

A Critical History of the
International Art Journal
Artforum

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Department of Fine Art

January 1995

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

ABSTRACT

The American-based international art journal *Artforum* has proved one of the most prominent and influential of art history's discursive agencies, playing a critical role in framing, probing, and re-working particular beliefs of art practice, art history, and art criticism broadly conceived of as 'Modernist' and 'post-Modernist.' This thesis investigates the development of *Artforum's* critical and historical writing on 'Modernist,' 'post-Modernist,' and feminist issues. It takes *Artforum*, from 1962 to 1993, as its 'archive' and undertakes a critical history of the journal's personnel, policies, and textual discourse, as well as its look and design.

The first chapter, "The Language of Another Generation," focuses upon the 'old' *Artforum*, a concept of the magazine which attempts to articulate a retrospective perception of its critical power from the mid-1960s to the mid-'70s. Specifically, it challenges a conception of the magazine which portrays it as a mouthpiece for Clement Greenberg's theories of Modernist artistic and critical practices. In attempting to elucidate this misconception of the journal, the chapter makes use of some of Michel Foucault's suggestions for a historical analysis that focuses on the ruptures, rather than the continuities of the object of study. To this end, the chapter identifies factors which contributed to the construction of the idea of *Artforum* as a Greenberg-influenced journal and then locates a discourse working against that idea, a discourse that disrupts Greenbergian Modernism.

Chapter 2, "Shameless Hussies," centres on *Artforum's* November 1974 and November 1980 issues and questions the journal's gendered biases toward the human figure in art. It considers the magazine's attempt to wrest from body and performance artists Lynda Benglis, Lisa Lyon, and Carolee Schneemann their artistic authority, and documents its struggle to maintain the producer/product, subject/object distinctions that these artists had blurred

through their practices. Indeed, the chapter propounds that *Artforum's* resistance to images of the female figure waxed when the body represented belonged to the artist herself and, in view of the evidence presented by the November 1980 issue, waned when artist and body were either distinct identities or male. The chapter concludes with an analysis of whether or not the journal succeeded in nullifying the artists' political power by preventing their bodies' final collapse into ambiguous representation.

Chapter 3, "Autocritique," looks at *Artforum's* relationship to certain concepts of post-Modernism through its notable recourse to a self-referential criticality. It discusses examples of the journal's self-reflexivity under the editorships of John Coplans, Ingrid Sischy, and current editor Jack Bankowsky and proposes that the magazine oscillates between working with and exhibiting a Greenbergian notion of Modernist self-criticism on the one hand, and an idea of a post-Modernist deconstructive impulse on the other.

For Mom, Dad, and Lesley

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Fred Orton, my thesis supervisor, for his consistent support and enthusiasm for this project, for reading my work with extraordinary care, and for his generosity with his time and astute comments. I am grateful to all of the undergraduate students at the University of Leeds who from 1991-1994 participated in my "*Artforum*, Modernism and Post-Modernism" course option, and to the post-graduate students undertaking the university's M.A. degree in Feminism and the Visual Arts, 1993-1994, who considered the Lynda Benglis controversy and *Artforum's* November 1980 issue with me, for their provocative discussions of the magazine's texts and images. Thanks also to Griselda Pollock for giving me the opportunity to debate *Artforum* with her MAFEM students. I am indebted to those friends and colleagues in England and America who read and talked me through aspects of my work - particularly Alison Sleeman, Jennifer Gordon, Joanna Roche, Chris Riding, and Nicolette Trahoulia - and to Robert and Bryony Hebson for their unflagging support and encouragement. And finally, special mention to Oscar for his steady company throughout untold hours in front of the computer.

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Introduction

'Neither a bore nor quite a whorehouse...'

*'They used to say that Artforum was like Listerine:
it tasted terrible, but it was good for you.'*

- Max Kozloff¹

In an article written for the 30th anniversary issue of the American-based international art journal *Artforum*, Thomas McEvelley exclaimed, 'Cracking open a magazine can be like opening a box of chocolates: knowing more or less what is inside does not diminish the delicious anticipation.'² As the above comment by Max Kozloff indicates, for some persons *Artforum* may have often seemed more a monthly dose of antiseptic than a box of chocolates; yet, in the 1960s especially, each issue indeed generated amongst those persons a sense of anticipation: 'There was such urgency to the magazine then, as the entire contemporary art world eagerly awaited each issue.'³ Since its founding in San Francisco in 1962, the journal has developed into one of the most prominent and influential of modern and contemporary art's discursive agencies, its reputation for an authoritative critical rigour established early on through its vital role in framing, querying, and re-working particular ideas of art practice, art history, and art criticism known collectively as 'Modernism.' Francis Frascina has pointed out that 'by 1970 [it] was probably the leading art journal in the USA.'⁴ And McEvelley, who began writing for the magazine in 1981, has declared of its first 15 years, 'Its power was undeniable - everyone knew the term *Artforum* Mafia, and used it' (Malcolm, 59). More recently,

¹Max Kozloff quoted in Janet Malcolm, "The Girl of the Zeitgeist - II," The New Yorker, 27 Oct. 1986, p. 59.

²Thomas McEvelley, "Sweet Thoughts," Artforum, Sept. 1993, p. 178.

³Chuck Close, "He Called Me Chuck," Artforum, Sept. 1993, p. 123.

