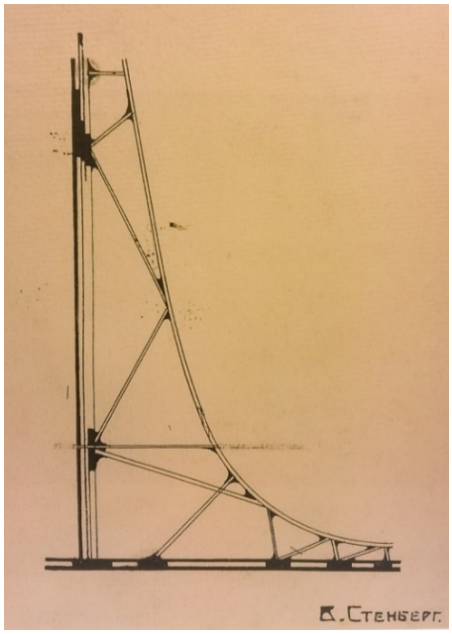


Figure 19. ***Construction***
Vladimir Stenberg (1920), ink in paper, 10" × 7 ½" (254 mm × 193 mm)
[Image extracted from Cohen and Lodder (2001: 65 catalogue reference 34)]



Figure 20. ***Example of a Composition***
Varvara Stepanova (*c*.1920-21), gouache on paper mounted on grey paper, 8 ¾" × 7 ¼" (222 mm × 184 mm)
[Image extracted from Gough (2005: plate 4), date from Rowell and Rudenstine (1981: 246)]

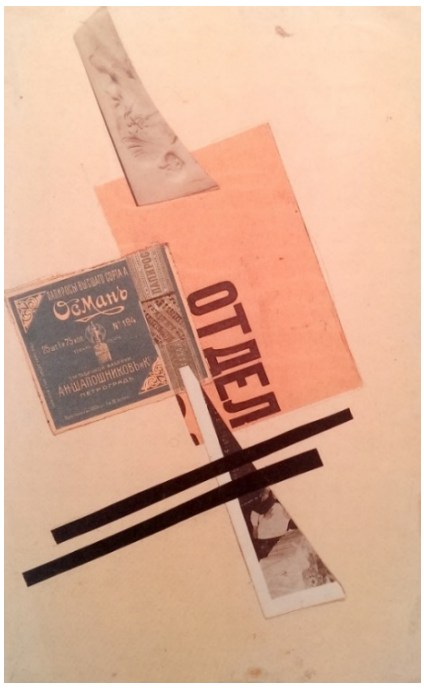


Figure 21. ***Construction***
Varvara Stepanova (*c*.1920-21), collage on paper, 14" × 9" (356 mm × 229 mm)
[Image extracted from Cohen and Lodder (2001: 69) catalogue reference 38]

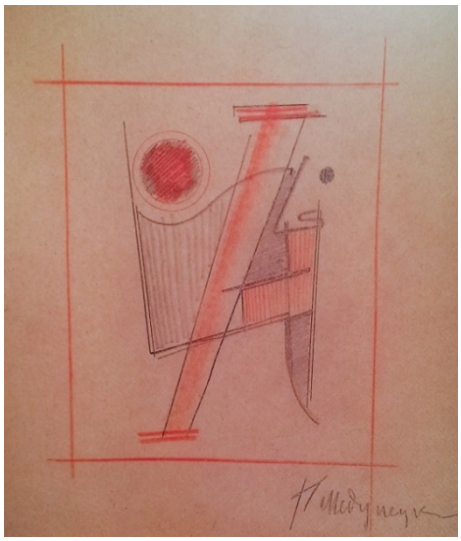


Figure 22. *Composition*
Konstantin Medunetsky (1920), pencil and orange crayon on paper, 10 ½" × 9 ¼" (267 mm × 235 mm)
[Image extracted from Cohen and Lodder (2001: 59 catalogue reference 28). They also elect to use the spelling Medunetskii.]

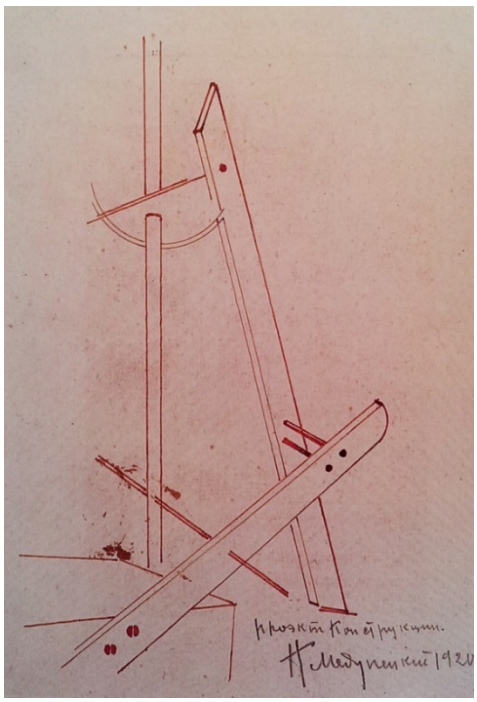


Figure 23. *Construction*
Konstantin Medunetsky (1920), brown ink on paper, 10 ½" × 7 ½" (267 mm × 191 mm)
[Image extracted from Cohen and Lodder (2001: 58 catalogue reference 27). They also elect to use the spelling Medunetskii.]

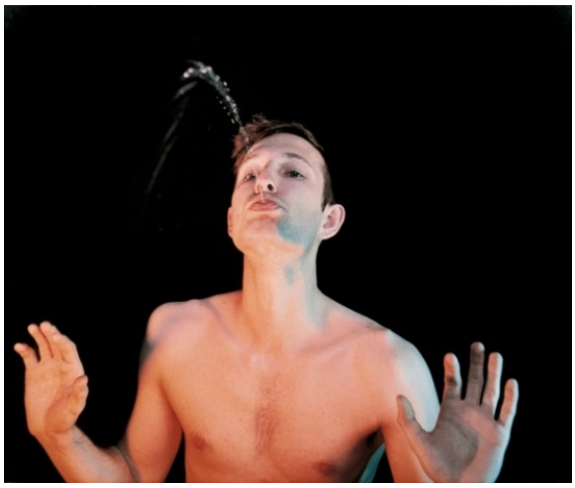


Figure 24. *Self-Portrait as a Fountain*
Bruce Nauman (1966), 20" × 24" (508 mm × 610 mm)
[Image from <http://www.phaidon.com>]

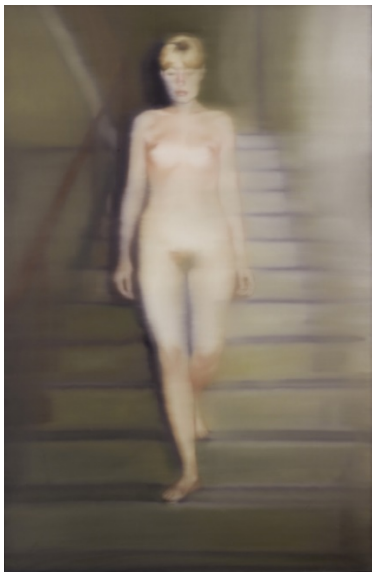


Figure 25. *Ema (Nude on a Staircase)*
Gerhard Richter (1966), oil on canvas, 78 ¾" × 51 ¼" (2000 mm × 1302 mm)
[Image from <https://www.gerhard-richter.com>]



Figure 26. ***The Card Players***
Ivan Puni (1913-1914), wood, wallpaper, tinplate and other materials, dimensions unknown
[Image extracted from Boersma (1994: 31 figure 7)]



Figure 27. ***Painterly Sculpture***
Ivan Puni (1915), oil paint, wood, cardboard and zinc on wood, 14 ½" × 9 ½" × 2 ⅞" (368 mm × 241 mm × 73 mm
[Image from <http://www.tate.org.uk>]



Figure 28. ***Chair and Hat Box***
Ivan Puni (1917-1919), oil on canvas, 38 ⅝" × 21" (981 mm × 533 mm)
[Image extracted from Rudenstine (1981b: 437 figure 992)]



Figure 29. ***Harlequin with a Mask***
Jean Pougny (1944), oil on canvas, 10 ¼" × 8 ⅜" (260 mm × 213 mm)
[Image from <http://www.christies.com>]



Figure 30. *Personnages dans le Jardin*
Jean Pougny (1953), oil on paper on board, 9 ¼" × 13 ½" (235 mm × 343 mm)
[Image from <http://www.christies.com>]

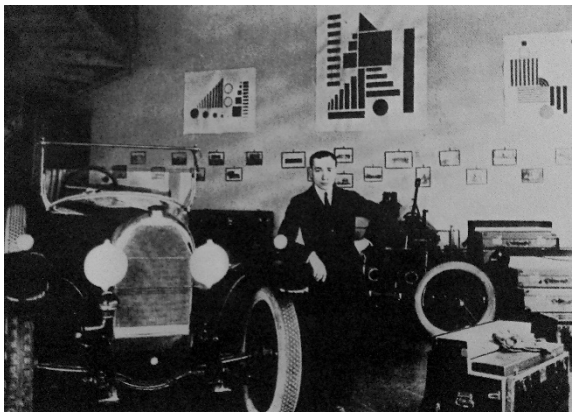


Figure 31. Henryk Berlewi and his exhibition of 1924
Photographer unknown (1924)
[Image extracted from Strzemiński *et al* (1973: 36)]



Figure 32. *Mechano-Faktura*
Henryk Berlewi (1924), screenprint on paper, 24" × 19 ⅝" (610 mm × 500 mm)
[Image from <http://muzeumsztuki.pl>]



Figure 33. Cercle et Carré invitation to the closure of the group's exhibition
Ink on card, dimensions unknown
[Image from <http://torresgarcia.com>]

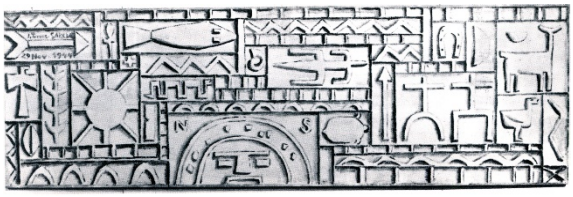


Figure 34. *Pachamama*
Joaquín Torres-García (1944), enamel paint on wall, transferred to canvas in 1972, lost to fire in 1978, 34 ¼" × 110 ¼" (870 mm × 2800 mm)
[Image from <http://torresgarcia.com>]



Figure 35. *Pintura Madí A-3*
Gyula Kosice (1946), enamel paint on board, 25 ¼" × 15 ⅜" (641 mm × 390 mm)
[Image from <http://mnba.gob.ar>]



Figure 36. *Monumento al partigiano*
Pietro Consagra (1947), painted iron on wooden base, 72" (1829 mm) high
[Image from <http://www.gettyimages.ca> (retouched)]

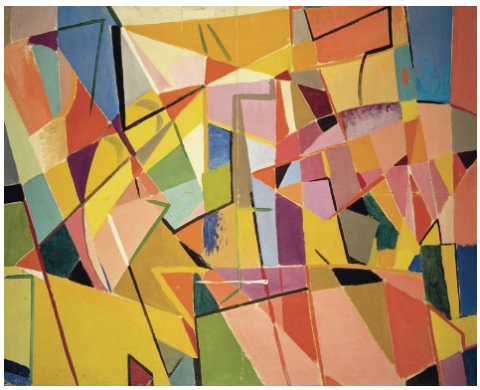


Figure 37. *Composizione*
Antonio Sanfilippo (1947), oil on canvas, 25 ½" × 31 ½" (650 mm × 800 mm)
[Image from <http://archivioaccardisanfilippo.it>]



Figure 38. *Untitled*
Gillo Dorfles (1948), oil and mixed media on cardboard, 14 ⅛" × 19 ⅞" (360 mm × 505 mm)
[Image from <http://zero.eu>]



Figure 39. *L'Aigle Blanc*
Achille Perilli (1948), tempera on paper, 19 ⅝" × 12 ¾" (500 mm × 323 mm)
[Image from <http://www.fondazionemarconi.org>]

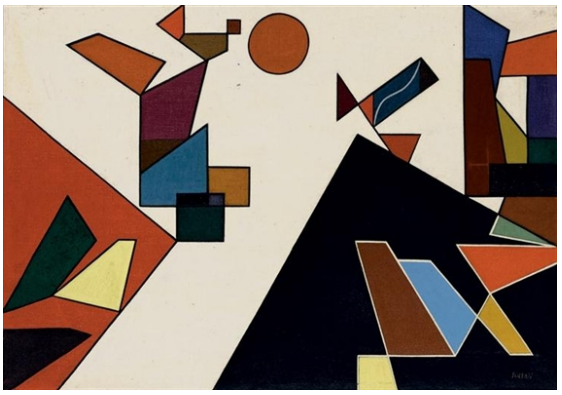


Figure 40. *Sospeso*
Atanasio Soldati (1948), oil on canvas, 18 ⅛" × 25 ½" (460 mm × 650 mm)
[Image from <http://www.mutualart.com>]



Figure 41. ***Modulazione Spaziale***
Galliano Mazzon (1950), tempera on cardboard, 18 ⅞" × 26 ⅛" (480 mm × 665 mm)
[Image from <http://www.museidigenova.it>]

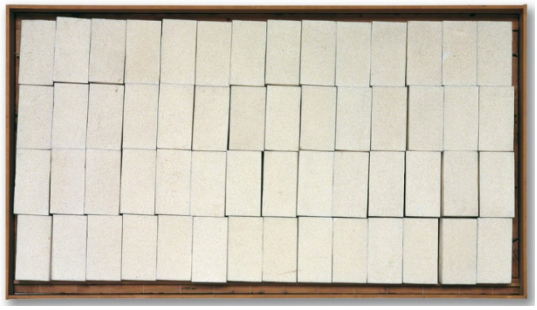


Figure 42. ***Strutturazione Pulsante***
Gianni Colombo (1959), polystyrene foam on wooden structure with electromechanical animation, 30 ¾" × 55 ⅛" × 4 ¾" (780 mm × 1400 mm × 120 mm)
[Image from <https://www.artsy.net>]

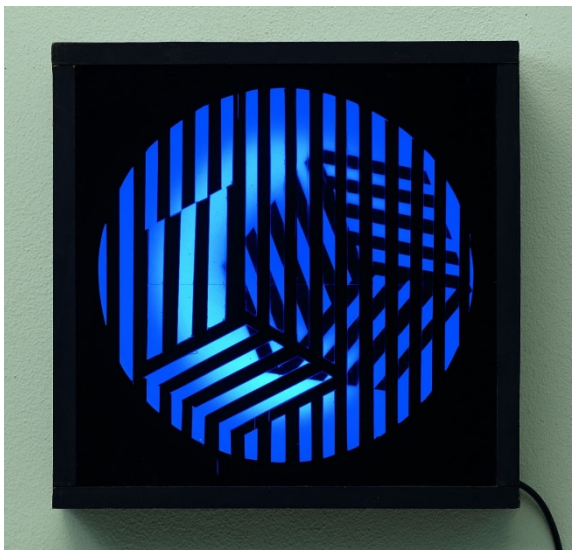


Figure 43. ***Schema luminoso variabile R. Cubo***
Grazia Varisco (1963), wood, Perspex, neon lamp, electric motor, 13 ¾" × 13 ¾" (350 mm × 350 mm)
[Image from <http://www.renatafabbri.it>]

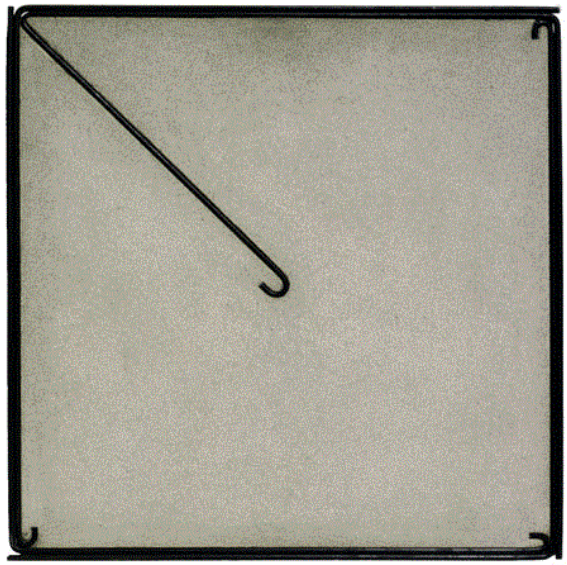


Figure 44. ***Ferrocemento Bianco***
Giuseppe Uncini (1965), painted steel and concrete, 15 ¾" × 15 ¾" (400 mm × 400 mm)
[Image from <http://milanoartexpo.com>]



Figure 45. ***Costruttivo 1/69***
Nicola Carrino (1969) [shown in 2014 exhibition], 28 iron blocks in groups of 4, each block 19 ⅝" × 19 ⅝" × 19 ⅝" (500 mm × 500 mm × 500 mm), shown in arrangement 4.7
[Image from <http://palazzoesposizioni.it>]

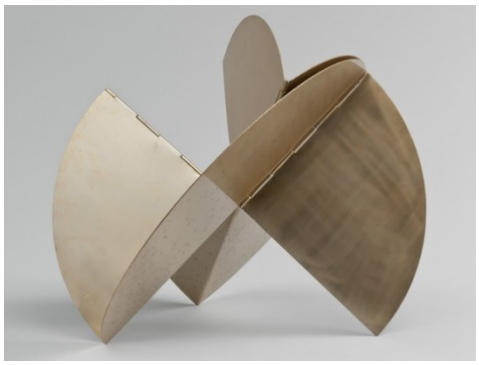


Figure 46. *Sundial*
Lygia Clark (1960), anodised aluminium, dimensions variable, approximately 20 ⅞" × 23" × 18 ⅛" (530 mm × 584 mm × 460 mm)
[Image from <http://www.moma.org>]

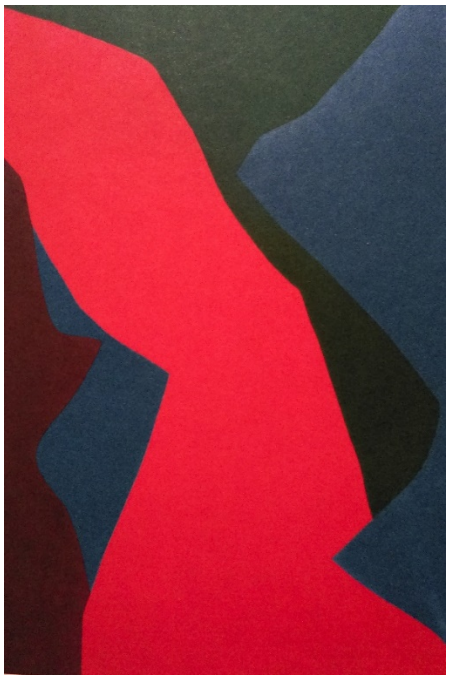


Figure 47. *Untitled (KO-43)*
Equipo 57 collaboration (1958), oil on canvas, 76 ¾" × 52 ⅛" (1950 mm × 1325 mm)
[Image extracted from Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo *et al* (2007: 63)]