⁴Francis Frascina, "The Politics of Representation," in Modernism in Dispute, eds. Paul Wood et al (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 90.

when the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds mounted an exhibition of the work of Serge Spitzer in the spring of 1994, issues of *Artforum* were hung on the walls, 'as though in homage or in ironic reference to their power.'⁵

As Frascina has pointed out, the art magazine and the university comprise two of the institutions crucial to the formation of a dominant culture (1993:81). Following Raymond Williams, he calls attention to the idea that both institutions select certain cultural meanings and practices for emphasis, reserving others for either reinterpretation and dilution, or else exclusion and neglect. Notably, part of the process of *Artforum's* institutionalization has occurred at the hands of the American university system, through Art History departments which have enlisted the journal - and even, I would go so far as to say, canonized certain of its essays - into their teaching of modern and contemporary art history. It was through one such department, UCLA's Department of Art History, that I first encountered the magazine.⁶ During the time I spent in both undergraduate and post-graduate studies there, essays first published in *Artforum* featured in a significant percentage of the department's art history course syllabi, thereby attesting to its prime role in informing its faculty's teaching - and its students' understanding - of 20th-century art practice, criticism, and theory. Although I was unaware of Williams' ideas at the time, my decision to undertake a critical history of *Artforum* sprang from a similar intuition: that, in so doing, I would confront that which the journal, and thus my own American-based, *Artforum*-influenced educational training, had selectively emphasised, reinterpreted, and/or

⁵Tim Hilton, "It's All Too Easy - To Forget," The Independent on Sunday, Magazine, 3 April 1994, p. 22.

⁶From my own experience at UCLA (1986-1990), the department's canon seemed to comprise Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood," Artforum, Summer 1967, pp. 12-23; Robert Herbert's "City vs. Country," Artforum, Feb. 1970, pp. 44-55; Max Kozloff's "American Painting During the Cold War," Artforum, May 1973, pp. 43-54; Eva Cockcroft's "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," Artforum, June 1974, pp. 39-41; and Moira Roth's "The Aesthetic of Indifference," Artforum, Nov. 1977, pp. 46-53. These essays featured repeatedly within the undergraduate and graduate level art history course syllabi produced by both permanent and visiting faculty.

omitted in its construction of 20th-century art history.

By invoking the concept of a critical, as opposed to a traditional, history, I am appropriating some of Michel Foucault's work in The Archaeology of Knowledge, which I discuss at greater length in my first chapter. Whereas a traditional history searches for continuity or overall significance between disparate events, Foucault advised the historian to 'ignore no form of discontinuity, break, threshold, or limit'⁷ in performing his or her task. Furthermore, he suggested taking as a starting point whatever unities are already given, interrogate what it is that specifies and individualizes them, and then either break them up or dissipate their apparent familiarity (26).

Artforum itself forms a unity of sorts, or more specifically it provides us with what Foucault referred to as an *oeuvre* - 'a collection of texts that can be designated by the sign of a proper name' (23). Through the use of the case study, the following chapters acknowledge and then attempt to disrupt the unity denoted by the sign *Artforum* by locating the journal's points of connection and its ruptures, always striving to render unfamiliar aspects of a magazine which after more than 30 years has perhaps become stereotyped.

Admittedly, there is one well-known aspect of *Artforum* that has so far resisted rupture: its public perception as a journal that is, at best, difficult to read and, at worst, unreadable. As former *Artforum* contributing (1971-1974) and associate (1974-1975) editor Peter Plagens remarked to former editor John Coplans (1972-1977) in the journal's 30th anniversary issue,

...the perception did come about that *Artforum* as a whole was the equivalent of the longest, most excessively footnoted Michael Fried essay you could think of. The magazine seemed to say that the most important new art was being made by, and critically championed by, incomprehensible academics displaced to SoHo.⁸

He further described the journal of the 1960s and early '70s to Coplans as "'a

⁷Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 31.

⁸Peter Plagens, "Interview with John Coplans," Artforum, Sept. 1993, p. 190.

degree magazine" written by Ph.D.'s about M.F.A.'s' (190). Long-term *Artforum* readers perusing the 30th anniversary issue might have remembered that Plagens had used the pages of the magazine to carp at its opaque writing once before. In his 1974 essay "Peter the Pressure Cooker," Plagens moaned, 'Tried to read three issues of *Artforum* on the plane coming in, got through only part of one article before my head hurt.'⁹ According to Carter Ratcliff, at least one of Plagens' colleagues knew and approved of the journal's reputation as an arduous read. He relates, 'I remember one of the writers at *Artforum* in the old days - I think it was Annette Michelson - saying, with a kind of pride, that *Artforum* was the only American journal that seemed to be translated from the German.'¹⁰ Yet, even after a series of resignations and forced departures in the 1970s from the critics and editors who had attained for the journal its early reputations for rigorous criticism and difficult writing,¹¹ the charge of unreadability continued to hang over its head:

If it were only Aunt Minnie in Keokuk who couldn't make heads or tails out of an article in *Artforum*...it wouldn't be a serious problem. But more and more it's the artist with an M.F.A. from Cooper, who lives on Prince Street, gets a show every year or two and maybe an occasional teaching assignment at Visual Arts or Queens College who is flummoxed. When an intelligent, educated, knowledgeable person finds himself unable to understand a trade magazine about his own trade, there's a problem.¹²

Ingrid Sischy (1980-1988) admitted to *New Yorker* writer Janet Malcolm that

⁹Peter Plagens, "Peter and the Pressure Cooker," *Artforum*, June 1974, p. 31.

¹⁰Janet Malcolm, "A Girl of the Zeitgeist - I," *The New Yorker*, 20 Oct. 1986, p. 49.

¹¹These include the resignations of former editor Philip Leider (December 1971), associate editors Annette Michelson, Rosalind Krauss, and Joseph Masheck (December 1975), and contributing editors Michael Fried (June 1971) and Barbara Rose (March 1973); and the dismissals of John Coplans and Max Kozloff in February 1977.

¹²T. Jeffrey Keeffe, Letter, *Artforum*, Dec. 1977, p. 11.

she, too, found much of *Artforum* unreadable.¹³ She further confessed,

An object lesson I keep before me all the time is that of my mother, who picks up *Artforum*, who is completely brilliant, sophisticated, and complex, who wants to understand - and then *closes* it (Malcolm, "...II," p. 52).