Figure 48. *Untitled*
Equipo 57 collaboration (1959), patinated bronze, 17" × 21 ¼" × 20" (430 mm × 540 mm × 510 mm)
[Image extracted from Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo *et al* (2007: 85)]

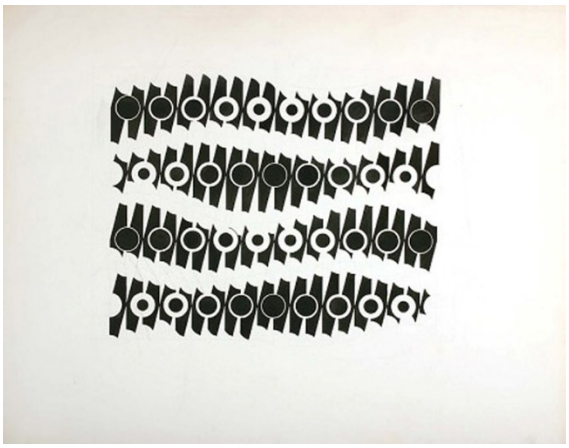


Figure 49. *Anon*
Ed Mieczkowski (1961), ink on paper, 22 ½" × 28 ½" (571 mm × 724 mm)
[Image from <http://www.anonimagroup.org>]

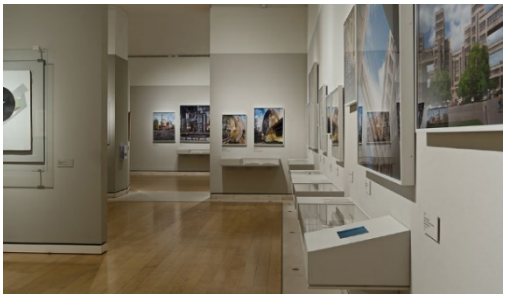


Figure 50. Installation view of *Building the Revolution* (1)
On display at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, between 29 October 2011 and 22 January 2012
[Image from <http://www.stiffandtrevillion.com>]

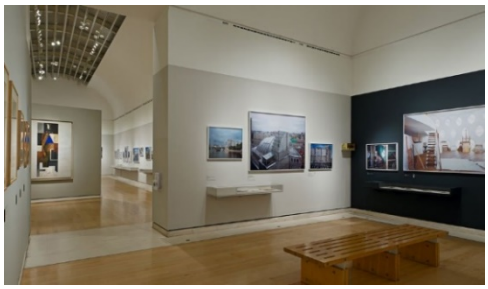


Figure 51. Installation view of *Building the Revolution* (2)
On display at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, between 29 October 2011 and 22 January 2012
[Image from <http://www.stiffandtrevillion.com>]



Figure 52. Installation view of *Lost Vanguard: Soviet Modernist Architecture, 1922-1932*
Richard Pare (2007), on display at MoMA, New York, NY between 18 July and 29 October 2007
[Image courtesy of Richard Pare (2012)]



Figure 53. Installation view of *The Lost Vanguard*
Richard Pare (2006), on display at the Ruina Annexe of The Shchusev Architectural Museum, Moscow, 15 April to July 2006
[Image courtesy of Richard Pare (2012)]



Figure 54. *The Morning of Our Fatherland*
F.S. Shurpin (1948), oil on canvas, 66" × 91" (1676 mm × 2311 mm)
[Image from <http://russianhistoryblog.org>]



Figure 55. *Joseph Stalin and Kliment Voroshilov in the Kremlin*
Aleksandr Gerasimov (1938), oil on canvas, 116 ½" × 152" (2959 mm × 3861 mm)
[Image from <http://www.tretyakovgallery.ru>]



Figure 56. *Cirque Calder*
Alexander Calder (1929-31), wire, wood, metal, cloth, yarn, paper, cardboard, leather, string, rubber tubing, corks, buttons, rhinestones, pipe cleaners, and bottle caps, 54" × 94¼" × 94¼" (1372 mm × 2394 mm × 2394 mm)
[Image from <http://whitney.org>]



Figure 57. ***Calder's Circus Invitation***
Alexander Calder (1929), linoleum cut with ink on pink paper, 15½" × 9" (394 mm × 229 mm), printed by the artist, unsigned and unnumbered edition
[Image from <http://www.calder.org>]



Figure 58. ***Red Frame Construction***
Alexander Calder (1932), painted metal, wood, wire, 35" × 26½" (889 mm × 673 mm) [4]
[Image from <http://www.philamuseum.org>]

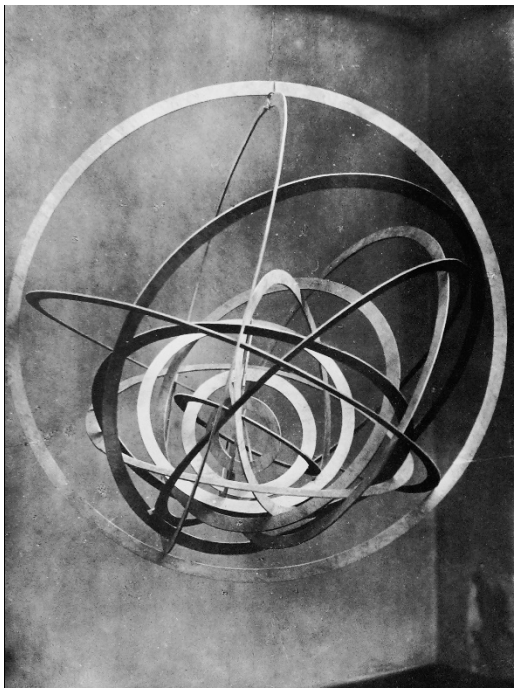


Figure 59. ***Hanging Construction***
Aleksandr Rodchenko (1921)
[Image extracted from Gray (1962: 258 figure 176), date from Lodder (1983: 27)]



Figure 60. ***Elephant***
Alexander Calder (1936), sheet metal and paint, 27½" × 33" × 35" (698 mm × 838 mm × 889 mm)
[Image from <http://www.calder.org>]

[4] <http://www.philamuseum.org> list the dimensions as an implausible 35" × 30¼" × 26½" inches.



Figure 61. ***Untitled***
Alexander Calder (1949), oil on canvas 20” × 16” (508 mm × 406mm)
[Image from <http://www.calder.org>]

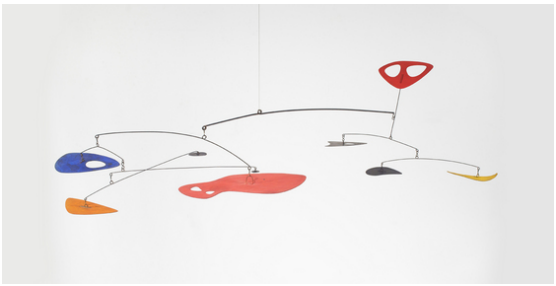


Figure 62. ***Red Ghost***
Alexander Calder (1949), sheet metal, wire, and paint, 58½” × 52” × 40” (1486 mm × 1321 mm × 1016 mm) [dimensions are maxima]
[Image from <http://www.calder.org>]

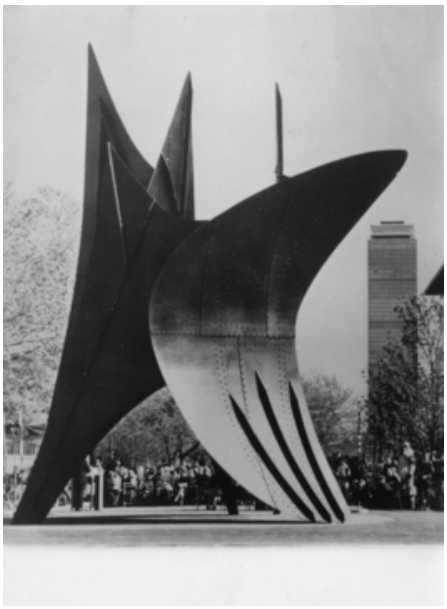


Figure 63. ***La Grande Voile***
Alexander Calder (1965), painted metal and rivets, 40’ (12.2 m) high.
[Image from <http://www.calder.org>]



Figure 64. ***Ghost***
Alexander Calder (1964), painted metal rods, sheet metal and wire, 34’ (10.4 m) high
[Image from <http://www.philamuseum.org>]

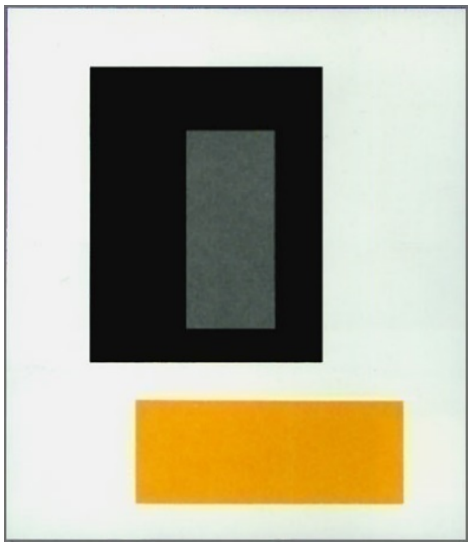


Figure 65. *Untitled*
John McLaughlin (1951), oil and casein on panel, 37 ¾" × 32" (959 mm × 813mm)
[Image from <http://www.abstract-art.com>]

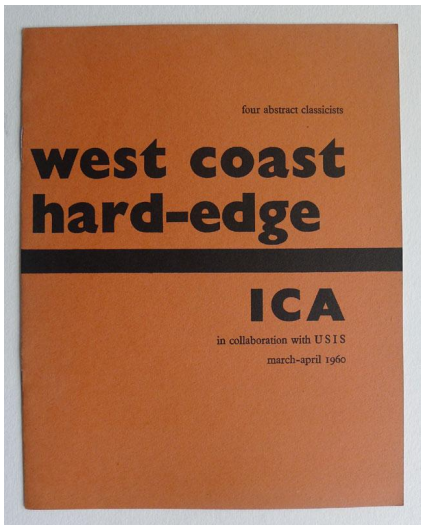


Figure 66. Cover of catalogue for *Four Abstract Classicists: West Coast Hard-edge*
ICA London (1960)
[Image from <http://antiques.gift>]

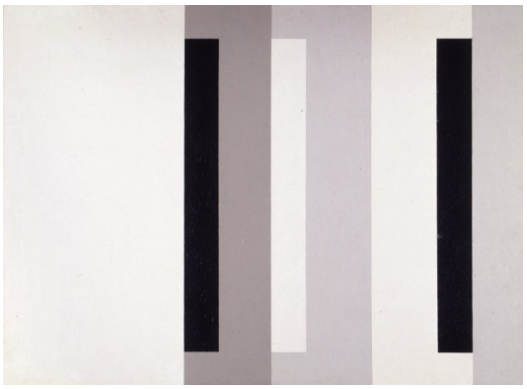


Figure 67. *#6*
John McLaughlin (1959), oil on canvas, 44" × 60 ¼" (1118 mm × 1530 mm)
[Image from <https://www.sfmoma.org>]

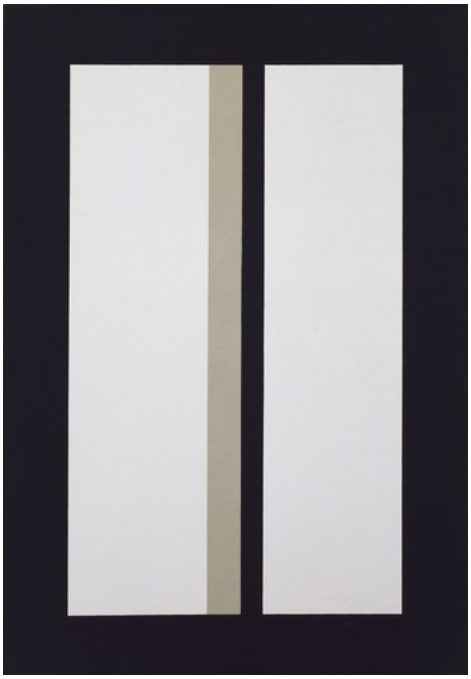


Figure 68. *Number 16 – 1963*
John McLaughlin (1963), oil on canvas, 60" × 42" (1524 mm × 1067mm)
[Image from <http://www.moma.org>]

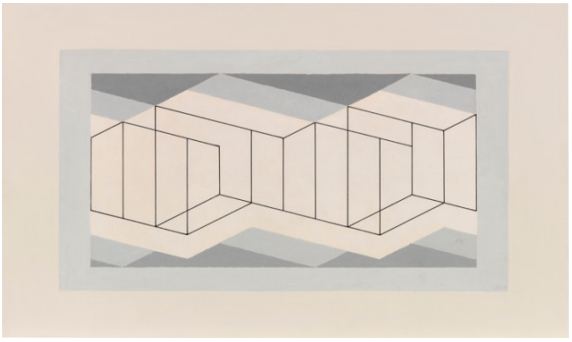


Figure 69. ***Light Construction***
Josef Albers (1945), oil and India ink on Masonite, 17” × 28” in. (432 mm × 711 mm)
[Image from <http://www.albersfoundation.org>]

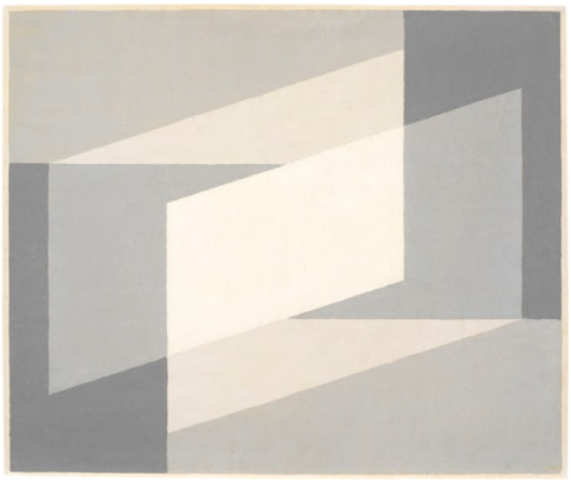


Figure 70. ***Neither…Nor***
Josef Albers (1948), oil on Masonite, 20” × 24” (508 mm × 610 mm)
[Image from <http://www.albersfoundation.org>]



Figure 71. ***Untitled***
John McLaughlin (1963), lithograph, 16” × 22” (406 mm × 559 mm)
[Image from <http://www.moma.org>]



Figure 72. ***Sentinel V***
David Smith (1959), welded stainless steel, 122” × 64” × 16” (3099 mm × 1625 mm × 406 mm)
[Image from <http://www.davidsmithestate.org>]

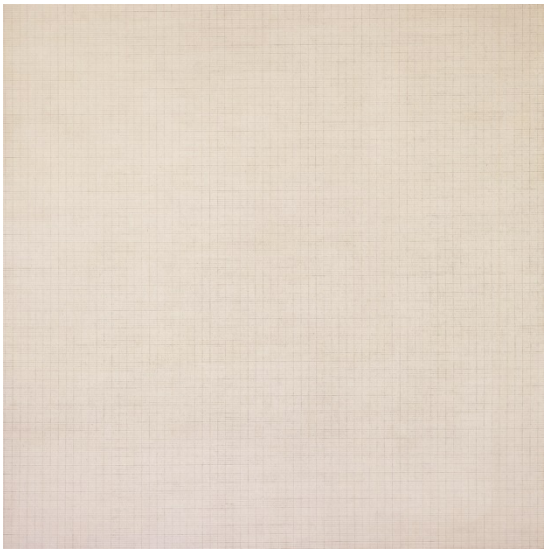


Figure 73. ***Leaf***
Agnes Martin (1965), acrylic and graphite on canvas, 72” × 72 ⅛” (1829 mm × 1832 mm)
[Image from <http://themodern.org>]



Figure 74. Installation view of *Truitt: First New York Exhibition*
Photographer unknown (1963), exhibition on display 12 February to 3 March 1963 at André Emmerich Gallery, New York, NY
[Image from <http://www.annetruitt.org>]

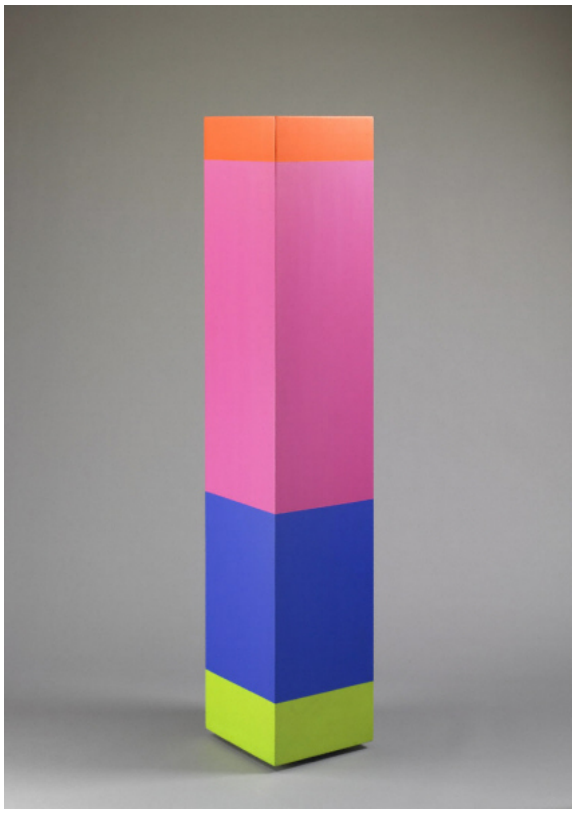


Figure 75. *Morning Choice*
Anne Truitt (1968), acrylic on wood, 72" × 14" × 14" (1829 mm × 356 mm × 356 mm)
[Image from <http://www.annetruitt.org>]



Figure 76. *Early X-Piece*
Kenneth Snelson (1948), wood and nylon thread, 11 ½" × 5 ⅜" × 5 ⅜" (292 mm × 137 mm × 137 mm)
[Image extracted from Snelson (2013: 21)]



Figure 77. *Cantilever*
Kenneth Snelson (1967), aluminium tubes and stainless steel wire, 48" × 48" × 360" (1219 mm × 1219 mm × 9144 mm)
[Image extracted from Snelson (2013: 50)]