Yet Sischy, if anything, exacerbated the magazine's alleged opacity by producing issues which through their lay-outs severely challenged their readers' abilities to get through an article. In a sense, the problematic shifted from content to form. Or, perhaps, from Modernism to post-Modernism? A special issue of May 1983, for example, alternatively printed its feature essays diagonally, sideways, upside down or, in one case, two to a page at different angles. Dinitia Smith of *New York* has cited the January 1986 issue for its baffling abundance of aggregate words separated by virgules - 'artificially/artistically,' for instance - and quoted Sischy as joking in response, 'The issue had a secret theme. It was a special issue on slashes, testing our readers' subliminal capacities.'¹⁴ The final issue produced under Sischy's editorship (February 1988) rendered literal the accusation of unreadability when space ran short in a series of interviews conducted for the issue. Faced with more material than could fit neatly within a page, Sischy systematically reduced the typeface within each article until it was nearly illegible. Stewart Greenspan told Dinitia Smith, 'We used to laugh about the fact that if you scissored the magazine up and randomly put it back together, you wouldn't know the difference' (49).

Chapter 1, *The Language of Another Generation*, discusses the journal's role in disseminating information to the public or, to be more precise, its titularly defined role as a forum for issues about art. Richard Cork's 1975 article for *Studio International*, "Pitfalls and Priorities: An Editorial Dialectic,"¹⁵ thus

¹³Janet Malcolm, "A Girl of the Zeitgeist - II," The New Yorker, 27 Oct. 1986, p. 52.

¹⁴Dinitia Smith, "After Andy," New York, 29 January 1990, p. 49.

¹⁵Richard Cork, "Pitfalls and Priorities: An Editorial Dialectic," Studio International, July/August 1975, pp. 2-3.

proves useful for understanding the paradox intrinsic to *Artforum*: a vehicle for public exchange that seemingly restricts its public's access to its texts. As his essay's title indicates, Cork argued the case for and against contemporary art magazines. Submitting his fourth point in favour of their continued existence, he contended,

There is nothing inherently wrong with a magazine which concentrates wholly on art if it is aware of the need to relate its contents to the broadest of social bases: newspapers, with their far greater ease of access to the mass of the public, signally fail to discuss art in any depth, and so it is important to nurture the forum that an albeit compartmentalized magazine can provide (2).

Cork presumes for art magazines the function of forum, specifically a forum providing access to a broad social base. *Artforum* in fact founded itself upon precisely this principle of providing a forum for the public exchange of ideas about art, even going so far as to incorporate the very concept of the forum into its name. Whether or not it fulfilled its self-described role is a question discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. What is of interest here is not just the consistent perception of *Artforum* as a magazine renowned for impenetrable writing, nor even the notion that the journal defied Cork's dictate that an art magazine ought to relate its contents to 'the broadest of social bases.' Nor is it the realization that for its first decade, *Artforum* recognized and knowingly perpetuated the social and intellectual limits of its forum, as evinced by the following exchange:

John Coplans: A peculiarity of the American scene in the '60s was that half the artists were shaped in universities, where they studied history and philosophy and the like, and the other half were shaped in the art schools. There was hardly anyone among the Minimalists who didn't study philosophy, and hardly anyone among the Pop painters who didn't go to an art school.

Peter Plagens: Is that how *Artforum* became a 'degree magazine' written by Ph.D.'s about M.F.A.'s? No wonder its tone was cold.

John Coplans: What you call coldness was simply a better educated generation (Plagens, 1993:190).

No, what is of interest here is the discovery that implicit within a perception of *Artforum's* persistent inscrutability is the insinuation that throughout the magazine's 30-odd years in publication, its various editors not only preserved

that perception, but actually encouraged it, thereby unifying the journal through a familiar stereotype.

Interestingly, current editor Jack Bankowsky has hinted that he could yet disrupt this stereotype. In an article for *The New York Times* published in the autumn of 1994, Diana Jean Schemo singles out *Artforum* for exemplifying what she terms 'the jabberwocky of art criticism.'¹⁶ In response, Bankowsky admits his own fears for the increasing opacity of art criticism (though he neglects his own magazine's contribution to its development):

Jack Benkowski (sic), editor of *Artforum*, says he worries that criticism that can't be understood without painstaking rereading, and criticism that forsakes judgment for description may be destined for irrelevance. He traces the trend toward obfuscation in popular magazines to the highly analytical criticism found in academic journals which, he says, are poorly mimicked by 'second-string writers' in a kind of intellectual trickle-down effect (Section 4, 1).

Bankowsky's confession of his worries for the future of art criticism gives rise to the possibility that he might work to arrest or even reverse this apparent trend through *Artforum* itself. He therefore suggests that he may accomplish for the journal that which his predecessors avoided: a rupture of one of its forum's more familiar aspects:

The *Artforum* of Philip Leider (1962-1971) and John Coplans' (1972-1977) editorships has produced another unifying, persistent conception of the journal as tied almost exclusively to the Modernist critical practice of Clement Greenberg. Chapter 1, **The Language of Another Generation** investigates how this perception was produced and works towards its dissolution by interrogating *Artforum* essays which I believe effect its rupture. Significantly, this conception's generation and disruption partially arise from the same source: the journal's editorial board. The presence of former contributing editor Michael Fried (1966-1974) on the editorial board, and his 1967 defense of Greenbergian Modernism against the 'corrupting' influence of Minimalist art, "Art and

¹⁶Diana Jean Schemo, "The Jabberwocky of Art Criticism," *The New York Times*, 23 Oct. 1994, Section 4, p. 1.

Objecthood," have especially occasioned the notion of the magazine as bound up with Greenberg's critical practice. Fried himself has acknowledged his critical debt to Greenberg - 'as anyone familiar with my essays on abstract painting and sculpture is aware, I was deeply influenced throughout the 1960s by the art criticism of Clement Greenberg'¹⁷ - though he has also asserted that 'by 1966 I had become unpersuaded by his theorization of the way modernism works...' (56). Despite his apparently faltering faith in his mentor's theories, we shall see that it is not Fried's writings for *Artforum* that mount the most profound challenge to the magazine's alleged articulation of Greenbergian Modernist criticism but, rather, those of his self-confessed Greenberg-inspired colleagues, Barbara Rose (1965-1973) and Rosalind Krauss (1969-1975). Chapter 1 traces their debts to Greenberg's beliefs and examines how their articles for *Artforum* interrupt Fried's perpetuation of Greenberg's critical presence within the magazine.

Fried's "Art and Objecthood," and its subsequent status as what Janet Malcolm dramatically but more or less correctly described as 'a sort of culminating aria, sung from the ground with the knife in the chest, of the enterprise known as formalist art criticism' ("...II," 62), inspires the title of this first chapter. The chapter takes into account conceptions of Greenbergian Modernism which, as Malcolm does here, often mistakenly conflate Greenberg's practice with that of formalist art criticism. Underlying some of those conceptions is the assumption that the language associated with Greenberg and his erstwhile followers belongs solely to his view of Modernism and is thus culturally and historically specific. Malcolm has recounted an encounter with Julian Schnabel who, in referring to the 'objectness' of his work in conversation, articulates this assumption. Inquiring as to whether he was using the term in Fried's sense of that which Modernist art strives to defeat, Malcolm

¹⁷Michael Fried, "Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop," in Discussions in Contemporary Culture, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), p. 56.

was stunned at his response:

Schnabel says he doesn't know Fried's essay, and asks me what it is about. After I tell him, he nods, and says with devastating carelessness, 'All that is the language of another generation. We don't use language like that today. We're a different generation. We're interested in different things' ("...II," 62).

Of course, Schnabel may have been being completely disingenuous here. Indeed, he probably was. But the point is that his remarks affirm that *Artforum's* own devotion to the representation and re-working of Modernism in the 1960s renders its discourse, too, culturally and historically specific. More to the point, his comments highlight the need to disrupt what we shall see is the pervasive and unifying notion of the journal as Greenbergian in its critical outlook in order to expose not only the deception behind that perception, but also the fiction behind Schnabel's presumption of a generational break between the artistic and critical practices of the '60s and the '80s, between Modernism and post-Modernism.

Chapter 2, **Shameless Hussies**, developed from my response to a critique of *Artforum* that the Guerrilla Girls delivered within the journal's own pages. Asked to participate in Ingrid Sischy's final issue as the magazine's editor, the Guerrilla Girls agreed to an interview, but brought with them for publication a well-deserved written denunciation of the journal for its lack of coverage of female and non-white artists. After stating their position and listing their supporting statistics, they concluded,

Only one female artist had work reproduced on the cover of *Artforum* during all of 1985, '86, and '87. Women now comprise more than nine percent of the military. Guerrilla Girls feel it is safe to say that in 1987 a woman has more opportunities in the U.S. Army than on the cover of the international *Artforum*.¹⁸

The Guerrilla Girls' statement prompted me to look through *Artforum's* issues of the '80s, '70s, and '60s. Along the way, I discovered a particular trope in the journal's coverage of female artists – the use of female artists who

¹⁸Guerrilla Girls, Statement, *Artforum*, Feb. 1988, p. 133.

specifically utilize their bodies for their art. Chapter 2 discusses this trope. It begins with an analysis of *Artforum's* controversial reaction to Lynda Benglis' two-page advertisement in the November 1974 issue and culminates with Sischy's special issue of November 1980 on the human figure in art. It pays particular attention to three case studies - the appearances of Benglis, Lisa Lyon, Carolee Schneemann within the above-mentioned November issues - which seem to make manifest the journal's inability to critically engage with the work of female body artists without first attempting to wrest them of their artistic authority. I will suggest that in its efforts to deny or at least throw into question the degree of the artists' authority over their work, *Artforum* hoped to reassert the producer/product, subject/object distinctions that Benglis, Schneemann and, to a lesser extent, Lyon had blurred by employing their bodies as their artistic medium. At issue is the proposition that the journal's gender biases go far deeper than neglecting to select the work of female artists for cover image reproductions; they go to the very heart of how *Artforum* represented their work and, equally importantly, the artists themselves.

Throughout the course of my doctoral studies, I have characterized my project both formally (to the university) and informally (to those who asked) as an interrogation into *Artforum* and its dissemination of 'Modernism' and 'post-Modernism.' However, having reached that paradoxical stage of concluding my writing of the thesis with its introduction, I have come to appreciate that what I have queried is not so much the journal's *dissemination* of the various practices and beliefs that collectively come to be regarded as either 'Modernism' or 'post-Modernism,' as its *internalization* of their principles. Chapter 3, *Autocritique* - a title I have appropriated from Barbara Rose's book of the same name - discusses the journal's internalization of both Greenberg's Modernist concept of a Kantian self-criticism,¹⁹ described in his 1961 essay

¹⁹Chapter 3's argument is specifically tied to "Modernist Painting"'s Kantian (as opposed to Greenberg's earlier Marxist) notion of self-criticism.

"Modernist Painting," and Craig Owens' theory of a deconstructive post-Modernist self-reflexivity. The concepts of Modernism and post-Modernism come under examination here, as does the notion of a split between the two. Correlatively, we shall see that *Artforum* under the editorship of Ingrid Sischy has been framed in terms that render the journal itself post-Modern and thus bespeak the idea of its own internal split. For example, Janet Malcolm described Sischy as 'the Ariel of the art world, darting hither and yon, seeming to alight everywhere at once...as if under orders from some Prospero of postmodernism' ("...II," 65). And in 1993, Sischy's successor, Ida Panicelli, declared,

My predecessor, Ingrid Sischy, had made an extraordinary turnabout in the magazine's vision. She opened it up to fields contiguous to art, such as film, television, and fashion - the latter well ahead of her time, back in '82. She had probed the post-Modern to its core; there was little to add.²⁰

Chapter 3 argues that like Panicelli, Sischy broadly conceived of post-Modernism as analogous to a new attention to mass culture, a view echoed by J. Hoberman in the December 1986 *Artforum*: 'The post-Modern can be partially defined as the point in Western civilization at which art finds itself identified within and against mass culture.'²¹ *Artforum's* interest in popular culture under Sischy is not in dispute here, given Robert Pincus-Witten's amusing testimony to her diligent study of its ebbs and flows:

Ingrid is odd. She can get curious *idées fixes*. She is very interested in popular culture. I remember one conversation I had with her and some fairly glamorous people when she was telling us about the tragedy of an extremely popular pop singer - the one who wears a glove. His tragedy was the built-in supersedence of his prestige by another extremely popular pop singer, named Prince. And it was simply impossible for me to think of that as even remotely entering the sphere of tragedy. She was reading tragedy in connection with some issues in popular culture, and I was reading it in terms of, you know, hubris, nemesis, the idle cruelty of the gods (Malcolm, "...I," 58).