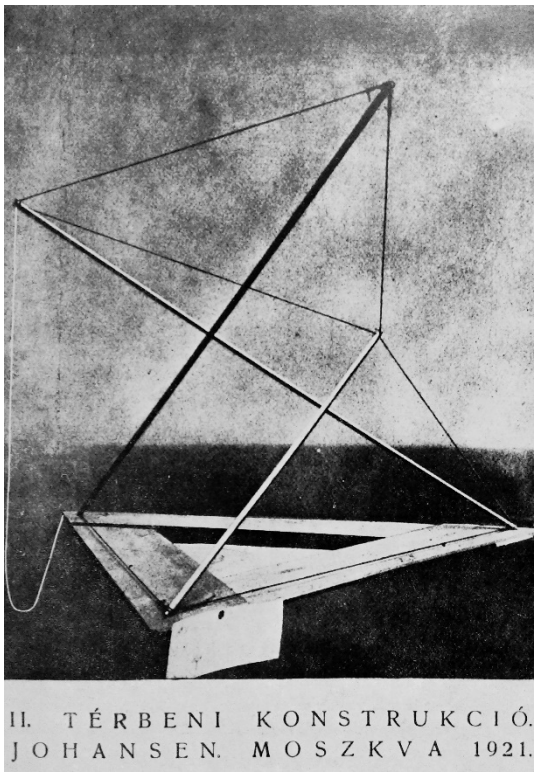


Figure 78. ***Construction in Space***
Karl Ioganson (1921), metal rods and wire, dimensions unknown, but estimated to be 25” × 34 ⅝” × 31 ⅛” (635 mm × 880 mm × 790 mm. Gough (2005: 86)
[Image extracted from Nakov *et al.* (1983: 41)]



Figure 79. ***V-X***
Kenneth Snelson (1968), stainless steel tubes and wire, 72” × 120” × 120” (1829 mm × 3048 mm × 3048 mm)
[Image extracted from Snelson (2013: 49)]

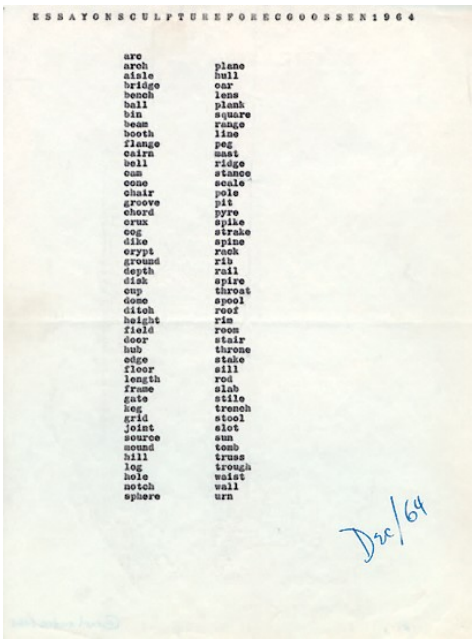


Figure 80. ***Essay on Sculpture for E.C. Goossen***
Carl Andre (1964), typed text on paper, 10 ⅞” × 8 ⅜” (266 mm × 213 mm)
[Image from <http://uk.phaidon.com>]

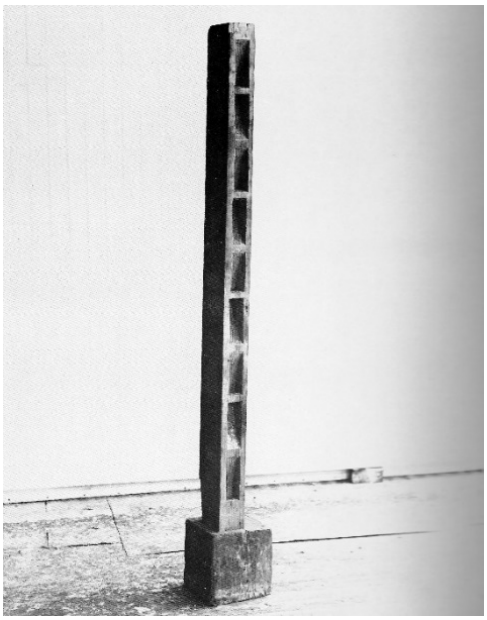


Figure 81. ***First Ladder***
Carl Andre (1958), carved timber upright set in timber base, 68 ¾” × 4” × 6” (1746 mm × 102 mm × 152 mm) upright, 8” × 8” × 8” (203 mm × 203 mm × 203 mm) base
[Image extracted from Buchloh (1980: 98)]



Figure 82. Stella in his studio working on *Getty Tomb (second version)* (1)
Hollis Frampton (1959)
[Image extracted from Buchloh (1980: 36)]



Figure 83. Stella in his studio working on *Getty Tomb (second version)* (2)
Hollis Frampton (1959)
[Image extracted from Buchloh (1980: 39)]



Figure 84. *'monument' 7 for V. Tatlin* [5]
Dan Flavin (1964), seven cool white fluorescent lights, 120" (3048 mm) high
[Image extracted from Govan and Bell (2004: 236 catalogue reference 59)]



Figure 85. *Untitled (from Works by artists in the New York Collection for Stockholm)*
Dan Flavin (1973), screenprint and lithograph on paper, 12" × 9" (305 mm × 229 mm)
[Image from <http://sis.modernamuseet.se>]

[5] See also footnote 6 on page 223 regarding the use of this same title.



Figure 86. *The New York Collection for Stockholm*
Various artists [see footnote 8 on page 143 for the full list] (1973), mahogany box containing sheets of dimensions 12" × 9" (305 mm × 229 mm)
[Image from <http://sis.modernamuseet.se>]



Figure 87. *'monument' for V. Tatlin* [6]
Dan Flavin (1970),[7] eight cool white fluorescent lights, 96" (2438 mm) high
[Image from <http://sis.modernamuseet.se>]



Figure 88. Graphical comparison of Flavin's 1970 work with its representation in his 1973 print
(Figure 87 overlaid with the diagrammatic form from Figure 85)

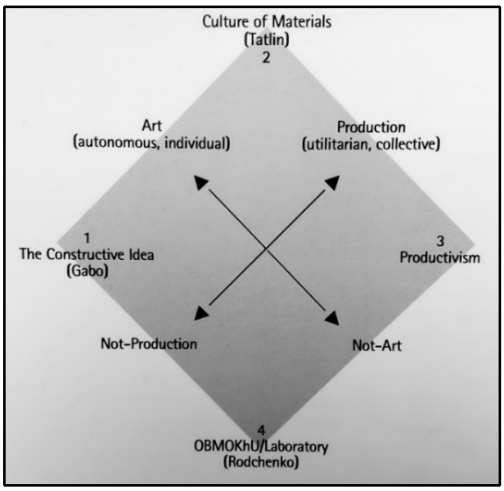


Figure 89. Hal Foster's Semiotic Square
[Image extracted from Foster (1990: 242)]

[6] This is the title from Govan and Bell (2004: 291 catalogue reference 249). Moderna Museet (2015) report the title of the work as *'monument' 7 for V. Tatlin*. (See Figure 84.) Govan and Bell also record this alternative title but indicate that 'this work has been mistakenly titled as *"monument" 7 for V. Tatlin*.' Govan and Bell (2004: 291).

[7] Moderna Museet (2015) only record the donation date of the work as 1973. Govan and Bell (2004: 291) assert that this is a work from 1970.

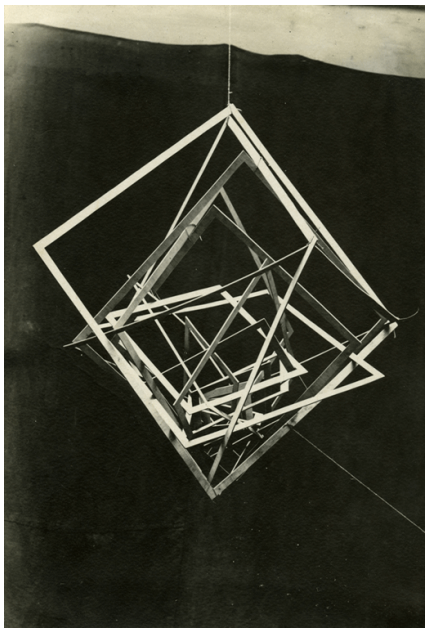


Figure 90. *Hanging Spatial Construction No. 11, Square in Square*
Aleksandr Rodchenko (c.1920), dimensions unknown
[Image from <http://www.tate.org.uk>, date from Lodder (1983: 27)]



Figure 91. Mikhail Kaufman's 1924 photograph of Rodchenko in his studio
[Image from <http://www.mamm-mdf.ru>]

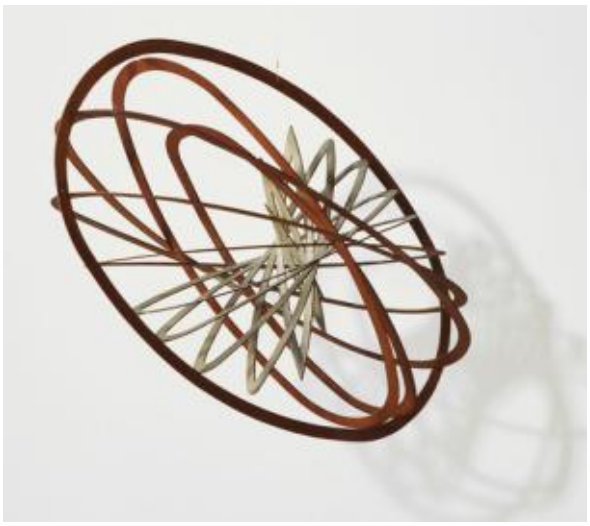


Figure 92. Colour photograph of work depicted in Figure 13
See Figure 13 for details
[Image from <http://www.moma.org>]



Figure 93. *Equivalent VIII*
Carl Andre (1966), recreated in 1969,[8] 120 firebricks, 5" × 27" × 90 ¼" (127 mm × 686 mm × 2292 mm)
[Image from <http://www.artstor.org>]

[8] Originally created as part of a group of works in 1966. This single assemblage was purchased by The Tate Gallery in 1972 and was created with firebricks. As Rider (2015: 13) has expounded, the original work was produced with sand-lime bricks which were shorter in length.



Figure 94. ***Henge on Threshold (Meditation on the year 1960)***
Carl Andre (1971), red Cedar, 83” × 59” × 12” (2108 mm × 1499 mm × 305 mm)
[Image from <http://www.kmm.nl>]



Figure 95. ***Tau and Threshold (Element Series)***
Carl Andre (1971), red Cedar, 60” × 36” × 12” (1524 mm × 914 mm × 305 mm)
[Image from <http://www.themodern.org>]

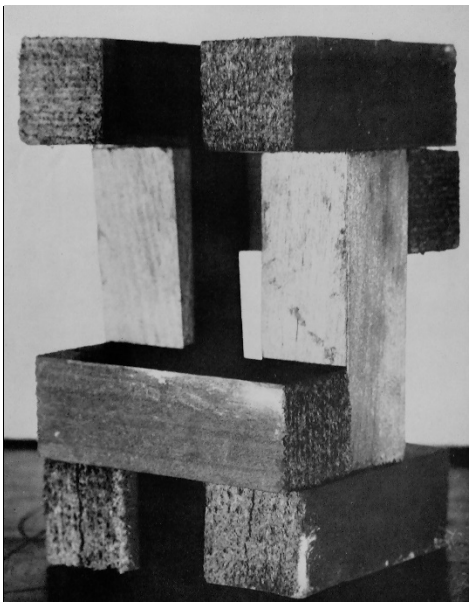


Figure 96. ***Spatial Construction***
Aleksandr Rodchenko (1920), softwood, dimensions unknown
[Image extracted from Gray (1962: 257 figure 175), Gray refers to it as *Construction of Distance*]



Figure 97. ***Spatial Construction No. 25***
Aleksandr Rodchenko (c.1921), softwood, dimensions unknown
[Image extracted from Tupitsyn (2009: 67)]



Figure 98. ***Untitled (Progression)***
Donald Judd (1965), galvanised and lacquered iron, 5” × 69” × 8 ½” (127 mm × 1753 mm × 216 mm)
[Image from <http://www.artstor.org>]

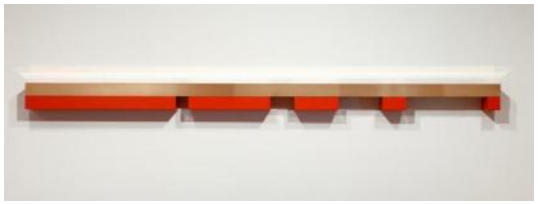


Figure 99. ***Untitled***
Donald Judd (1967), brass tube with painted steel boxes, 6 ¼” × 111” × 6” (159 mm × 2819 mm × 152 mm)
[Image from <http://www.artstor.org>]

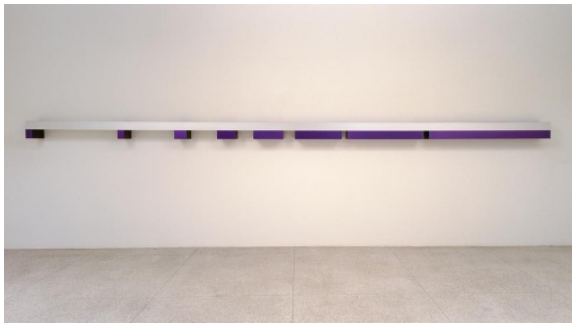


Figure 100. ***Untitled***
Donald Judd (1970), clear anodised and purple anodised aluminium, 8 ¼” × 253 ½” × 8” (210 mm × 6439 mm × 203 mm)
[Image from <http://www.artstor.org>]

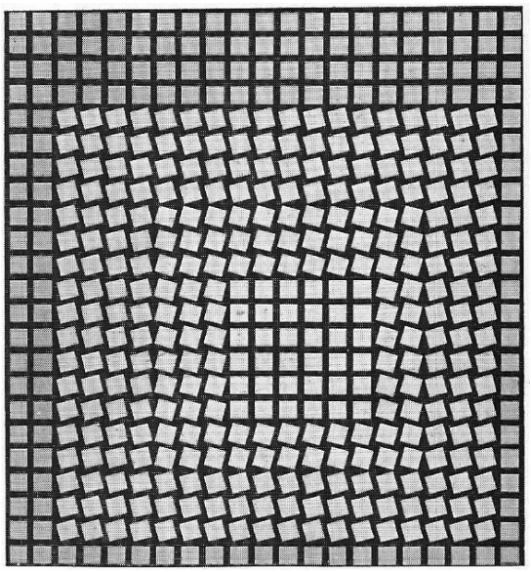


Figure 101. ***Eridan C+***
Victor Vasarely (1962), oil on canvas, 27 ½” × 25 ¼” (698 mm × 641 mm)
[Image extracted from Sidney Janis Gallery (1964), catalogue reference 35]



Figure 102. ***Untitled***
Donald Judd (1965), folded perforated steel plate, 8” × 66” × 120” (203 mm × 1676 mm × 3048 mm)
[Image extracted from Meyer (2000: 88)]

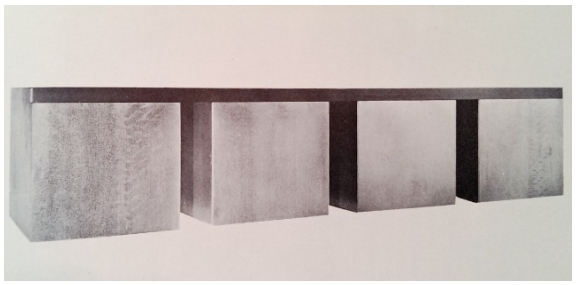


Figure 103. *Untitled*
Donald Judd (1966), galvanised iron and painted aluminium, 40” × 190” × 40” (1016 mm × 4826 mm × 1016 mm)
[Image extracted from Los Angeles County Museum (1967: 127)]

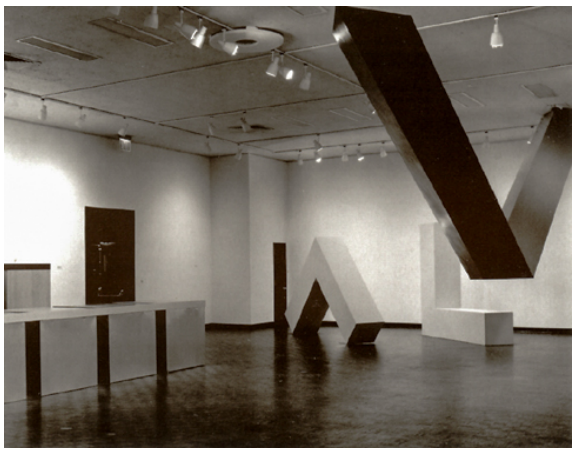


Figure 104. Installation view of *Primary Structures*
On display at the Jewish Museum, New York, NY, 27 April to 12 June 1966
This photograph includes works by Donald Judd and Robert Morris.
[Image from <http://www.radford.edu>]

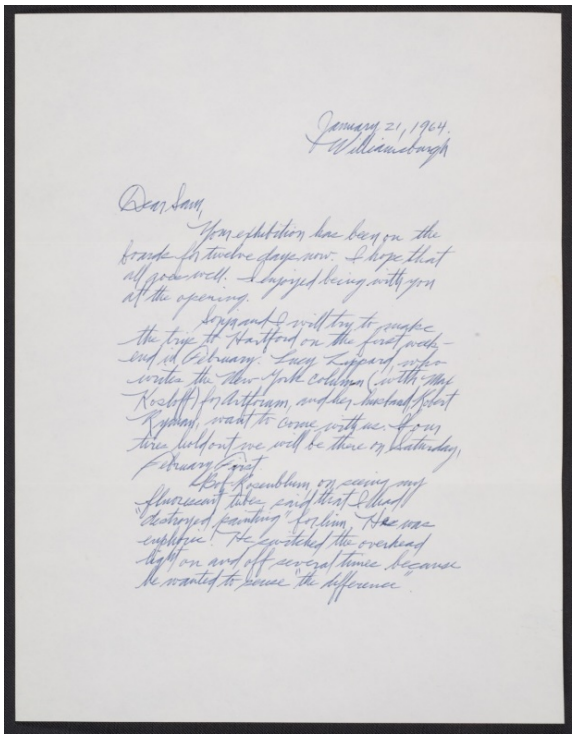


Figure 105. Recto of Dan Flavin’s letter to Sam Wagstaff of 21 January 1964
Dan Flavin letter to Sam Wagstaff dated January 21, 1964. Samuel Wagstaff papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.[9] Box 1, Folder 23, notepaper, 10” × 8” (254 mm × 203 mm)
[Publicly available index of image can be found from Archives of American Art (2014b) item 31.]
See Appendix G, page 258 for the author’s transcript of this letter.

[9] This is the precise wording that the Archives of American Art required as a condition of my use of their high-resolution image in this thesis.