²⁰Alessandra Mammi, "Ida Panicelli," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 180.

²¹J. Hoberman, "Andy Warhol: Top Gun and Brancusi," *Artforum*, Dec. 1986, p. 72.

Rather, what *is* open to dispute is both Sischy's notion of the post-Modern and Panicelli's assumption, shared by others, that the journal turned its attention to mass culture only after 1980. In investigating these notions, I shall challenge another which insists upon a break between the *Artforum* of the mid-'60s to the mid-'70s and the *Artforum* of the 1980s. Notably, members of the journal's staff from the earlier period have themselves promoted the idea that the two '*Artforums*' are indeed distinct entities by begrudging the latter product the critical sway of the former:

I ask Rosalind Krauss what she thinks of the present *Artforum*. She replies, 'I just got so bored with it that I stopped subscribing. I've just not looked at it. I'm just not interested in it. Ingrid's sensibility just doesn't interest me' (Malcolm, "...I," 50).

The new *Artforum* is a media magazine; it's totally media-oriented. There's no real criticism in it, or almost none. McEvelley writes criticism, and John Yau writes criticism, but I haven't found anything else that I would call criticism in the new *Artforum* (Barbara Rose quoted in Malcolm, "...I," 60).

Peter Plagens: Do you read the magazine now?

John Coplans: I look at it. *Artforum* retains its original audience, but the audience has grown enormously and there are a number of magazines serving it. *Artforum* is no longer the central magazine that we presumed it to be. I don't read it very often because I don't find the art they're writing about very interesting (Plagens, 1993:190).

Notwithstanding these remarks, Sischy's *Artforum*, and indeed the *Artforum* of Jack Bankowsky, will reveal through their acts of self-reflexive criticism to have themselves negated the notion of the journal's internal split. However, by working to discredit this notion of a rupture I am not arguing for a unity under the sign *Artforum*. Instead, I am proposing that by determining what it was about itself that *Artforum* wanted to recover, promote, or dispute through its recourses to self-reflexivity and self-criticality, we might better understand how the journal has constructed itself and thus how it wants us to read it.

'Neither a bore nor quite a whorehouse' – the title of this introduction is indexed to part of my argument in Chapter 2. Lisa Liebmann's description of

the journal as 'neither a bore nor quite a whorehouse'²² alludes to her time at the magazine during the 1980s. However, I have invoked it here because my discussion in Chapter 2 of Lynda Benglis brings to light attempts on the part of *Artforum's* associate editors to characterize the artist as herself a prostitute, as well as their own inference that Benglis somehow transformed the journal into a house of ill-repute by 'soliciting' its editor for advertising space. Liebmann's quote, which otherwise seems a rather bizarre delineation of the magazine, here retroactively refutes the editors' inference.

Finally, a comment about my decision to centre what follows strictly on *Artforum's* text and illustrations. I have not interviewed any of its former or current staff members for various reasons, some of them tactical. Some of those once associated with the magazine, like Philip Leider, never give interviews. Others, like Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss, are now rooted in critical positions which oppose their earlier Greenbergian practices, thereby inducing the suspicion that their accounts of their work for *Artforum* would contradict the actual texts. But what finally persuaded me to confine my discussions to the journal's content was my conviction that an interrogation of *Artforum* ought to begin and end with that which ultimately comprised it – its textuality and its imagery – and not with the retroactive perspectives and representations contained within the memories of those personalities who participated in its production. Jack Bankowsky reinforced this view when, upon wavering in my decision to adhere to text and image alone, I sent him a fax requesting access to *Artforum's* archives. Bankowsky replied that there was nothing for me to see in the archives, that everything I needed was in *Artforum's* text, and that the 30th anniversary issue in particular would answer any questions I might have had about the journal and its contributors.²³

²²Lisa Liebmann, "Hip to Be Square," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 176.

²³Jack Bankowsky, fax to author, 25 Jan. 1994.

Ingrid Sischy, too, has inadvertently supported my decision:

Critical writing is not subject to interview, nor does it require collaboration; were it necessary to consult...about a critical opinion there would be no history of art, no doctorates.²⁴

If I had gone out and interviewed the personalities who published within *Artforum* over the past three decades, I would have produced a different doctoral thesis – but not necessarily one that would bring me or you any closer to understanding the aspects, enquired into here, of its discourse.

²⁴Ingrid Sischy, "Editorial Comment," *Artforum*, May 1980, p. 66.

Chapter One:

The Language of Another Generation

'*Artforum* has never put forth the unified front we sometimes retrospectively imagine.' - Jack Bankowsky, current editor of *Artforum*.¹

Introduction

Artforum began publication in June, 1962, with a staff of one. Before John Coplans and Philip Leider joined the journal as associate editor and managing editor respectively in the autumn of 1962, *Artforum* officially consisted only of John Irwin, a printing company salesman who wanted to set up an art magazine. Specifically, Irwin conceived *Artforum* as a viable alternative to the New York-based art journals which had hitherto dominated the market, particularly *Art News* and *Art in America*, and thus distinguished his product by establishing it in San Francisco and dedicating it primarily to West Coast artists.² The journal's unusual 10½" x 10½" format further distinguished it from other art magazines, as did its early eagerness to venture beyond Manhattan and the East Coast's borders in its coverage of artists and recruitment of writers. Unlike its rival *Art in America*, which generally restricted itself to New York City's art scene and whose editorial board in 1962 included figures associated with such New York art institutions as the Museum of Modern Art (Alfred H. Barr Jr., Dorothy C. Miller, James Thrall Soby), the Guggenheim Museum (Thomas Messer), and the Whitney Museum (Lloyd Goodrich), *Artforum* at first looked outside New York's artistic and critical establishment for its material. It sought out new artists and new people to write about them, pointedly forging a link in the reader's mind between *Artforum* and the 'new.' John Coplans explains,

Artforum's founder, John Irwin, wanted the magazine to be a financial success, so he wanted to publish the leading critics of the day, the people at the *Timeses* (sic) of Los Angeles and New York - the very people we were obsessed with not using. I was convinced that *Artforum* should be a new magazine, run with the

¹Jack Bankowsky, "Etc. Etc.," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 3.