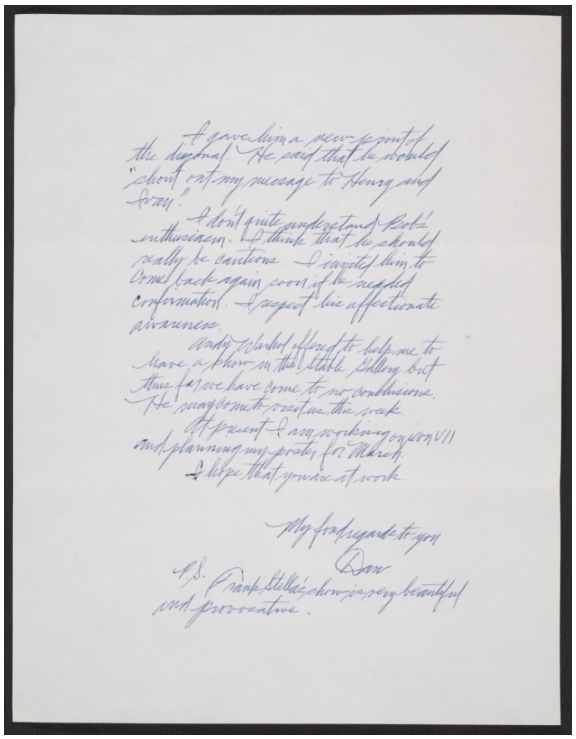


Figure 106. Verso of Dan Flavin's letter to Sam Wagstaff of 21 January 1964
Dan Flavin letter to Sam Wagstaff dated January 21, 1964. Samuel Wagstaff papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.[10] Box 1, Folder 23, notepaper, 10" × 8" (254 mm × 203 mm)
[Publicly available index of image can be found from Archives of American Art (2014b) item 32.]
See Appendix G, page 258 for the author's transcript of this letter.



Figure 107. *Alternate Diagonals of March 2, 1964 (To Don Judd)*[11]
Dan Flavin (1964), one daylight and four cool white fluorescent lamps, measuring 144" (3658 mm) diagonally
[Image from <http://www.sothebys.com>]

[10] This is the precise wording that the Archives of American Art required as a condition of my use of their high-resolution image in this thesis.

[11] Flavin created this work shortly after the recording of the WBAI interview. The text of the argument about the use of the diagonal is in Pacifica Radio Archives (1964: Track 5, 8:48-10:16). See Appendix B, page 226 onwards, for full transcript.

Appendix B Transcript of 1964 radio transmission

The following is the author's transcription of the Pacifica Radio Archives recording (their reference BB3394) 'New Nihilism or New Art?' (recorded on 15 Feb 1964 and originally broadcast by the New York, NY Radio Station, WBAI on 24 March 1964), Bruce Glaser's interview with Judd, Stella and Flavin, Pacifica Radio Archives (1964), all footnotes are the author's. The left margin carries track timings.[1] Blank lines have been introduced between each contribution for ease of labelling in this appendix only. The contributors to the discussion are indicated thus:

BG: Bruce Glaser

FS: Frank Stella

DJ: Donald Judd

DF: Dan Flavin

Track 1 – 09:05

0:01

BG: Recently we've been hearing a lot of talk about the evolution of a new abstraction which as yet hasn't been given any name and some of this work has been seen around in exhibitions at the Sidney Janis gallery in a show that's entitled *The Classic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art*[2] and [*mock snoring heard*] this suggests that the evolution of this abstraction perhaps goes back to the early years of the twentieth century and that you can find precedents for it in Malevich and Mondrian and perhaps other Constructivists or neo-plasticists. Our guests tonight; Dan Flavin, Don Judd and Frank Stella, seem to come under this category of the so-called 'Classic Spirit', I'm not sure the term is accurate, but for want of another term, perhaps we can use that temporarily. Other terms have been applied to your kind of work, I understand that there has been an editorial that appeared in a magazine just recently that referred to this time, while all this work is going on, as the 'time of the white surface' and there are two other exhibitions about, that have been put on to illuminate some points about this style of art, and they are an exhibition at the Hartford Museum in Connecticut[3] and the Jewish Museum, here in New York, recently closed an exhibition entitled *Black and White*.[4] The show up in Hartford was called *Black, White and Gray*.[5] In any event [*muttering about 'originality' by* FS], well just to give a simple description of this work the, the morphology of it may be loosely characterised as extremely simple, sometimes with a colored surface of one hue, and when there is a design it's

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[1] The recording of the broadcast was originally made on one single reel of magnetic tape (recorded at 7 ½ inches per second). This single tape was digitised in 2004. DeShazor (2015). The CD recording, as presented by Pacifica Radio Archives, is split into six apparently arbitrary tracks, and at certain points the start and finish points interrupt the artists' comments when the CD recording is listened to as individual tracks. Where this occurs a suitable note has been included in this appendix. The audio, when the CD is played 'conventionally', remains seamless.

[2] On display 4 February to 29 February 1964. Sidney Janis Gallery (1964).

[3] Known as The Wadsworth Atheneum.

[4] On display 12 December 1963 to 5 February 1964. Meyer (2001: 283 n. 1 and n. 12).

[5] On display 9 January to 9 February 1964. Meyer, (2001: 283 n. 1 and n. 12).

often symmetrical, or repeated [*'or' heard in the background*], or both, but it's exceedingly spare, and to many people these works seem to offer a minimal plastic effect. Now some of the older generation of American painters, who have been an inspiration for the younger painters who work in this direction are Joseph Albers and Barnett Newman and Ad Reinhart. And other artists who do this sort of thing, if you will, that you do, are Ellsworth Kelly and Paul Brach, Nassos Daphnis and many others. I thought I'd just simply start off by reading to you and asking for your comments an editorial from the recent issue of the *Art Voices* magazine. The editorial from the January 1964 issue says, very simply:

2:52

> A point of saturation has been reached in abstract painting so that a simplification in some cases, in some cases over-simplification of patterns seems to be emerging. From tachism to action-painting, from this to that, abstract art seems to be in quest of greater piece of mind and is tending towards a more serene interpretation of inner impulses. We have indeed recently come across virgin surfaces [*laughing in background*] reduced to the utmost simplicity, in fact almost nothing. Huge planes, harmonious spaces, painted in subtle shades, such as pale grey, off-white, purple, yellow, blue, as if we were arriving in modern painting at an era to be known as the time of the white surface. A restful trend that considerably complicates the task of critics…

3:39

In any case this, this editorial goes on, and it says, it has a very strong exhortation to somebody, to the government, to civic centers, to communities, to newspapers, to leading citizens, that somebody ought to do something about it, and it concludes with the line:

> We believe that something ought to be done about it, soon and by all concerned.

And I was just wondering what your reaction is to this exhortation and to this description of your work. Frank, do you have some ideas about this?

4:08

FS: There's a lot you can say, I mean, but, do something about it, I don't know what they mean there, but, you know, people like Brian O'Doherty[6] and everything, everyone's being pointing and saying oh look there's something going around and what they say, do something about it, what they mean by that is, put it in a museum show where you have them all together so we know what it is.

4:27

BG: Well, I have the feeling that, perhaps, he, they are searching for some kind of explanation.

4:33

FS: Well, they want, they want to categorize it, but I mean, and also they, the complaint there, the obvious sort of public and sort of critical complaint is that it's hard to talk about, that thing 'cause there's not enough there to talk about. That seems to be the thing that bothers them. Well. But, I mean, I think that, I think that what we do, or sort of the kind of art that they are talking about, they wanna, they can't tell whether they wanna really, basically criticize it, or whether they wanna actually see what it is. I mean, like O'Doherty says well we should have a show of this and they say the public should see it and something like that and they wanna make it, I think, into a movement so that they can oppose it basically, to something like, you now would have pop art, and then if you could get a good name that would really stick you could then have this other new abstraction. [BG *Do you think*] Which would make everyone happy.

5:18

BG: Do you think that's what the purpose of these shows at Hartford and at the Jewish Museum and at the Janis Gallery is, do you think?

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[6] At the time, he was an art critic with *The New York Times*.

5:25

FS: Yeah, basically its, that idea to show that something else is going on, something new, and they kinda want to crystallize it in some way, categorize it, basically. And it seems to be a pretty basic instinct for the, sort of, art world mechanism. I mean, people like Sam Wagstaff[7] and Sidney Janis[8] has certainly the, the barometers that are, that are, sort of, always late.

5:49

BG: Are you suggesting Frank, that, that the kind of thing you do, or the kind of thing that Dan and Don do, is simply very traditional and it doesn't augur a new trend in abstraction?

6:01

FS: No, I mean, that I don't think that, I mean, there's, the thing that, that everyone's said about what's going on is that, ever, there's always been a trend towards simpler painting. [BG *mmhuh*] And it was bound to happen in one way or another. Bound to get…

6:16

BG: Always, when you say always, do you mean in the twentieth century, or all the time?

6:19

FS: Well, whenever you got, I think whenever painting gets complicated, say Abstract Expressionist, Surrealism, or something like that, you always get, immediately, or adjacent to it in some way there, there's going to be someone who's not painting complicated paintings, someone who's trying to simplify. [BG *Yes*] But you get that, you get that all the time.

6:36

BG: Yeah, well, you're suggesting a kind of counterbalance to a more, you know, complex movement, but this Janis show seems to point out that all through the twentieth century there was this very simple kind of painting, you know, that simply…

6:48

FS: That's right, I think, but in that show, what happened, it seems to me, is when you get to the, so called, the so, as everybody said, the meat of the show, the younger generation, it seems to me that it's not continuous, I mean, I don't know… [BG *mmhuh*] I don't know, when I first showed, Coates[9] in *The New Yorker* said oh, how sad is to find somebody so young and bright back where Mondrian was thirty years ago. And I didn't really feel that way. [BG *huhha*]

7:17

BG: In other words, you feel that there's no connection between you and Mondrian, is it, do you feel foreign to them?

7:21

FS: I think that there, I think that there are obvious, obvious connections, I mean, you're always related to something, I mean, obviously it's related to, I'm related to more geometric or a simpler painting, but the motivation doesn't seem to have anything to do with that, with that, with the European geometric painting, I mean the obvious comparison, I think, with my work would be with Vasarely[10] and I can't think of anything I like less.

7:44

BG: Why, why do you compare yourself with Vasarely Frank? Is it because, you don't deal with optical illusions or anything like that do you?

7:52

FS: Well, it's basically, no I, it has very, it has less of the illusionism, less illusionism than Vasarely say, but still it is that whole group of Vasarely, Vasarely's son, and Morell, Morrei, or

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[7] Samuel J. Wagstaff Jr was the curator of the exhibition *Black, White and Gray* at The Wadsworth Atheneum in 1964. Meyer (2001: 77).

[8] Collector and then gallery owner.

[9] Referring to Robert M. Coates: a prolific contributor to *The New Yorker*.

[10] Referring to Victor Vasarely, Hungarian born artist. Born 1906, died 1997.

something like that.[11] [DJ *Morellet*] And they've used actually, I can't, can't think of his name, the Frenchman, but they had that group that they had,[12] and it actually painted before I did all the patterns, the basic designs that are in my painting. Not the way that I did it, but, I mean, you could find the schemes or what would be, like what are actually the sketches I make for my own paintings have been painted in France by Vasarely in that sort of group over the last seven or eight years.[13] You know, I didn't even know about it. [BG *Yes*] But yeah that's the kind of thing that's there. But I mean, in spite of the fact that they used those ideas, those basic schemes, it still, it doesn't have really anything to do with it. [BG *mmhuh*]

8:45

BG: Well, what, how do you feel about that, as somebody has painted your paintings, you know, several years before you and they've discarded it or they haven't made much of it…

8:54

FS: Well, yeah. Well, it just seems funny, or I guess it seems like a curio, I mean, I find essentially anyway, all that European geometric painting is sort of post-Bill school,[14] I find that a kinda curiosity somehow. It's very, it's very dreary.

0:00

Start of Track 2

Track 2 – 15:06

0:02

DJ: There's an enormous break between that work and Frank's work or other present work in the United States [BG *you, you feel that?*] Because Vasarely is a continuum, continuous development from what was going on in the thirties, in fact he was doing it in the thirties, [BG *huhum*] and it has a smaller scale and a great deal of composition and the qualities that European geometric painting in the [FS *you describe*] twenties and thirties had [FS *yeah, the one thing*] and that gives it an enormous break despite the similarity in the patterns or anything, the scale itself is just one thing to pin down.

0:41

FS: The other thing is that they really strived for a thing that they called relationships or relation, or what I call relational painting and the whole scheme of their idea of balance, like you would do something in one corner, you would balance it with something in the other corner, [BG *yes*] now you said that they characterised the new painting as being symmetrical, very often, like Ken Noland will put things in the center, I'll use the symmetrical pattern and stuff like that. But, we use this symmetrical thing in a, in a really different way, it's like it's non-relational, the, the impact like in the, in the newer American painting, whatever you wanna call it, say Noland or myself or maybe almost use Ray Parker or something like that. But anyway, they strive to get the thing in the middle and symmetrical, but it's just a kinda force, just to get the thing on the canvas, in the middle of the canvas, and that the balance factor isn't, isn't very important, I mean it's not trying to jockey everything.

1:33

BG: What do you mean, that they wanna get the thing on the canvas [FS *well*] what is the thing?

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[11] I think that he was trying to recall François Morellet's name. Born 1926, died 2016.

[12] Glaser, in the *ARTnews* article and in the Battcock anthology, reports this group as being the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel. Glaser ((1966: 55) and (1968: 149)).

[13] Although Stella mentions him by name, it is worth noting that Victor Vasarely was not a member of the group, but his son, Jean-Pierre Yvaral, was. However, it is fair to say that Vasarely had a strong influence on the group's practice.

[14] Glaser, in the *ARTnews* article and in the Battcock anthology, clarifies this as post-Max Bill school. Glaser ((1966: 55) and (1968: 149)). Referring to Max Bill, Swiss born artist. Born 1908, died 1994.

1:36

FS: Well, you have to, you have to, I guess you'd have to describe it as the image, either the image or the scheme, whatever it is that they're really interested in. Say, Ken would use concentric circles, he wants to get them in the middle because it's the easiest way to get them there, you know, rather than put them off to the side. And he wants them there in the front. Sort of on the surface of the canvas or up-front, and that you end up, if you're that much involved with the surface of anything, you are bound to, symmetrical thing is the most natural thing to do. I mean, because as soon as you get into any kind of asymmetrical placement you get into a terrible kind of fussiness which I think is the one thing that most of the painting now wants to avoid. And the sort of, that kind of fussy choice, it becomes a sort of arch. I mean, when you are always making these delicate balances, it seems, it seems to present too many problems. [BG *huhuh*]

2:30

BG: Do you, Dan, find a relationship in your work to what Frank is talking about, that, in reference to his work?

2:38

DF: Well, yes and no, one thing that I'd like to say is that I don't look upon my work as a distinct reaction to Abstract Expressionism, I look, look at it as a proposal, you know, which digs into ground which stood long before, before target painting reiterated itself. You know, I have in the context of my own work proposed other things that were simple, other propositions. But, which, you know, in a sense, you know, might have been more clearly a reaction to, say, de Kooning. But, I think what I do now doesn't relate in that way and I don't, I don't feel, feel it that way, I feel it as a proposal. [BG *uhuh*] But, no, design wise, in a sense, or the mechanics, I don't look on asymmetrical/symmetrical difference as, you know, being the fussy against the straight or something like that. I think I can live with either, you know, when the situation presents itself. [BG *uhuh*] And, in fact, I was thinking about using fluorescent tubes the way I do, they always seem to me to maintain their own distinction while working with each, as they remain there, they keep their own distinction in the group, each tube exists of itself. You know, as an equal entity in the whole. So it almost looks like it works against symmetry and asymmetry, and I've been thinking about this more and more lately, that, that they are independent of each other, though they can be appear to be related. You know, for instance I can use all white tubes [BG *uhuh*] and, and yet there are different whites, you know, there are four or five whites.

4:53

BG: Well, then actually the problems that you deal with of course, don't necessarily require that you consider the problem of symmetry or asymmetry, in other words, you're working in another realm. Or, it would seem to me that you're working with another kind of vocabulary, so to speak.

5:08

DF: Yes, but it can appear to be the old stuff, or the old fussy stuff if you will… [BG *uhuh*]

5:16

FS: Yeah, but it's pretty hard. I mean, sort of, of the work of yours that I've seen it still seems to me that the major force in your work comes towards a kind of, the obvious thing that they talk about, the simplification and also it tends to be symmetrical. I mean, it seems to me, like how can you avoid it, basically, when you take a box situation you sort of forced yourself into a symmetrical situation. And the chances of you making a box that's a sort of outlandishly long, say, rectangle one way or the other are very slim, and it's gonna tend to be more square, given the thing that you use.

5:51

DF: Well, I think, I think what you're talking about though, I've had that experience, you know.

5:55 FS: Yeah, well, [DF *yeah*] I would say that [DF *that's true*], that the box is what it's about were symmetrical and that the thing about putting the long fluorescent light on the wall at an angle, say, that might lean towards something, but it would seem to me that would lean, I don't know, reminds me anyway, or the idea of the balance in there, it strikes me as something like some of the kinda Kandinsky things, of the long poles, sort of, sort of that kind of thing, imploding into space, at that kind of angle.

6:19 DF: Yeah, I have to think about that. [*laughter*]

6:23 BG: I, I've heard that you know, some people, I've heard one statement, somebody said that they find symmetry extraordinarily sensuous and this came from a, an artist who works, in, more in your vein. And on the other hand, I've heard some people, or generally the comment is that symmetry is very austere. I was wondering what your intentions are in, in either case. That is if you use symmetry, say either Frank or Don, because, I guess, maybe, in your two cases it applies more, do you think you are trying to create a sensuous effect or an austere effect, do you, do you think this is relevant to the operation of the surface of your work? Don?

7:03 DJ: No I don't think it has [*laughter*] it has, to be either one [BG *uhuh*] I'm interested in spareness but I don't think it has any connection to symmetry.

7:11 FS: Yeah actually, your work, well, well from what I've seen, it's sort of, it's really symmetrical actually, the only piece I can think of that really deals with any kind of symmetry[15] is sort of, the one box which is sort of square with the plane cut out. [DJ *yeah*] And, that's not really symmetrical in a way. [DJ *yeah, but I don't*]. But it's not consistently symmetrical.

7:29 DJ: I don't have any ideas as to symmetry or lack of it. I think they're symmetrical, because, as you indicated, I didn't want to get into the, I wanted to get rid of any compositional effects. And the obvious way to do it is to be symmetrical. Now, I've, you can, not have any composition and still be asymmetrical which you certainly can, I think, then you may as well do that too. I don't intend to do it as a symmetrical work forever [BG *huhuh*] anyway.

8:02 BG: Why is it that you want to avoid the so-called compositional effects, Don?