²John Irwin, "Ars Longa, Pecunia Brevis," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 117.

new art, and find new writers. Phil went all the way with this.³

By thus promoting new, young talent within its pages, *Artforum* strategically opposed its own youth to the maturity of *Art News* (founded 1902) and *Art in America* (founded 1913). It advanced itself as contemporary and implied that its competitors were *passé* by comparison. At the same time, *Artforum* also put itself forward as a serious rival to *Art News* and *Art in America*, as a journal entitled to the same respect that their seniority accorded them. In short, it craved both the freshness associated with youth and the air of gravity that attended its more established competitors. To this end, *Artforum* forsook its West Coast bias in 1965 and merged youth with East Coast establishment by publishing the work of a host of young critics with doctoral degrees in art history from prestigious Ivy League colleges. John Coplans relates,

...in 1965 or so, I had recruited for *Artforum* some younger East Coast critics who wanted to deal with the new art. There was Robert Rosenblum, Barbara Rose, Michael Fried, Max Kozloff, and Rosalind Krauss. One of the best people looking for new artists was Robert Pincus-Witten.⁴

Yet at the same time that Coplans was recruiting new critics for *Artforum*, the journal was verging on bankruptcy. In fact, rumours of its financial troubles had begun circulating as early as 1964, reaching the ears of Stanford University student Charles Cowles. With a family in publishing, an interest in art, and a major in journalism, Cowles recognized within the failing journal an opportunity to launch his own career. He recounts,

...I put up the money to help the magazine out of debt and get it off the presses on the condition that I could spend a year there doing whatever needed to be done. I sold ads, I worked on circulation...From October until June I spent every moment I wasn't in class at the magazine, or coming to New York to promote it.⁵

³John Coplans, "He Was Extremely Terse," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 121.

⁴Peter Plagens, "John Coplans," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 119.

⁵Henry Geldzahler, "Charles Cowles," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 121.

But despite Cowles' efforts, *Artforum* remained debt-ridden and by 1965 John Irwin could no longer support it financially. Unwilling to surrender his role as publisher, Irwin's (unnamed) partners forced him out and, wanting rid of the journal, accepted Cowles' offer to take over as publisher:

...when June came around, I finished up at Stanford, and I needed something to do with my life. So I went to the owners and said, Look, here's the story. The magazine's not making money. And you guys are tired of it, and I need something to do, and I like *Artforum* - I'd like to take it over. And they said okay (Cowles, 1993:192).

Cowles immediately moved *Artforum* to Los Angeles, which by 1965 enjoyed a more vibrant art scene than San Francisco, only to move it two years later to New York City. *Artforum* had by then abandoned its original commitment to 'try to put the West Coast scene on the map, and to support the artists who were emerging there' (Coplans, 1993:118), yielding a significant portion of its space not only to its young East Coast critics, but also to new East Coast artists, such as Dan Flavin, Robert Morris, and Don Judd. John Coplans claims that this change quickly alienated the very artists for whom the journal had been founded and thus hastened its move:

When *Artforum* was still on the West Coast the artists there had hated the magazine because of its attention to major East Coast artists. That was one reason Phil wanted to move to New York... (1993:122).

But if the move to New York marked *Artforum's* final break from its West Coast origins, it also marked the journal's coming-of-age - in its own estimation - as a serious rival to *Art News* and *Art in America*, for by establishing offices on their home ground it was pronouncing itself their direct competitor, if not their equal. Furthermore, the move to New York created an official headquarters for *Artforum's* East Coast critics and thus declared its faith in their import. Perhaps this explains why the magazine's relocation in 1967 now seems to mark the beginning of what has been termed the 'old *Artforum*,' a concept which attempts to articulate a retrospective perception of the journal and its critical force during its early years in New York. According

to *Artforum's* current editor Jack Bankowsky, the notion of an 'old *Artforum*' derives from 'a longing for a moment when New York was sure of its centrality, and *Artforum* of its status as the primary organ of thought on the vanguard arts' (1993:3). More significant though is the evidence that artists and critics shared, and in fact reinforced, *Artforum's* belief in its critical primacy via published comments which portray the 'old *Artforum*' as America's most critically rigorous art magazine from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies. Thomas Crow, for example, has asserted, 'single issues from that period maintain a level of informativeness and intensity that put to shame whole books of recent critical writing,'⁶ whilst *New York Times* columnist Hilton Kramer once declared, 'for the better part of the 10 years that it has been in existence, *Artforum* has been our leading intellectual art journal.'⁷ *The New Yorker* has also cited the journal's past sway, noting, 'it was such a formidable critical force in the art world as to give rise to the expression "*Artforum* Mafia,"'⁸ and artist Chuck Close recalls,

There was such urgency to the magazine then, as the entire contemporary art world eagerly awaited each issue. Every article was dissected and debated nightly at art world watering holes such as Max's Kansas City.⁹

⁶Thomas Crow, "The Graying of Criticism," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 185.

⁷Hilton Kramer, *The New York Times*, September 17, 1972, p. D23. Kramer also noted *Artforum's* influence upon university art history programmes: 'For a sizable segment of the art public, especially in the universities, the experience of color-field painting, minimal art, earthworks, and related developments has been inseparable from the criticism, theory, debate and documentation which *Artforum* has lavished upon them.'

⁸Janet Malcolm, "A Girl of the Zeitgeist - I," *The New Yorker*, 20 October, 1986, p. 49.