8:07 DJ: Well, it has all the structure that I was feeling and everything, the whole European tradition which suits me fine it's down the drain. To point out that on the Vasarely panting in the Janis show, that while it has optical effects within the squares there are never enough, and he has well three, four squares, one slanted and tilted another inside the other, and this is all arranged, which is about five times more composition and juggling than he needs. If you take it into…

8:44 BG: In other words, it's too busy?

8:45 DJ: …the terms of somebody like Poons, or something [BG *yes*] but this composition has the effect of the type of order and the quality that old[16] European painting had, which I find pretty objectionable.

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[15] Glaser ((1966: 56) and (1968: 150)) mistakenly records this word as 'asymmetry', although Meyer (2000: 197) does not repeat this error.

[16] Glaser (1966: 56), Glaser (1968: 150) and Meyer (2000: 198) record this as 'traditional'.

9:00 BG: Well there seems to be another, several other characteristics that accompany, you know, this prevalence of symmetry in these paintings also, as seems to be inferred from the things we've said, there's a very finished look in all of this work. There's a complete negation of the painterly approach that, I think, characterises the majority of twentieth century painting. Writers have written that the, that twentieth century painting has been mainly concerned with emphasising the artist's presence in the work, in other words that you felt that there was this unfinished quality that was there and you felt that you could experience or feel that you could relive the experience of the artist painting the picture. And all this seems to be denied in your work too. In fact it has [FS *well*], very clearly, an industrial look. [FS *yeah*] And I'm wondering, I'm wondering about that.

9:50 FS: Well, I think you can characterize it very simply, I mean, the thing that's disappearing very quickly is the artist's tools or the artist's, the traditional artist's brush and the, maybe even artist's oil paints. You said industrial. I mean, you'll see, I think all of us three, Dan, maybe you use oil paint on some of those, but it mostly commercial paint, I think, that all three of us use.

10:13 DF: Yeah, I mean, [FS *it also*] no, but it takes on the look anyhow. [FS *yeah*] I can see that.

10:17 FS: And also generally, you tend towards larger brushes, in a way Abstract Expressionism started, I mean sort of, de Kooning thing, the house-painter's brush and the house-painter's technique. [DJ *Pollock's use of commercial paint*] Yeah, the aluminum paint, and stuff like that. I think that what happened is gradually, I mean, at least for me, I'll just talk from my way, what happened is that I was, well when I first started painting was sort of, I would see Pollock, de Kooning and sort of, New York school Abstract Expressionism and you just, the basic thing there the thing, the one thing that they all had which I didn't have was art [*sic*] school basis. In other words they were brought up on drawing. And basically they all ended up painting or drawing with the brush. And they got away from smaller brushes in an attempt to free themselves they got involved in commercial paints and house-painting brushes, but still was basically the, the drawing with the brush or drawing with the paint which I think it characterize [*sic*] almost all of twentieth century painting up to now anyway. And it just seemed to me, or the way my painting kept going, that, that was less and less necessary. And in fact the one thing that I wasn't, I wasn't going to do, I wasn't going to really draw with the brush, I'm just going to…

11:29 BG: What, what, what induced this conclusion, that, that it wasn't necessary any more, that you didn't need to execute the painting on this premise?

11:35 FS: Well it seems to me that what happens is that when you're painting with a, well when you have a brush and you've got, actually got paint on the brush and you ask yourself why you're doing whatever it is you are doing with the, what inflection you're going to actually make with the brush and with the paint that's on the t, on the end of the brush it's all, it's like, well the obvious thing is handwriting, it's inflection or something like that, and I, and I just didn't have anything to say in those terms. I mean, I didn't want to make variations, I didn't wanna record a path, I didn't want to do any of those things, I wanted basically to get the paint down. I mean one of, I mean one of the things that I got into was a wise guy or whatever you wanna call him, who used to make fun of my paintings, he said well the best, and he didn't like Abstract Expressionism anyway, but he wasn't a painter, and he said well they would be good painters if they could only keep the paint as good as it is in the can. [*much laughter*] And that's all, that's what I try to do. [DJ *so you, so you made it*] Made it, I try to keep the paint…

12:33 BG: Well, actually what you are implying is that you're really making, Don at least has implied this, and Frank has, and Dan hasn't, that you, is that you are trying to make a break with traditional painting, Dan says that he his is trying to make a proposal and he is not trying to destroy painting but, [DF *yes*] it seems to me that what you, what Frank and Don are doing is trying to destroy painting, wouldn't you say this?

12:54 FS: Well it's just that you can't go back, it's not a question of destroying anything, I mean, if something's used up, something's done, something's over with, what's the point of you being involved in it?

13:03 DJ: Root hog, or die.[17]

13:05 FS: What?

13:06 DJ: Root hog, or die. Got bored or…

13:08 BG: In other words, are you suggesting that there are no more solutions to be, or no more problems that exist in painting, you know that, that a painter can, can work with?

13:17 FS: Well [DJ *yes*], what we're working with, it seems to me that we have a set of problems, or at least it seems to us anyway that we have problems.

13:23 DJ: I mean, I mean, you know one indication is [FS *you got problems*], one indication of this kind of work is Morris Louis [*sic*] instant masterpieces, you know, where as soon as they appear everybody looks at them and says they are masterpieces. [FS *yeah, yeah*] Late diagonals. [FS *yeah*] You know. Because, the, you know, the terminology is so clearly abroad, in a sense, you know, it was almost like it was expected. [BG *uhuh*] You know.

13:46 FS: Well, Louis is a really, it's hard to go into him, 'cause, I mean, he's sought of a really interesting case, I mean, there's someone that was an ab…, well in every sense, all his instincts were Abstract Expressionist [DJ *mmm*] and he was terribly involved with all the…

13:58 DJ: Well, well, that's what I'm hinting at I think.

14:00 FS: Yeah, and, and everybody put his paintings to eye, I went to his opening at French and Company[18] and I was, like, the only one there for about twenty minutes, or so, and they were like, you know, nobody looked at those paintings, I mean like, Massacano[19] or somebody had an opening whether that was the thing to do, they wouldn't even go look at the paintings, when they showed them at French and Company, literally. [BG *uhuh*] And they were dismissed as

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[17] United States' idiomatic reference to self-dependence. Glaser, Foster and Meyer (Glaser (1966: 58), Glaser (1968: 157), Foster (1996: 53), in a subheading, and Meyer (2000: 199)) all mistakenly insert a comma after 'Root'. This parsing error appears to have been carried over from Lippard's working transcript. According to the Archives of American Art extract seen in Dubay (2011: 199). [Also see *Note B* under footnote 86 on page 193 and footnote 24 on page 238.]

[18] Louis had two major exhibitions at French and Company in New York, NY in successive years. These were both titled *Morris Louis*; the first was held between 10 April and 2 May 1959 and the second was open between 23 March and 16 April 1960. Maryland Institute College of Art (2015).

[19] I think that Stella was intending to refer to the American-born artist Nicholas Marsicano. Born 1908, died 1991.

thin, I mean, they still are. I mean, in *ARTnews*... [*laughing*] Tom Hess[20] can't find them anything more than merely decorative. But anyway, but those paintings, they're tied in. But he, but he, thought he had to move too, in a way. [DF *uhuh*]

14:36

DF: I want to say two things, which is off the track, in a sense, the thing is, first of all my work becomes more and more an industrial object, in this, in the way I accept the fluorescent light for itself. You see. It is an industrial object, it's just a reiteration of it, or a disorientation[21] of it.

0:00

So, I let, I just wanted to put that in. [BG *uhuh*] And the other thing is, the thing I think it's important to talk about, I think Don has a sense of this, is that the painting-as-object, you know as, as a physical object, I think Frank is the farthest from that of us.

Start of Track 3

Track 3 – 06:19

0:06

BG: What do you mean by that then?

0:07

DF: Well, then let's find out. [*laughter*] [DJ *the Father, but the farthest*...] [FS *no that's*]

0:12

FS: Well, it isn't, well anyway, any painting is an object, I mean, the argument that I always had, or that you always get into with people that want the old values in painting, essentially they're all the humanistic values, is that they always find on the canvas, if you pin them down, there's always something there, more than actually the paint and the canvas, in other words, that would not be, shall we say, Alexander Eliot,[22] or the general public, or any kind of really felt, any kind of really felt opinion has it, that there's always something there more than what's actually there. And certainly my paintings are, sort of, based on the fact that there's only what's there is there. [BG *uhuh*] And that makes it an object, I mean, 'cause it really is an object, and I think anyone that actually does it, or gets involved enough in it, finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever it is that he is doing, he's making a thing.

0:00

0:58

BG: Are you trying to say that what you are doing is, when you want to assert the painting as an object, or the construction as an object, that you want it to be felt as a, a, a three dimensional presence rather than [FS *no actually*] as a compositional...

1:11

FS: That's the one thing I don't want, I think all of that should be taken for granted, like I mean, basically I think the discussion of the thing as object is sort of, in a, in a sense ridiculous, I mean, particularly as a painting, a painting, I don't know, is a, is a, is a painting, the thing that I would like to see is, sort of, if the thing is either lean enough, accurate enough, or right enough, you would just be able to look at it, in others words, all I want anyone to get out of my paintings, or[23] all I ever get out of them is the fact that you can see it all[24] without any confusion, in that sense. What you see is what you see.

1:45

BG: Yes. But that doesn't leave too much though after that does it?

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[20] Editor of *ARTnews* 1946-1972.

[21] Jones (1996: 169) transcribes this as 'reorientation'.

[22] Between 1945 and 1960 he was the art editor of *Time* magazine. Eliot (2012).

[23] Glaser (1966: 58), Glaser (1968: 158) and Meyer (2000: 199) transcribe this erroneously as 'and'.

[24] Glaser ((1966: 59) and (1968: 158)) transcribes 'see it all' erroneously as 'see the whole idea'. However, this is a result of Lippard's editing, according to the Archives of American Art extract seen in Dubay (2011: 199). [Also, see *Note B* under footnote 86 on page 193 and footnote 17 on page 236.]

1:47 FS: Well, I mean, I don't know what else there is. I mean, if you can really get a visual sensation that is pleasurable or worth looking at [BG *yes*] or, or enjoyable or something [BG *yes*] that's, or if it really does something to, to want you to see, just worth something, to make something worth looking at…

2:00 BG: But some would claim, as I said at the very beginning, that the effect is, the plastic effect [*someone lights a cigar or a cigarette*], so to speak, is minimal, that is you're just giving us a symmetrical grouping of lines and you're giving us, maybe, one color and stripes. You're, one would assume that a nineteenth century landscape painting offers more for contemplation than your painting does. [FS *well*] Simply because it's more complicated, if for no other reason.

2:27 DJ: I don't think it is more complicated, actually.

2:29 BG: You don't.

2:30 DJ: No.

2:31 FS: No, because you see, I mean, if you really start, I mean, what you're saying essentially is that it's more complicated because there are two things working, you have the deep space and then you have the actual way it's painted. [BG *yes, yes*] In other words you have the, the painterly application and you have, you have paint applied in such a way you can see how that's done and then you can read how the figures work and the thing and what kind of depth there is. Well, if you look closely enough at all the, let's get off my painting a little bit, or any, say, modern paint, take Ken Noland's for example, which is, say, even simpler, just a few stains on the ground, on the ground and even if you look, if you wanna look hard enough, if you wanna wait around long enough, if you wanna look at the depth and the problems there, there is just as much problematic space, just as much space you can actually get involved in, in looking at, and there's just as much involvement if you want. It's a little bit more simplified but, technically you can worry and wonder how he painted it the way he did. And in, say, some of them it's actually extremely complicated the way he would, say, have to tip the canvas, or have to, the way he would drip the canvas in order to get it to do those things. The technical problems would be just as complex. I mean, you can get just as involved if you really wanted to make the effort. [BG *uhuh*] I mean like, a lot of the things about the old master in nineteenth century painting is talking about the glazes, what you mixed, how he did this, that, so it's, so it's supposedly complicated.

3:48 DJ: It's got a great reputation for being profound and universal and all that [*laughter*] but, it doesn't necessarily, [DF *antidote to the nineteenth century*] say it to the world. Yeah.

4:02 DF: Some pretty sloppy technical work here.

4:03 FS: But, I don't know how to, how to get around that part, that it, just wanna make something that's interesting to look at right now. Or worth looking at, that's all. I mean, but basically I want it to be, to be, so that you can't get around the fact that it's supposed to be entirely visual. [BG *uhuh*]

4:17 BG: In other words, you want to completely, destroy any, any, reference to illusions at all…

4:21 FS: I don't wanna destroy anything, I mean, I just wanna say that the, it's worth doing to make something for the eyes, that's all. [BG *uhhuh*] That's basically there's something there to look at.

4:29 BG: But then there comes another problem. If you make so many canvases like one another, you know, how much can the eye be, how shall I say, stim…, be stimulated by so much repetition, that is one canvas after the other. One canvas after another looking like the next one. How, how do you…

4:50 FS: Well, I mean, that's, that's really a relative problem, because obviously it strikes different people different ways and also, I mean, I find, I find, say Milton Resnick, for example, as repetitive as I am, sort of [*snigger*], if not more so. The change in any given artist's work, sort of, picture to picture, isn't that great. I mean, look at the, take the Pollock show, I mean, if you wanna, if you wanna take up, in the Pollock show, say, you have a big span of years, you could break it down, say, three or four things. But any given period, say, any given interest to the artist when he's working on a particular interest or problem, whatever it is, the paintings tend to be a lot alike. I mean, I, I see, I think it's really hard to find any artist that isn't like that. It seems to me a natural thing rather than unnatural. But I think that you can, and also, obviously, you object to some kinds of painting. I mean, I mean, everyone does, I mean, you obviously, everyone finds some things more boring than others. And it obviously works in visual schemes. [BG *uhuh*]

5:51 BG: Did you want to make some comment Don?

5:52 DJ: Yeah. I wanted to say something about the painterly thing for jobs. That, I think that it certainly involves relationship between what's outside nature, a figure or something and the 0:00 artists actually painting that thing, and his particular feelings at the time, and I think this is certainly just one area of feeling and no larger an area of feeling than any other.

Start of Track 4

Track 4 – 11:57

0:03 And I for one am not interested in it in my own work, and I can't do anything with it, I don't think, I think it's been fully exploited and I think it's probably false for a lot of reasons, and I don't see why it should be made exclusively art. [BG *uhuh*]

0:25 BG: In other words, are you suggesting that there should be an art without feeling? Is it or am I reading you wrong?

0:29 DJ: No. I wouldn't, no you're reading me wrong, because I say this is one kind of feeling, [BG *yeah*] this painterly feeling, [BG *I see*] which…

0:36 BG: Uhuh, well how would you characterize [DJ *and that*] the feeling, if it's not in your work, if it's not austere or if it's not finished, what is, what, how might you, what are you striving for?

0:47 DJ: Yeah [*laughs*] [*others laugh*] you can't paraphrase what the call or name of something is, right [BG *uhuh, well okay*] better it talking around it [BG *okay*] I, [BG *if you can talk around it*] [FS *well, I mean*], I certainly wanna be austere somewhat, but that's a very loose [FS *yeah, can I?*]

1:04

FS: Yeah, one of the things that I would say that would characterize your work, of, so it's easier to talk about someone else's [DJ *yeah*], it's great, is that, are the thing about trying to keep it involved with that painterly business is that, obviously, say, if we take painterly simply now to mean Abstract Expressionism to make it easier, well, they were obviously involved in, in what they were doing, I mean, as they were doing it [DJ *yes, that what I*] and now obviously, the thing is that, what Don does, and so I guess what I do, is that a lot of the effort is, is always directed towards the end, [BG *uhuh*] we, sort of, really believe [DJ *sorry*], that we, that we, that we can find the end, that they will be finished, and they always, it was always, they always felt it was very problematical when the painting was finished. And certainly, I think we'd be more readily to say, more readily accept the idea that our painting is finished, and say, well, it's either a failure or it's not. [BG *right*] Rather than say, well, maybe it's not really finished. Or something like that. [DJ *yeah*]

1:54

BG: Well, this brings up another very important problem, you see, what you're saying is almost conceptualised in the mind before it's actually made, and that, in other words, you can devise a diagram in your mind and actually put it on canvas. [FS *yeah, but*] But I'm wondering, whether, and this is the question, whether it's just not adequate enough to simply verbalize this image and give it to the public, rather than giving them your paintings?

2:19

FS: Well, I mean, if I make, well the simple thing is a diagram is not a painting, it's as simple as that. I mean, I, I can make a painting from a diagram, but can you, or sort of can the public, I mean they can't [BG *uhuh*] in other words, it can just be, it just remains a diagram if that's all I do, or if it's a verbalization, it just remains a verbalization. And yet infinite [BG *uhuh*] oh, Clement Greenberg talks about the, the ideas or possibilities for painting, in his, I think it's in the *After Abstract Expressionist* or something like that, and that he allows a blank canvas to be an, an idea for a painting, but it might not necessarily be a good idea for a painting, but it's certainly a valid idea for a painting. And you get, sort of, I mean and, Yves Klein did the, the empty gallery [BG *yes*] he sold air [BG *right*] and that was a, that was a conceptualised art I guess. [*laughter*] No.

3:09

BG: Well, it has, sort of gone, in some instances, *reducti*, you know, *reductio ad absurdum*.

3:13

FS: Not absurd enough though, I mean. [*laughter*]

3:16

DJ: But even if you can plan the thing completely, ahead of time [BG *yes*], you still don't know what it looks like [FS *yeah, that's, a really… yeah, yeah*], until it's right there, you see, it may be totally wrong, once you go to all the trouble of building the thing, [BG *yes*] It may be off.

3:29

FS: And also that's what you wanna do, you actually wanna see the thing. I mean, that's the thing [DJ *yeah*] that motivates you to do it. [BG *yes*] Is to see what it's gonna look like. [BG *yes*]

3:34

DJ: You can think about it forever, in all sorts of varieties, and they're nothing [BG *uhuh*] until you really…

3:38

BG: Yes, but what I, the problem then is, is say I go to an exhibition of, of such work, I, I, it doesn't matter to me, it seems, if I never see these paintings again, as long as I carry the image around in my mind. [DJ *oh, come on, oh*] in other words…

3:52

FS: But, you can't carry it for more than ten seconds [DJ *no*] no how far can you carry [DJ *you can't have any impression*] I can think of a, the Poll, the Pollock painting I saw the other day, or something that I, that I like, but I can't really remember it that well, and I, you know, and there

are, I don't know, but there are supposedly the people with photo-memories, I don't know what those are like. [BG *uhuh*] But, you can't carry it very far. [BG *yes*]

4:10

BG: Well, I, I was wondering about another term that seems to be relevant to this discussion also, often, I've read quite a few reviews, and I've heard some reviewers talk about presence in a work and in fact I heard one reviewer recently who said that presence is something that tells you that a work is great even when you're not looking at it. In other words, you can feel it from behind you, even when you've got your back turned to the painting. And, even if you never looked at the painting, you just know that you're in the presence of a great work of art, and I was just wondering about this, do you, any of you have any idea about what constitutes presence?