⁹Chuck Close, "He Called Me Chuck," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 123. Close, whose professional name was actually *Charles* Close, adds that *Artforum's* influence was such that when it published an interview with him under the title "An Interview with *Chuck* Close" in the same month that *Art in America* published its own article, "Introducing *Charles* Close," it was *Artforum's* name for the artist which took hold. He writes, '*Artforum's* article evidently became the defining piece on me and my work, and I have been stuck with "Chuck Close" ever since' (p. 123).

According to John Coplans, the journal's critical influence extended into the art world's commercial side as well. He relates,

I started to hear artists saying cockamammy things like "I got the lead review in *Artforum*." I mean, is the first review in the Friday *New York Times* the "lead review?" And when I'd put an artist on the cover, six museums and collectors would call the gallery, wanting to buy" (1993:190).

Kerry Brougher, the one-time Assistant Curator of Los Angeles' Museum of Contemporary Art, has also affirmed *Artforum's* influence upon museums, specifically upon MOCA's own 1986 inaugural show, *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art*. Responding to a question about that exhibition's bias towards male artists, Brougher revealed that MOCA acquired its skewed notion of art history directly from the pages of *Artforum*:

...If you go through *Artforum* through the fifties (sic) and seventies there are hardly any women artists included. So it's difficult, because if you are doing a history, do you do that history as that history stands, or do you revise that history?¹⁰

Brougher, whose assumptions about the relationship between art journals and certain notions of art history I shall address shortly, underscores how *Artforum's* past influence extended into ideas about the history of contemporary art. As does a comment from Hilton Kramer who, at a 1975 Los Angeles County Museum of Art symposium entitled "Validating Modern Art," noted that *Artforum's* critical force gave it historical weight as well:

Peter Plagens: ...how the hell do you act when you know that every move has this crushing weight of history behind it?
Hilton Kramer: It's the same weight that you carry writing for *Artforum*...¹¹

Yet as we shall see, attending these perceptions of 'the old *Artforum*' is another, in my view less-tenable conception of the journal, which identifies it under the editorships of Philip Leider (1962-1971) and John Coplans (1972-

¹⁰Jo-Anne Berelowitz, "L.A. Stories: of Art, MOCA, Myths, and City Building," Diss. UCLA 1991, p. 131. Brougher's correct assessment of *Artforum's* neglect of women artists is discussed in a later chapter.

¹¹"Validating Modern Art: The Impact of Museums on Modern Art History," Proc. of a symposium published in *Artforum*, January, 1977, p. 43.

1977) as heavily influenced by, if not synonymous with, Clement Greenberg's 'Modernist' critical practice. It is this broad conception of the journal's critical tendencies during this period that I shall challenge and explore, for I believe that a portrayal of *Artforum* as fundamentally Greenbergian in its critical and theoretical orientation ignores the discontinuities within the journal's critical content which conflict with such an account. These ruptures occur not only but most significantly within the 'Modernist' criticism of Barbara Rose and Rosalind Krauss, both of whom were members of *Artforum's* editorial board in the sixties and/or seventies, and both of whom Barbara Reise has particularly identified as adherents of Greenberg's theories in her condemnatory essay, "Greenberg and the Group."¹² I shall therefore argue that their essays, along with Philip Leider's consistent recruitment of articles by such anti-Greenberg artists/critics as Dan Flavin, Richard Serra, Robert Morris, and Robert Smithson, expose a magazine irresolute in its position towards Greenberg and his views. Moreover, they demonstrate that from the mid-sixties onward, *Artforum* participated in the decline of Greenbergian 'Modernism' by operating as the key site in which that decline played itself out, thus confirming Richard Serra's assertion, 'More than any other voice or venue, *Artforum* substantiated the break in American culture in the late '60s.'¹³

Artforum's own potential as an art magazine further impels an investigation into its supposed critical and theoretical allegiance to Clement Greenberg, for in its capacity as an art journal it is, according to *Artforum* contributing editor Thomas McEvilley, 'the entranceway to art history.'¹⁴ McEvilley writes,

...the first framing, analysis, contextualization and evaluation of art takes place in the magazines, and that early formulation powerfully

¹²Barbara Reise, "Greenberg and The Group: a retrospective view - Part 1," *Studio International*, May, 1968, p. 254; "...Part 2," *Studio International*, June, 1968, p. 315 & p. 316, n.47.

¹³Richard Serra, "He Was A Great Editor," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 120.

¹⁴Thomas McEvilley, "Sweet Thoughts," *Artforum*, Sept., 1993, p. 179.

affects artworks subsequent reception. The authors of the books that deal with contemporary artworks as they recede into the past...rely on various sources of information - notably exhibition catalogues, which are enormously influential records - but it is the magazines that stitch the history of their time in the most complete and seamless fabric (1993:179).

Given the above-noted affirmations of *Artforum's* critical force during its first fifteen years, and John Coplans' boast that when he featured 'an artist on the cover, six museums and collectors would call the gallery, wanting to buy,' it is safe to assume that the journal did indeed influence the reception of some of the various artists and/or artworks it featured. One must therefore examine if, how, and when *Artforum* privileged or discredited Greenberg's views on modernist art and criticism in order to begin to question how its own attitude might have affected an artist's or artwork's public reception.

Notably, *Artforum* was well aware of its art historical role early on, for in its 10th anniversary issue (September, 1972) it placed the following advertisement:

We are pleased to announce the first four sets in a continuing series on the history of contemporary art. It is our feeling that this program will make a real contribution to art education in the areas of contemporary art history where current and recent materials have not been readily available to art educators. Each set will comprise 20 first-quality color slides and will include a text which provides stylistic descriptions as well as an analysis of each slide in terms of that particular style.... (p. 95)

Artforum divided the sets into 'Abstract Expressionism and the Gestural Tradition,' 'Non-Gestural Abstract Expressionism and Colorfield Painting,' 'Pop and Post-Pop Representation,' and 'Minimalism and Post-Minimalism.' In manufacturing the slides and accompanying texts, the journal ensured that its critical influence extended to university art history programmes and art colleges. Moreover, it preserved certain views on contemporary art and artists, creating a permanent collection which by its very nature escaped the shifts in critical positions that the continual publication of a monthly journal would generate. The collection's fixity makes the need to reassert *Artforum's* fluctuating critical positions at that time all the more pressing.