4:46

DJ: It means the work's very good and interesting, that's about all it means.

4:49

FS: It means you like it, yeah. [DJ *sure*] [BG *uhuh, it means you like it*] And you'd like to think about it some more. And you're able to. I mean, you'd rather think about that than something else.

4:57

BG: Would any of you say that it's a factor that you're aware of, or something that you strive for while you're making a painting?

5:03

FS: I don't think you can, I mean, I think if, that's like suicide to say, it's like always saying, well, it's, it, that would mean like constantly comparing yourself with something [BG *uhuh*] like, saying am I really as good as Titian, sort of, every time [*laughter*] you dip the brush in the bucket.

5:16

BG: Yeah, well, the only thing is that I have a feeling that this word presence is frequently applied more to paintings of this, of this so called, new classic spirit, than it is, say, to more [FS *so what do you mean Poons*...] more traditional paintings. [FS ...*Poons optical stuff?*] Yes. Painting such as yours, and Don's and Dan's. I have the feeling that people talk about presence in the face of those works more than they do in the presence of regular works. In other words, is, do you think that it's because there's such a, such a, so little that you can say in terms of verbalization before your works.

5:50

DJ: A little that *they* can say.

5:52

BG: Yes, a little that the critics can say, yeah. That's what I mean.

5:53

DJ: They'll, they'll figure it out, indeed.

5:55

BG: Or do you think that your work generally has more presence than, you know, traditional works of art, or what?

6:01

FS: Well, I mean, it's pretty awful, I mean, you can't say that your work [BG *uhuh*] has more of this or that [BG *yes*] than some [*laughs*] than somebody else's work, unless you wanna say that. But, I, I don't know, I mean, it's a kind of, every, I mean, the thing about presence, is, are, it just goes back to what we said before, it's about what, what you like and people will talk about strong paintings, tough paintings, those are, those are more popular, I mean, like the Abstract Expressionists would use that instead of presence [BG *yes*] when they wanted to talk about something that's really good. [BG *uhuh*] De Kooning or Al Held paint tough paintings. [BG

uhuh] And we would have to paint paintings with presence, I guess. [BG *I see*] But, I think it's sort of terminology, I mean, there's just another way of describing [DJ *oh yeah*]

6:39

DJ: It's just another way of saying you're very impressed by me. [BG *uhuh*] I'd like to get rid of the word classic though, [BG *yes*] while we're at it [FS *yeah, let's get rid of that*] [*laughter*] Because it has nothing to do with, what [FS *with anything*] any of us are doing... [FS *uhuh*]

6:51

DF: Or you might say it's after the fact. [DJ *...or the people in the Janis show*] I'm jesting.

6:55

FS: I don't think it had to do with anybody in that show either, what did they care, who in that show cared about classic art? [DJ *yeah*]

7:02

BG: Well, I think that the catalogue for that show simply defined classic as something, as something that was not romantic. [*laughter*]

7:08

DJ: Well, that's, that's not very good either. [DF *that's Janis, that, that sounds funny...*] [FS *encaustic at your leisure*]

7:13

DJ: What's romantic? Or it's Pollock... [DF *...or it came across as Brian O'Doherty*]

7:16

BG: Well, I think one might conclude from that show, that you get the feeling that anything that had a hard edge, or a very tight taut line, or used geometrical shapes, might be considered classic. And since your work does have that, is it, do you think it...

7:29

DJ: It would certainly give Poussin a pain in the neck to hear that, [*laughter*] [DF *oh, really*].

7:35

BG: In other words, you think it's alright to call Poussin classic, but?

7:38

DJ: Well, he asked for it.

7:39

BG: Yes, I see, but you didn't, yeah. What do you feel about it?

7:45

DJ: And I don't think it should be, it infers that, implies that, Abstract Expressionism is romantic, which isn't accurate for it either. [BG *uhuh*] And, anyway the two terms belong in the beginning of the last century [BG *uhuh*] they're better off there. [*laughter*].

8:01

FS: Stay, there. Give them back to Friedländer[25] or whatever. [DJ *laughs*]

8:05

BG: I have the feeling that so many of these terms are just simply picked up by people who are putting on exhibitions and because they have the vaguest resemblance to modern work. But, nobody's really attempted to develop some kind of new terminology, or new vocabulary to deal with the, the problems that these paintings deal with. And, ah, well...

8:33

FS: Well, I mean, I, but that's the thing, I mean, at, at one time, I think the, the paintings or what we're trying to do is a little bit different, but on the other hand, I mean, it seems to me that they're still dealing basically with the problems that painting, or, or making art always has, it's pretty much the same old problems, but, I mean, I don't see why everyone feels so

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[25] I think that Stella was referring to Walter Friedländer, art historian specialising in the baroque, associated with New York University. See Sorensen (2014).

desperately a need for a new terminology. And I don't see what there is in our work, I hope I can speak for the other two, that, that needs, that really needs a new terminology to [BG *uhuh*], to either explain it or evaluate it. I mean, it, it's, it's a, it seems to me that art, it's art, or it wants to be art, or it asks to be considered as art, and that therefore the, the terms that we have for discussing art are probably good enough. I mean, I don't see that it necessarily needs new ones. [BG *uhuh*] You could say that the terms that have been used so far to discuss and evaluate art are pretty grim. [DJ *I agree*] You could [DJ *I agree with that*] make a very good case for that. [BG *I see*] But, nonetheless, that, I mean, I think that there's nothing necessary in the work now, the newer work now, I mean, nothing specifically in our work that asks for new terms, any more than any other art.

9:47

DF: I've always felt, in my own work, also, to start another side of another side, [*laughs*] is that, is that there is a physical element, a distinct physical element, I think Don is, we've mentioned this one time up to four o'clock in the morning, I remember, and I think it has to be called up, I think it concerns him very much, even more than it does me. You know, and we were talking about the thick, the weight of Frank's canvasses, you know, the cut-out part, you know, this is all to call attention to this quality I think.

10:28

FS: Well, you two make objects, I mean, it's, that's, it's that simple, I mean, so they are either objects, sculpture or something like this [BG *yes*], but the reason I make the canvas deeper, than ordinarily, is I didn't do it for any reason, I mean, it began accidentally, if you wanna call it that, I mean, I'm sure lots of people do it. I turn one-by-threes on edge, to make a quick frame, to butt-end them, and then when I first started stretching canvasses. And then I liked what that did, in a sense that, when you stand directly in front of the painting it gives just enough depth to, sort of, hold it off the wall, you're just conscious of a, sort of, shadow just enough depth, so that actually it emphasizes the surface. So, in other words, to make it more like a painting and less like an object. So, did it, again. It simply emphasizes the surface quality.

11:15

BG: It's very curious. I've heard several artists have referred to your paintings as sculptural in form, because of that thickness [FS *yeah, yeah*] It's very interesting that, you know, you say this, that this was simply an accidental feature.

11:28

DJ: I was, I thought of the aluminum ones, as Frank says, as slabs, in a way, they seemed objects, in a way, to me.

11:37

DF: I always think, because you can think of the difference, say, from Rothko, you know, he hinted that he was going to, to add a certain weight to the stretcher, I think, if, I get that feeling, you know, that the painting goes around the corner.

11:54

FS: Yeah, right. Well, I think he did paint around the edge, you know. [DF *yeah*] But I don't.

0:00

Start of Track 5

Track 5 – 10:16

0:02

DF: Yeah, well we had to get it out. [*laughter*] [BG *yes*] Because it means it means something.

0:06

FS: Yeah, I don't paint around the edge, right there. [BG *no*] A lot of people always, Sven Lukin, in that, in the show at Janis, there, paints around the edge too. [BG *yeah*] And he's much more an object, than painting than I am, you see, that's real.

0:18

BG: Yes, but his painting is also in relief too, in a sense.

0:21 FS: Right, right, it is relief yeah.

0:22 DF: Well, that's what's been suggested. [FS *you know*]

0:25 DJ: I think you, actually a flat surface too made it seem more like an object, [BG *yes*] because that was pretty rare. [BG *yes*]

0:31 BG: Well, what about [DJ *and funny, was it first?*] [FS *yes probably*] what, what about this problem of sentimentality in painting, I've heard often that, or, I think your, that you've been quoted Frank as saying that you want to get the sentimentality out of painting, or at least this, I seem to have read something like that [FS *Sam Wagstaff*] in Sam Wagstaff's article in the *ARTnews* [DF *phew, hew*] about the show in Hartford.

0:49 FS: Yes, I even said nineteenth century in that too. I mean, I don't, I hope I didn't really say that. But, it wasn't meant. Well, what, I think what I said, is I didn't, I didn't think it was necessary, and I, I, I didn't then and I don't now, think it's necessary to make art objects or make paintings that will interest people in a sense that they can keep going back to explore a certain kinda painterly detail. [BG *uhuh*] Like, I hate to keep using Milton Resnick, but it's such a nice example, I mean one could be, if one wanted, to stand in front of Milton, any one of Milton Resnick's painting at the Wise now,[26] for a long time, and walk back and forth in front of it and, and inspect the depths of the pigment and the sort of [BG *yes*] the inflections and [BG *yes, yes*] all the painterly brush work [BG *yes*] actually for hours, but I mean, I wouldn't particularly wanna do that. And I also wouldn't ask anyone to do that kinda thing in front of my painting and, I guess, to go further, I would like to prohibit them from doing that in front of my painting [BG *uhuh*], so that's why I make the paintings the way they are, more or less.

1:52 BG: Well, do you, maybe you can, maybe this is searching too much, but why, why would you like to prohibit somebody from doing such a thing? Well, [FS *well, I feel, I mean*] such a, such a prolonged…

2:02 FS: Basically, I guess it's a criticism of other painters, they, I just used Resnick to make it, to make it simple. In a sense, I feel that you shouldn't, you know, after a while, you're just, sort of, mutilating the paint, I mean, I don't feel that the paint ever did anything to deserve that. I mean, if you have some feeling about either, color, or maybe you have direction or line or something like that, I think you can state it, you can either state it or exp, or, you know, make it [BG *uhuh*], that's more simply than that, I mean, I don't think that you have to, kind of, I don't, I never go in, or I've never gone in for the kind of art which is, sort of, kneady[27] [BH *uhuh*] of material [*laughs*] and sort of really grinding it up, I mean, I, its, kind of seems sort of destructive to me, it makes me very nervous. [BG *I wanted to*] I find that attitude basically destructive rather than constructive. [DJ *for piecemeal contemplatives, sort of thing*]

2:48 BG: In other words, it seems to me that you seem to suggest that what you're after, most of you are after economy of means rather than trying to avoid sentimentality, that would be perhaps a more accurate way of phrasing it.

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[26] The exhibition titled *Recent Paintings by Milton Resnick* was held at the Howard Wise Gallery in New York, NY from 4 February until 29 February 1964.

[27] 'Kneady' rather than 'needy' is assumed here, because of the context and Stella's hurried additional remarks. Meyer records this sentence as, 'You don't have to knead the material and grind it up'. Meyer (2000: 200-01).

3:00

FS: But, but, there's something awful about that economy of means [*laughs*], I don't know why, I get sort of, I really resent that, like almost instantly. [DJ *you know*] I don't know. It's, I mean, I'd like, I don't go out of my way to be economical in any way, sort of [DJ *with all those lines, wow, that's not economical, that's true]* [*laughs*].

3:16

DF: Yeah, that's what I, you have discussed before, reducibility [FS *yeah, yeah*] as far as I am concerned, it's a, irre, irre, you know, irre, irrele, irrelevant to me, it's no concern, you know, and I, I, I don't want you pin my ears back on it either. You know, you know, 'cause I, I'm thirty years old and I have a lot to do. [*laughter*] I hope.

3:37

FS: It seems to me that you are motivated by, it's hard to explain by what exactly it is you're motivated by, but I mean, it's sort of, in, and I don't think people are, are motivated by, by, by reduction, it would be nice actually if we were, but actually you're motivated by, you wanna make something, and then you go about it in the way that seems best.

3:54

DJ: You're reducing the things that people earlier thought were essential to art, [FS *yeah*] that's what you're getting rid of [FS *yeah, yeah, you*…] but, that's only incidental.

4:00

FS: You wanna get rid of things also, that you think get you in trouble. I mean, it seems to me, as you, or at least as I started, the more you paint, or as you keep painting, or as you keep doing things, you find things are getting in your way a lot, and those are the things that you tend to, to try to [DJ *yeah*] get out of the way. I mean, I, well I mean, can I just say, I mean, you might be having, you might be spilling a lot of a particular blue paint all over something [*laughs*] and it's because there's something wrong with that particular paint, and then, you don't, you don't you don't use that, or you find a better thinner, or you work in a those kinda ways. Or you get better nails, or you know [BG *yes*] you just, well, there's a lot of striving for better material, I'm afraid. [*laughs*] I don't know how good that is.

4:44

BG: Well, there's just one more question that I, I, I'm bothered by, you've, several of you made the point that you certainly want to create some effective enjoyment in your work, I think Frank specifically made that comment, that you want people to come and look at your paintings and, and enjoy them, and you don't want to do, be bothered with a lot of complex effects of color and depth and illusionism and what have you, but the fact is that right now the majority of people that come before your works, that come before your canvasses, seem to have some trouble in this regard, and they don't get this enjoyment that you seem to be very simply presenting to them. That is, they are still stunned and taken aback by the utter simplicity of it. And, is, do you think that this is just because that they have not come up to the point where they, they can comprehend these works, that is, they, they are just simply behind the artist again, the way it is, you know, all through the history of art, or, [FS *maybe that's*…] or what?

5:46

FS: Maybe that's the quality of simplicity, I mean, when somebody hits the ball out of the park, say Mantle [28] or something like that, everybody is sort of stunned for a minute, [BG *uhuh*] 'cause it's very simple, he just knocks it right out of the park, and [BG *yes*] and that, that usually does it.[29]

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[28] Mickey Mantle was a New York Yankees baseball player from 1951 to 1968. Major League Baseball (2013).

[29] This is used as the basis for the final remark in the *ARTnews* article, 'Maybe that's the quality of simplicity. When Mantle hits the ball out of the park, everybody is sort of stunned for a minute because it's so simple. He

5:59

DF: What I've been noticing is the difference between Frank's attitude and mine, you know [BG *yes*] that I, I, I really, Bob Rosenblum said to me recently that I, that I had destroyed painting for him.[30] Well, I'm just getting a real sense of this and a sense, I never, I don't communicate that much with Frank and I, I can see I've done it for myself unconsciously, you know, I don't think on the terms in which he's, in the terms in which he's thinking at all. And it's a, it's a surprise to me, that I had considered myself a painter, in a sense [BG *uhuh*], but I can see the difference, that's good [BG *uhuh*].

6:40

FS: What, what are some of the differences, that you… I wonder what they are?

6:46

DF: Arhh, gee, no I mean, you know, consciousness of, of, you know, the way paint works, what you don't want to do with it, you know, what you've seen done with it, I don't even think about it, in a sense, you know, very really, I don't think about that, at all now. I think, you know, more like an arrangement of sticks, of, of color sticks or, you know, illuminous, if that, you know, the thing it's more and more [FS *what do you do*] an object for me.

7:25

FS: Yeah, but what do you do with the, sort of, I mean, how do you, well I won't say rationalize, how do you deal with, sort of, structural things, or compositional things, for example, I mean [DF *yeah, but*], we're all left with that, that's what I want to say [DF *yeah*], part of the point about, sort of, the terms, I mean, it's sort of, I mean the problems aren't any different, I mean, for us, we have to, still basically all of us, well, I'll only talk about, well I have to compose a picture, and if you make an object, you have to organize it or structure it and it seems to me that you're still, basically, I mean, all I'm saying is that finally, I don't think our work is that radical in any sense, [DF *mmm*] because, I mean that, between the three of us you can [*sic*] find any structure, any compositional element or any really new structural element. [BG *uhuh*] I mean, I don't know what that exists, it's like the idea of a color that you haven't seen before, I mean, is there something that's say, not a diagonal [DF *mmm*], or not a straight line, or not a compositional element that you can describe?

8:28

BG: So, Don even your efforts to get away from European painting, and its traditional compositional effects have, is somewhat limited, because you're still gonna be using the same sort of, some of the same devices that they use.

8:45

DJ: I don't think so.

8:47

BG: You don't think so?

8:48

DJ: No, totally uninterested in European painting and I think it's over with.

8:52

FS: Yeah, but I mean, how can you say that you don't use any of the, you don't use any of the traditional devices, I mean, when you have been?

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knocks it right out of the park, and that usually does it'. Glaser (1966: 61). Also, in the Battcock reproduction, Glaser (1968: 164) and in Meyer's composite interview, Meyer (2000: 201), although Meyer does follow the text with an ellipsis.

[30] Rosenblum's comments are recorded in Flavin's letter of 21 January 1964 to Sam Wagstaff Jr from Archives of American Art (2014b) items 31 and 32 (recto and verso), Box 1, Folder 23. See Appendix A, Figure 105, page 224 and Figure 106, page 225 for images and see Appendix G, page 261 for my transcript of the letter. This comment is also referenced by Robert Rosenblum in his Flavin eulogy 'Name in Lights'. Rosenblum (1997: 11).

8:58

DJ: Well, we used to use a diagonal, but no one there ever uses a direct diagonal as, say, Louis[31] did, for example. [FS *no, right*] There is, there is no such bet that I know all the history of European painting, that's one of his. [DF *oh boy, oh boy*] [FS *yeah, well, all the, look at, they were all*] I'm not talking about twentieth century things, but…

9:19

FS: Look at all the Kandinskys, all the Kandinskys, look at those, those have a lot of, even the mechanical ones, they're sort of awful, but they have some pretty radical diagonals and stuff. [BG *uhuh*] Of course, they're always balanced, with dots, and stuff.

9:29

DJ: Yeah, but when you make, when you make a diagonal clear across the whole thing [FS *yeah*] and the main thing, it's a very different thing.[32]

9:37

FS: Right, but nonetheless, the idea of the diagonal has been around for a long time.

9:41

DJ: Yeah, well actually it's, that's true. [FS *I mean*] There's always gonna be something in one's work that's been around a long time. But, the fact, for example, now that the structural arrangement probably even isn't that important is rather new. It's obviously very important for Vasarely [FS *yeah, right*], but, really all I'm interested in is having a thing interesting to me, in a lump, and I don't think there's any way you can juggle the structure, especially that'll make it more interesting, than parts.

10:16

0:00

Track 6 – 4:59

Start of Track 6

BG: Don, I'm worried, I'm wondering, are you concerned with getting away from European painting because it's European or because it's European painting?

0:10

DJ: No, because I, I'm interested in the quality of it.

0:13

BG: Uhuh, not just in the quality of it, it's European painting.

0:15

DJ: I think it belongs to [BG *yes*] another period [BG *uhuh*] and I'm not promoting American [BG *yeah, oh yes*] painting especially, because there are Europeans who are doing this too I think [BG *right*], Yves Klein to some extent [BG *uhuh*] is out of European painting.

0:30

BG: Well, it's very interesting Meyer Schapiro once said that there might be, I think he suggested, that there might be an analogy between, say, a Barnett Newman, with a field of one color and one simple stripe down the middle, if you looked at, say, at the apse mosaic of some byzantine church, where you might find a completely gold field and then a simple vertical form of the Madonna. And so perhaps, even here we have some indication of some kind of precedent for, for twentieth-century painting. You have utter simplicity and great big field that's just enjoyed for the sake of itself, and then the vertical division in the most symmetrical and obvious way.

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[31] I think that this is another reference to the American painter Morris Louis. Born 1912, died 1962.

[32] It is interesting to note here, in relation to the argument between Stella and Judd about Judd's use of the diagonal, that shortly after the recording of this interview Flavin created a work which carried the title *Alternate Diagonals of March 2, 1964 (to Don Judd)*. (See Appendix A, Figure 107, page 225 for a photograph of the work.)

1:10 DJ: Yeah well [FS *yeah, but, but*] a lot of things look alike, but they're not necessarily [BG *yes*] very much alike.

1:13 FS: Like the i..., the whole idea is so comp..., well not so complex, but the idea of a field, what you mean by a field in painting is pretty, pretty difficult idea, I mean, sort of, because, I mean, well, just say in terms of mosaic field can never have anything to do with, say, a field like you would get it in a Morris Lewis or something like that. [DJ *no*] The whole idea of a saturated...

1:35 DJ: It don't feel like that in a Newman like it would be in a plain gold field. Because Newman's doing something with this field.

1:41 FS: Yeah, yeah, it's in the canvas and all that [DJ *yeah*] it just wor..., really does work too.

1:47 DF: I didn't answer, I didn't answer Frank I think, [BG *uhuh*] and, [FS *yeah*] in fact I don't think I can right now, but one thing is, that I've tried, I was writing, trying to write, a letter to Bob Rosenblum about what I was thinking about, and I found out what I was saying, in fact, was I was trying to drop composition, and [FS *yeah, but that's*] I don't see how I can do it right now... [*laughter*]

2:12 FS: You know, but that's, I mean, that's the kinda thing you get in with so-called really advance painting, for example, would drop composition, that would be terrifically avant-garde, that's a really good idea, but the question is how do you do that.

2:23 DF: That's right. Yeah, yano, well.

2:26 BG: That goes even beyond eliminating nothing on the canvas, [FS *actually*] he's eliminating the canvas, isn't...

2:30 FS: The best article I ever read about, sort of, pure painting and all of that, was that thing that Elaine de Kooning wrote, in *ARTnews* years ago, 'Pure Paints a Picture', I don't know if any of you saw it?

2:39 DJ: Yeah, I saw that.

2:40 DF: I'm too young to read that.

2:41 FS: The guy was really fantastic, well, the way it ended was that Pure was very, very pure and he lived in a, you know, a stainless steel white loft, or something like that, but anyway, finally what he did was, he was very meticulous, and he gave up painting, and brushes and all that, and he had a syringe which he loaded with a colorless, odorless fluid which he injected into clear odorless styrene, that was how he created his art object by injecting colorless fluid into a colorless material.

3:11 DJ: Like Nick Klein, [DF *he was kinda breathing*] Yves Kline, he was kinda pretty radical artist.

3:15 FS: Well, Yves Klein was no doubt a radical artist, but a bad artis..., a bad artist, or he didn't do anything very interesting, but. But it wasn't so much, [DJ *groundbreaking*] but why is Yves Klein, sort of, not radical, it seems to me kinda interesting, I don't know. Like, I mean, I don't think, I mean, I could, like I have one of his paintings, which I sort of like in a way, but there's something about him that's not radical, I mean, what's not [*sic*] radical about the idea of selling air, it doesn't seem very interesting. [BG *uhuh*]

3:38

DJ: No, it's not very interesting to me. One thing I want to do with art is to be able to see it, as you said, it looks really, some… it is something you look at.

3:49

BG: Well, it seems that you all end on a happy note. You ultimately affirm some kind of plastic value. You must see the work of art.

3:56

FS: If my paintings work, or get going, or anyway, I don't…, I do lose sight of the fact that it's canvas, even though I'm strip…, I know it's paint on canvas, and I just do see it, in a way. I mean, I don't, I don't get terribly hung up over the canv…, in other words, if the thing is going on on the canvas strong enough, if the paint, actually, and the design, or whatever it is, the visual action taking place there is strong enough, I don't get the very strong sense of the materiali…, material, the material quality of the canvas, so that, sort of, disappears. But I don't like things that, that stress the material quality, like a lot of times, I get, I don't like, even though I like the paintings a lot, say, Ken's paintings, or something, I, sometimes those big canvases, with all the bare canvas get me down, all that, sort of, [BG *oh*] because there's so much, there's so much canvas, the physical quality of the, of the cotton duck [DJ *uhuh*] [BG *uhuh*] it, sort of, just gets in the way.

4:52

57:42 in total

Appendix C Derivation of 'Judd additions'

The following is the author's derivation of the 'Judd additions' to the *ARTnews* article, Glaser (1966). This extraction has been arrived at by a comparison of the Pacifica Radio Archives (1964) interview (as detailed in Appendix B, page 226 onwards) and the *ARTnews* article, Glaser (1966). All track notes are the author's. Blank lines have been introduced here to indicate where the groups of additions begin and end. Groups that include Judd have been annotated to avoid the possibility of confusion by the pagination of this appendix. Page numbers in the left margin refer to locations in Glaser (1966).

Page 55 [Additional Glaser question]
GLASER: There are characteristics in your work that bring to mind styles from the early part of this century. Is it fair to say that the relative simplicity of Malevich, the Constructivists, Mondrian, the Neo-Plasticists, and the Purists is a precedent for your painting and sculpture, or are you really departing from these earlier movements?

Page 56 [Group 1]
GLASER: What qualities?
JUDD: The qualities of European art so far. They're innumerable and complex, but the main way of saying it is that they're linked up with a philosophy—rationalism, rationalistic philosophy.
GLASER: Descartes?
JUDD: Yes.
GLASER: And you mean to say that your work is apart from rationalism?
JUDD: Yes. All that art is based on systems built beforehand, *a priori* systems; they express a certain type of thinking and logic that is pretty much discredited now as a way of finding out
Page 57 what the world's like.
GLASER: Discredited by whom? By empiricists?
JUDD: Scientists, both philosophers and scientists.
GLASER: What is the alternative to a rationalistic system in your method? It's often said that your work is preconceived, that you plan it out before you do it. Isn't that a rationalistic method?
JUDD: Not necessarily. That's much smaller. When you think it out as you work on it, or you think it out beforehand, it's a much smaller problem than the nature of the work. What you want to express is a much bigger thing than how you may go at it. Larry Poons works out the dots somewhat as he goes along; he figures out a scheme beforehand and also makes changes as he goes along. Obviously I can't make many changes, though I do what I can when I get stuck.
GLASER: In other words, you might be referring to an antirationalist position before you actually start making the work of art.
JUDD: I'm making it for a quality that I think is interesting and more or less true. And the quality involved in Vasarely's kind of composition isn't true to me.
GLASER: Could you be specific about how your own work reflects an antirationalistic point of view?
JUDD: The parts are unrelational.
GLASER: If there's nothing to relate, then you can't be rational about it because it's just there?
JUDD: Yes.

GLASER: Then it's almost an abdication of logical thinking.
JUDD: I don't have anything against using some sort of logic. That's simple. But when you start relating parts, in the first place, you're assuming you have a vague whole—the rectangle of the canvas—and definite parts, which is all screwed up, because you should have a definite whole and maybe no parts, or very few. The parts are always more important than the whole.
GLASER: And you want the whole to be more important than the parts?
JUDD: Yes. The whole's it. The big problem is to maintain the sense of the whole thing.
GLASER: Isn't it that there's no gestation, that there's just an idea?
JUDD: I do think about it, I'll change it if I can. I just want it to exist as a whole thing. And that's not especially unusual. Painting's been going toward that for a long time. A lot of people, like Oldenburg for instance, have a "whole" effect to their work.

Page 58

[Group 2]
GLASER: You obviously have an awareness of Constructivist work, like Gabo and Pevsner. What about the Bauhaus? You keep talking about spareness and austerity. Is that only in relation to the idea that you want your work "whole," or do you think there was something in Mies's Bauhaus dictum that "less is more"?
JUDD: Not necessarily. In the first place, I'm more interested in Neo-Plasticism and Constructivism than I was before, perhaps, but I was never influenced by it, and I'm certainly influenced by what happens in the United States rather than by anything like that. So my admiration for someone like Pevsner or Gabo is in retrospect. I consider the Bauhaus too long ago to think about, and I never thought about it much.
GLASER: What makes the space you use different from Neo-Plastic sculpture? What are you after in the way of a new space?
JUDD: In the first place, I don't know a heck of a lot about Neo-Plastic sculpture, outside of vaguely liking it. I'm using actual space because when I was doing paintings I couldn't see any way out of having a certain amount of illusionism in the paintings. I thought that also was a quality of the Western tradition and I didn't want it.
GLASER: When you did the horizontal with the five verticals coming down from it, you said you thought of it as a whole; you weren't being compositional in any way or opposing the elements. But, after all, you are opposing them because vertical and horizontal are opposed by nature; and the perpendicular is an opposition. And if you have space in between each one, then it makes them parts.
JUDD: Yes, it does, somewhat. You see, the big problem is that anything that is not absolutely plain begins to have parts in some way. The thing is to be able to work and do different things and yet not break up the wholeness that a piece has. To me the piece with the brass and the five verticals is above all that shape. I don't think of the brass being opposed to the five things, as Gabo or Pevsner might have an angle and then another one supporting it or relating on a diagonal. Also the verticals below the brass both support the brass and pend from it, and the length is just enough so it seems that they hang, as well as support it, so they're caught there. I didn't think they came loose as independent parts. If they were longer and the brass obviously sat on them, then I wouldn't like it.
GLASER: You've written about the predominance of chance in Robert Morris's work. Is this element in your pieces too?
JUDD: Yes. Pollock and those people represent actual chance; by now it's better to make that a foregone conclusion—you don't have to mimic chance. You use a simple form that doesn't look like either order or disorder. We recognize that the world is ninety percent chance and accident. Earlier painting was saying that there's more order in the scheme of things than we admit now, like Poussin saying order underlies nature. Poussin's order is anthropomorphic. Now there are no preconceived notions. Take a simple form—say a box—and it does have an

order, but it's not so ordered that that's the dominant quality. The more parts a thing has, the more important order becomes, and finally order becomes more important than anything else.

Page 59 contains no 'Judd additions'

Follows on from: Track 5
3:54

Page 60

[Group 3]
JUDD: [...]. I object to the whole reduction idea, because it's only reduction of those things someone doesn't want. If my work is reductionist it's because it doesn't have the elements that people thought should be there. But it has other elements that I like. Take Noland again. You can think of the things he doesn't have in his paintings, but there's a whole list of things that he does have that painting didn't have before. Why is it necessarily a reduction?

[Group 4]
JUDD: There's nothing sacrosanct about materials.

[Group 5]
GLASER: Don, would it be fair to say that your approach is a nihilistic one, in view of your wish to get rid of various elements?
JUDD: No, I don't consider it nihilistic or negative or cool or anything else. Also I don't think my objection to the Western tradition is a positive quality of my work. It's just something I don't want to do, that's all. I want to do something else.
GLASER: Some years ago we talked about what art will be, an art of the future. Do you have a vision of that?
JUDD: No, I was just talking about what my art will be and what I imagine a few other people's art that I like might be.
GLASER: Don't you see art as kind of evolutionary? You talk about what art was and then you say it's old hat, it's all over now.
JUDD: It's old hat because it involves all those beliefs you really can't accept in life. You don't want to work with it any more. It's not that any of that work has suddenly become mad in itself. If I get hold of a Piero della Francesca, that's fine.

Page 61 contains no 'Judd additions'

Continues as: Track 3
5:52

Appendix D Analysis of *ARTnews* article

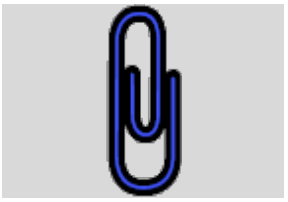
The following is the author's analysis of the editing of the *ARTnews* article, Glaser (1966), by a comparison of the article with the author's transcription of the audio recording of the radio transmission, Pacifica Radio Archives (1964) as detailed in Appendix B, page 226 onwards.

A separate file 'Analysis of Audio versus ARTnews', from which the images in this appendix have been generated, is included below:



Audio v ARTnews.xlsx

Embedded Microsoft Excel file
(in the Microsoft Word version of this thesis).



Embedded Microsoft Excel file
(in the PDF version of this thesis).

Image 1, on page 251, is an analysis of the audio recording, Pacifica Radio Archives (1964) – as transcribed by the author – compared to the *ARTnews* article, Glaser (1966). This image is extracted from the tab 'POSITIONAL ANALYSIS CORRECTED' in the Microsoft Excel file embedded above in the electronic version of this thesis.

Image 2, on page 252, is the author's analysis of the audio recording, Pacifica Radio Archives (1964), compared to the *ARTnews* article, Glaser (1966). This analysis is based on the annotation which Jones includes in her endnote, Jones (1996: 415 n. 152). This image is extracted from the tab 'POSITIONAL ANALYSIS (as Jones)' in the Microsoft Excel file embedded above in the electronic version of this thesis.

In each of these images the group of columns on the left (when the A3 page is viewed in portrait orientation) represent the transcript of the audio recording, whereas the group of columns on the right indicates the arrangement of the edited *ARTnews* article. The arrows indicate the extent of the repositioning of the contributors' comments. See chapter six, pages 187 and 188 and the section in this appendix 'Detailed conclusions from my analysis' on page 253 for more details.

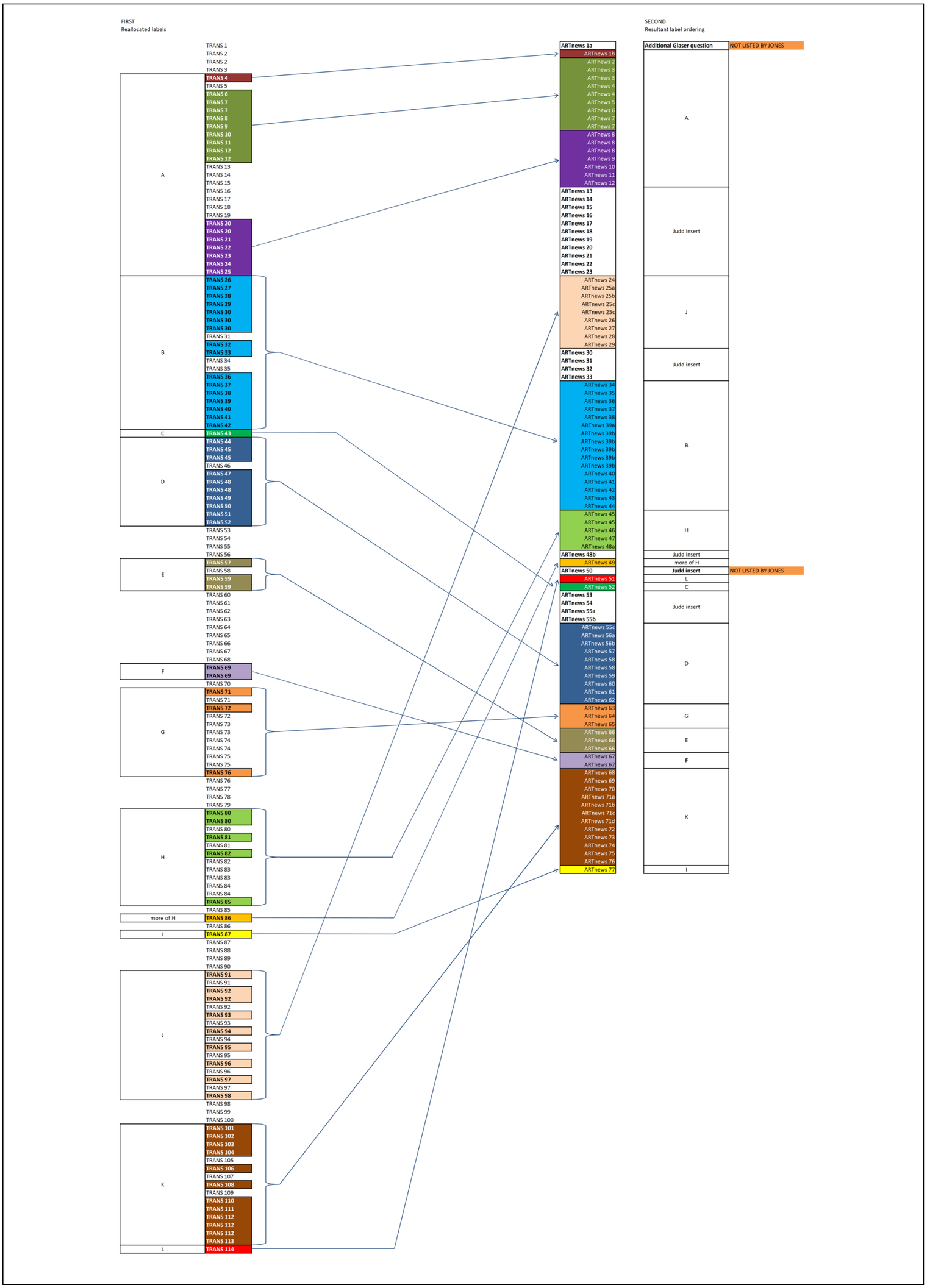


Image 1 - Audio (as transcribed by the author) compared to *ARTnews* article

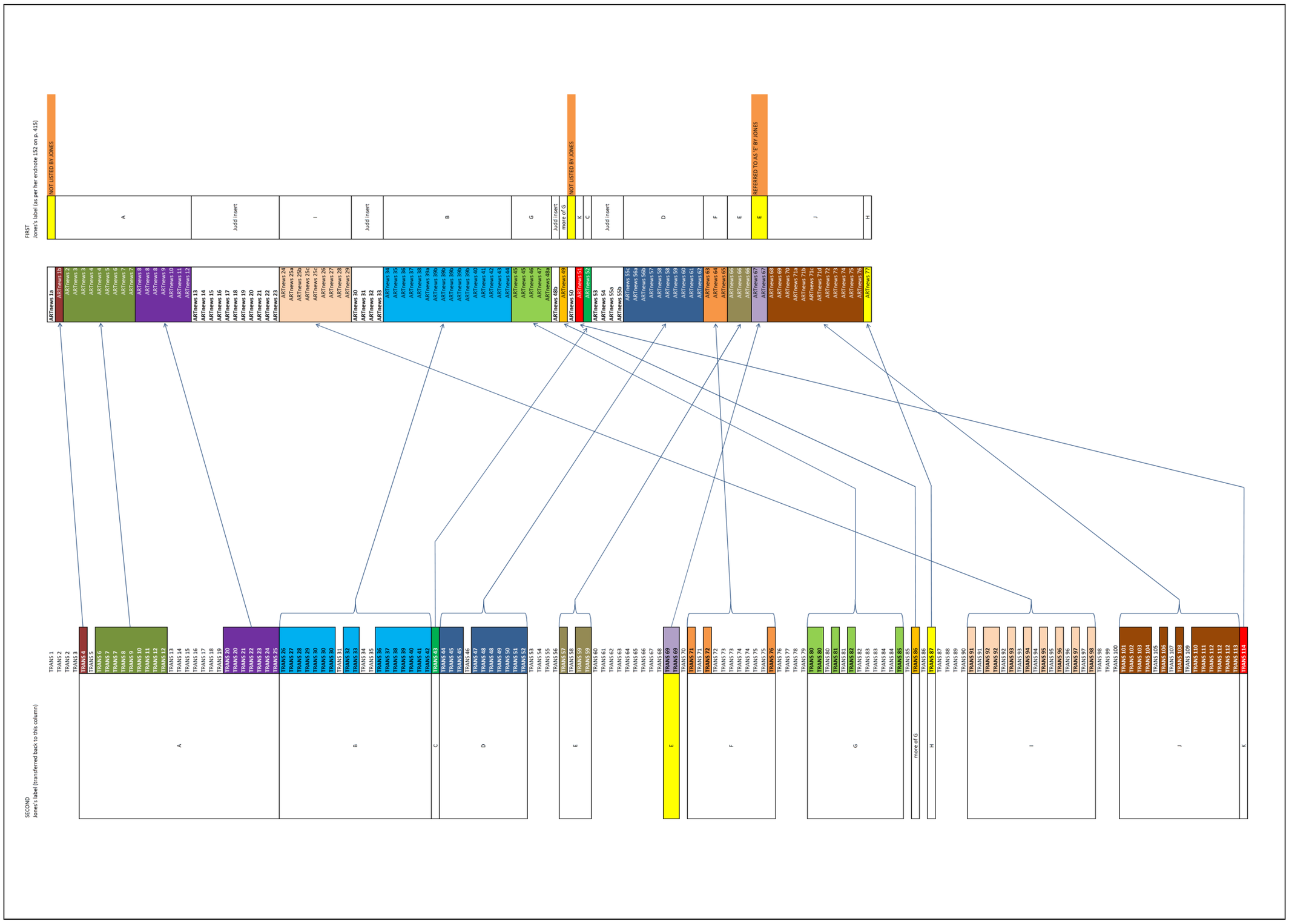


Image 2 – Audio compared to *ARTnews* article (reflecting the annotation by Jones (1996: 415 n. 152))

Detailed conclusions from my analysis

There are a number of things to note:

Jones conflates two Judd insertions into one ([my ref] 'ARTnews 48b' and [my ref] 'ARTnews 50'). But these have the comment [my ref] 'ARTnews 49' ([Jones's ref] 'more of G') between them. Therefore, I conclude that Jones effectively omits the second of these Judd insertions here.

It could be argued that Jones's allocation of [my ref] 'TRANS 69' and [my ref] 'TRANS 70' to the group 'E' is correct. However, 'TRANS 69' and 'TRANS 70' are so far removed from the earlier group 'E' and the discussions are not related, that the labelling of the interview and the subsequent resulting attribution of these groupings to the *ARTnews* published interview should be amended.

The 'incorrect' 'E' cannot be attributed to the group 'F' either (although comments in group 'F' are adjacent to the comments in the 'incorrect' group 'E', the ordering of Jones's results precludes this from being an option.

Also, Jones omits the additional Glaser question that begins the *ARTnews* piece ([my ref] 'ARTnews 1a').

Therefore, I propose that the interview should be labelled A to L and the *ARTnews* ordering would then be reported as being, [Additional Glaser question], A, [Judd insert], J, [Judd insert], B, H, [Judd insert], more of H, [Judd insert], L, C, [Judd insert], D, G, E, F, K, I.

Appendix E Major Western exhibitions making use of the Costakis collection¶

(Entries for *The Great Utopia* and *Building the Revolution* are emboldened.)

1977 *Werke aus der Sammlung Costakis: Russische Avantgarde 1910-1930*
Düsseldorf (16 September to 31 October 1977) Kunstmuseum

1981 to 1984 *Art of the Avant-garde in Russia: Selections from the George Costakis Collection*
New York, NY (16 October 1981 to 3 January 1982) Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
Houston, TX (11 March to 9 May 1982) Museum of Fine Arts
Ottawa (8 July to 6 September 1982) National Gallery of Canada
Indianapolis, IN (17 October to 2 December 1982) Indianapolis Museum of Art
Chicago, IL (14 January to 13 March 1983) Museum of Contemporary Art
Stockholm (23 April to 7 August 1983) Moderna Museet
London (17 September to 13 November 1983) Royal Academy of Arts
Munich (18 January to 11 March 1984) Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus
Hanover (23 March to 13 May 1984) Kestner-Gesellschaft
Helsinki (15 June to 28 October 1984) Helsingin Kaupungin Taidemuseo

1988 *The George Costakis Collection Exhibition*
Dublin (19 August to 15 October 1988) The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham [1]

1989 *The Russian and Soviet Avant-garde: Works from the Collection of George Costakis*
Montreal (17 March to 21 May 1989) Montreal Museum of Fine Arts

1990 to 1991 *Art into Life: Russian Constructivism, 1914-1932*
Seattle, WA (4 July to 2 September 1990) Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington
Minneapolis, MN (7 October to 30 December 1990) Walker Art Center
Moscow (Spring 1991) State Tretyakov Gallery

1992 to 1993 *The Great Utopia: The Russian and Soviet Avant-garde, 1915-1932*
Frankfurt (1 March to 10 May 1992) Schirn Kunsthalle
Amsterdam (5 June to 23 August 1992) Stedelijk Museum
New York, NY (25 September 1992 to 3 January 1993) Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum
Moscow (March to May 1993) State Tretyakov Gallery
St Petersburg (July to August 1993) State Russian Museum

1995 to 1996 *Russian Avant-garde 1910-1930: The G. Costakis Collection*
Athens (6 December 1995 to 8 April 1996) The National Gallery and Alexandros Soutzos Museum
Munich (10 May to 4 August 1996) Haus der Kunst

1999 to 2001 *Amazons of the Avant-garde* [2]
Berlin (10 July to 17 October 1999) Deutsche Guggenheim
London (10 November 1999 to 6 February 2000) Royal Academy of Arts
Venice (29 February to 28 May 2000) Peggy Guggenheim
Bilbao (12 June to 3 September 2000) Guggenheim Bilbao
New York, NY (14 September 2000 to 10 January 2001) Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

2003 *Art + Utopia - A selection from the masterpieces of the Costakis Collection*
Thessaloniki (6 June to 31 December 2003) SMCA

2004 *Masterpieces of Russian Avant-garde from the Costakis Collection*
Thessaloniki (30 April to 10 October 2004) SMCA

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[1] Which by 1990 became the Irish Museum of Modern Art.

[2] Which contained the following works related to Costakis: five of which were Tretyakov (gift of Costakis); Exter (catalogue reference 6), Popova (catalogue references 34 and 40) and Udaltsova (catalogue references 74 and 77); seven of which were Costakis collection, Popova (catalogue references 33, 39 and 41) and Udaltsova (catalogue reference 86, 87, 88 and 89) and one of which was Guggenheim (gift of Costakis), Popova (catalogue reference 35).

2004 to 2006 *Light and Colour in the Russian Avant-garde 1910-1930*
Berlin (3 November 2004 to 10 January 2005) Martin-Gropius-Bau
Vienna (18 February to 17 June 2005) Museum Moderner Kunst
Thessaloniki (8 September 2005 to 5 February 2006, extended to 5 March 2006) SMCA

2007 *Journeys of the Russian Avant Garde: works of art from the Costakis collection of the State Museum of Contemporary Art*
Kavala (10 February to 11 March 2007) Kavala Archaeological Museum

2007 *Costakis Collection – Russian Avant-garde: Objective – Non-Objective*
Thessaloniki (24 October to 30 November 2007) SMCA

2008 *Five seasons of the Russian Avant-garde*
Athens (30 April to 20 October 2008) Museum of Cycladic Art

2008 *Lost Vanguard Found, Art and Architecture in Russia (1915-1935)* [3]
Thessaloniki (9 May to 28 September 2008, extended to 11 October 2008) SMCA

2008 to 2009 *Vers de Nouveaux Rivages*
Paris (13 November 2008 to 2 March 2009) Musée Maillol

2009 to 2010 *Rodchenko and Popova: Defining Constructivism*
London (12 February to 17 May 2009) Tate Modern
Thessaloniki (18 June to 20 September 2009) SMCA
Madrid (20 October 2009 to 31 January 2010) Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia

2010 to 2011 *Cosmos of the Russian Avant-garde. Art and Space Exploration in Russia 1900-1930*
Santander (24 June to 19 September 2010) Fundación Botín
Thessaloniki (11 December 2010 to 27 March 2011) SMCA

2011 *Selections from the Costakis Collection of SMCA. The movements of the Russian Avant-garde (1900-1930)*
Thessaloniki (14 June to 28 August 2011) SMCA
Thessaloniki (18 September to 18 December 2011) SMCA

2011 to 2012 *Building the Revolution: Soviet Art and Architecture 1915–1935*
Barcelona (4 February to 17 April 2011) CaixaForum
Madrid (24 May to 18 September 2011) CaixaForum
London (29 October 2011 to 22 January 2012) Royal Academy of Arts
Berlin (5 April to 9 July 2012) Martin-Gropius-Bau

2012 *Composition-Construction-Production: The Russian Avant-garde and Contemporary Art*
Thessaloniki (20 January to 24 March 2012, extended to 14 April 2012) SMCA

2012 *The Movements of the Russian Avant-garde (1900-1930)*
Thessaloniki (25 April to 2 September 2012) SMCA

2013 to 2014 *The Costakis Collection and the Russian Avant-garde: 100 Years after Collector's Birth*
Thessaloniki (5 April 2013 to 31 January 2014) SMCA

2013 to 2014 *Malevich*
Amsterdam (18 October 2013 to 2 February 2014) Stedelijk Museum
Bonn (8 March to 22 June 2014) Bundeskunsthalle
London (16 July to 26 October 2014) Tate Modern

2013 to 2015 *Russian Avant-garde from the Costakis collection*
Thessaloniki (9 February to 24 March 2013) SMCA
Turin (3 October 2014 to 15 February 2015) Palazzo Chiablese
Thessaloniki (28 January to 5 May 2015) SMCA

2016 *Beyond the common sense. Works of Russian Avant-garde from the Costakis Collection of the State Museum of Contemporary Art*
Thessaloniki (23 January to 8 May 2016) MMCA

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[3] This show had eighty-one images by Richard Pare on display.

In the interests of completeness, the following important exhibitions did not include any works from the Costakis collection.

1995 to 1996 *Berlin-Moskau/Moskau-Berlin 1900-1950* [4]
Berlin (3 September 1995 to 7 January 1996) Martin-Gropius-Bau
Moscow (1 March to 1 July 1996) Pushkin-Museum

2006 *The Lost Vanguard* [5]
Moscow (15 April to July 2006) Ruina annexe of The Shchusev Architectural Museum

2005 to 2006 *RUSSIA! The Majesty of the Tsars: Treasures from the Kremlin Museum*
Las Vegas, NV (1 September 2005 to 15 January 2006) Guggenheim Hermitage Museum

2005 to 2006 *RUSSIA!*
New York, NY (16 September 2005 to 11 January 2006) Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

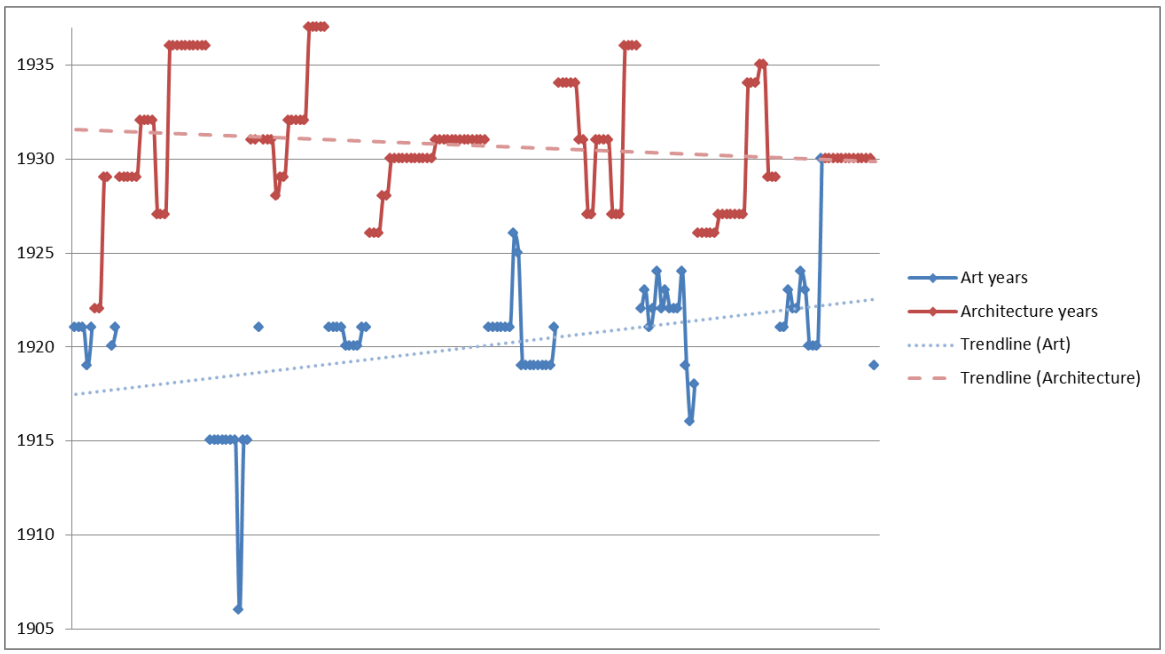
2007, 2009 and 2012 to 2013 *Lost Vanguard: Soviet Modernist Architecture, 1922-1932* [6]
New York, NY (18 July to 29 October 2007) MoMA
Atlanta, GA (17 April to 23 May 2009) Lumière Gallery
Chicago, IL (11 October 2012 to 16 February 2013) The Graham Foundation

[4] 937 works on display.

[5] Twenty-one images by Richard Pare on display.

[6] Although Pare's book was titled *The Lost Vanguard: Russian Modernist Architecture 1922-1932*. Pare (2007). This show had eighty images by Richard Pare on display.

Appendix F Analysis of the display of *Building the Revolution*



The author's analysis of the exhibition *Building the Revolution*

This chart represents graphically the author's analysis of the arrangement of works on display in the exhibition *Building the Revolution*. The x-axis represents the visitor's progression through the exhibition space and the y-axis represents the year of the work encountered by the visitor.

Appendix G Transcript of Flavin's letter to Wagstaff

This appendix contains the author's transcript of Dan Flavin's letter to Sam Wagstaff. See Appendix A, Figure 105, page 224 and Figure 106, page 225 for the images on which this transcript is based.

January 21, 1964.

Williamsburgh

Dear Sam,

Your exhibition has been on the boards for twelve days now. I hope that all goes well. I enjoyed being with you at the opening.

Sonja and I will try to make the trip to Hartford on the first week-end in February. Lucy Lippard, who writes the New York column (with Max Kosloff [*sic*]) for Artforum, and her husband, Robert Ryman, want to come with us. If our times hold out we will be there on Saturday, February First.

Bob Rosenblum, on seeing my fluorescent tubes, said that I had "destroyed painting" for him. He was emphatic. He switched the overhead light on and off several times because he wanted to sense "the difference".

I gave him a new print of the diagonal. He said that he would "shout out my message to Henry and frau".

I don't quite understand Bob's enthusiasm. I think that he should really be cautious. I invited him to come back again soon if he needed confirmation. I respect his affectionate awareness.

Andy Warhol offered to help me to have a show in the Stable Gallery but thus far we have come to no conclusions. He may come to visit us this week.

At present I am working on icon VII and planning my poster for March.

I hope that you are at work.

My fondest regards to you

Dan

P.S.

Frank Stella's show is very beautiful and provocative.

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Abbreviations

AAH	Association of Art Historians
ANSI	American National Standards Institute
BG	Bruce Glaser
CAA	College Art Association, New York, NY
CD	Compact Disc
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DF	Dan Flavin
DJ	Donald Judd
EAT	Experiments in Art and Technology
FS	Frank Stella
Guggenheim	The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY [unless otherwise qualified]
HfG	Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm [School of Design Ulm]
ICA	Institute of Contemporary Art, London [unless otherwise qualified]
ICA University of Pennsylvania	Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
IFdK	The International Faction of Constructivists
INCITS	International Committee for Information Technology Standards
INKhUK	Institut khudozhestvennoi kultury [Institute of Artistic Culture]
KGB	Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti [Committee for State Security]
LACMA	Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art
m	Metre(s)
MHRA	Modern Humanities Research Association
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA
mm	Millimetre(s)
MMCA	Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki
MoCA	Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
MoMA	The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
NEA	National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC

OBMOKhU	Obshchestvo molodykh khudozhnikov [Society of Young Artists]
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
PDF	Portable Document Format
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RA	Royal Academy of Arts, London
RGALI	Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Lituratura i Iskusstva [Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts, Moscow]
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SMCA	State Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki, Greece
Tretyakov	The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UK	United Kingdom
UNOVIS	Utverditeli novogo iskusstvo [Affirmers of the new art]
US/USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VKhUTEMAS	Vysshie gosudarstvennye khudozhestvenno-tekhnicheskie masterskie [Higher State Artistic and Technical Workshops]
WBAI	Name (call sign) of New York, NY radio station [not strictly an abbreviation, but listed here for the sake of clarity]
WWII	World War II

The United States' two-letter state abbreviations in use in this thesis are as per ANSI standard INCITS 38:2009.