It is also important to establish whether or not a disjunction between *Artforum's* critical practices between 1965 and 1975 and its readers' perceptions of those practices existed and/or still exists, for that possible disjunction would affect how one reads the magazine's precise 'entranceway to art history.' Equally, McEvelley's claim that art magazines offer 'the history of their time in the most complete and seamless fabric' further impels an analysis of *Artforum's* potential critical biases toward a certain art and culture, since those biases in fact would determine how the journal 'framed, analyzed, contextualized, and evaluated' art and thus render dubious McEvelley's notion of a complete and seamless history. For him to think otherwise is to slip, as MOCA's Kerry Broucher did when selecting artists for his museum's inaugural exhibition, from recognizing that *Artforum* constructed a *specific* entranceway to – or route for – art history to considering it a self-contained repository of art historical fact.

McEvelley tries to correct this slippage by later asserting, 'for an art history of the last thirty years...one could do worse than read a full run of *Artforum*' (1993:179), his use of the indefinite article 'an' reminding us that the journal offers only one particular writing of art history amongst many possible writings. However, his referral to 'a full run of *Artforum*' once again implies an inherent completeness in the journal's art history of the past 30 years, suggesting that without a 'full run' the historical record would be incomplete and discontinuous. Moreover, he misleadingly enacts a closure, since *Artforum* continues to publish and has yet to produce 'a full run.' McEvelley is correct to highlight the art magazine's relationship to the history of art, but he ultimately misrepresents that relationship by portraying art journals as passive receptors of art history rather than as one of its active and, in the case of the early *Artforum*, most powerful constructors.

It is this latter concept of the art journal that I want to hold on to, for it affirms the value of an investigation into *Artforum's* engagement with art and criticism and, in particular, its staging of critical debates from the mid-sixties

to the mid-seventies. What follows on in this chapter concentrates on this last aspect of the magazine and thus analyzes the ways in which *Artforum's* editors and writers deployed criticism via published articles, editorial statements, and implicit or explicit editorial policies. It also details Greenberg's theories of 'Modernism,' how they became perceived as linked to *Artforum*, and the ruptures in the journal's own critical output which I believe render this perception of *Artforum* deceptive. In other words, I am writing a critical history of *Artforum*, but one which intentionally deviates from pursuing the continuities and relationships so dear to a traditional historical analysis.

My approach owes something to Michel Foucault's work in The Archaeology of Knowledge. Foucault advised forsaking traditional historical analysis, which depended upon identifying linkages, connections, and causal succession, in favour of a new attention to the phenomena of ruptures and discontinuities. He urged the historian towards a new history, one propelled by the discontinuous:

One of the most essential features of the new history is probably this displacement of the discontinuous: its transference from the obstacle to the work itself; its integration into the discourse of the historian, where it no longer plays the role of an external condition that must be reduced, but that of a working concept; and therefore the inversion of signs by which it is no longer the negative of the historical reading (its underside, its failure, the limit of power), but the positive element that determines its object and validates its analysis.¹⁵

Following Foucault, I have chosen the essays which appear in the discussions below due to the disruptions I believe they effect upon the notion of *Artforum* as a Greenberg-inspired journal from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies. This notion was largely generated by articles which appeared in the magazine by Greenberg follower and *Artforum* contributing editor (1966-1974) Michael Fried. Many of these disjunctive essays come from the pen of Fried's co-contributing editor (1965-1973) Barbara Rose, who in the 1960s reigned as one

¹⁵Michel Foucault, The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 9.

of that decade's most important critics. In retrospect, although Michael Fried emerges as the more influential writer, it can be argued that Rose was regarded as the more important critic at the time and that she, rather than Fried, seemed likely *then* to assume Greenberg's influential position within art criticism.¹⁶ Hence, her disruptions of Fried's Greenbergian criticism within *Artforum* ought to be understood as having produced especially powerful reverberations. Even now, they discontinue Fried's perpetuation of Greenberg's presence within the journal and therefore appear in this chapter as what Foucault called 'both an instrument and an object of research' (1972:9).

In a Foucauldian analysis, the very use of the term '*Artforum*' when referring to the journal's output raises a problem that must be acknowledged. An institution within art journalism, *Artforum* acts as an *oeuvre*, 'a collection of texts that can be designated by the sign of a proper name' (1972:23). Foucault tried to dissuade historians from sustaining the notion of the *oeuvre's* unity, urging, '...the unities that must be suspended above all are those that emerge in the most immediate way: the book and the *oeuvre*' (1972:23). Therefore, one might begin a suspension of *Artforum's* apparent unity with the realization that it is also a plurality in flux; the elements that occupy its pages do not remain constant. In particular, they change under the magazine's various editorships and speak in multiple critical voices. However, one must equally concede that the opinions, statements, and editorial decisions articulated between its covers went out into the public arena under the mark '*Artforum*.' The magazine's contributors created for it a collective identity that, though mutable, differentiated it from other art journals and rendered it more or less

¹⁶See in particular I. Michael Danoff, "Six Apologists for the New American Art," Diss. Syracuse University 1970. Danoff examines the work of six writers on American art (Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg, Barbara Rose, Alan Solomon, Robert Morris, and Donald Judd); in choosing his subjects he admitted selecting Rose over Fried based on criteria that privileged those critics whom he deemed to be "the most persistent and influential, and who have also been...highly interesting, original, and valuable" (pp. 9-10).

unique. Indeed, *Artforum's* own editors personified their journal, ascribing it agency and attributing to it various pursuits and pleasures. To give just these examples:

Artforum's increasing concern with film-making and film criticism in its most advanced aspects quite naturally elicits pained reactions for those with vested interests in the art of the recent past....¹⁷

Artforum has, over the past few years, made conscious efforts to support the woman's movement....¹⁸

What *Artforum* then came especially to like was photography.¹⁹

Artforum has always been and remains dedicated to the idea that the serious and worthwhile developments in art are never simply a question of changing tastes....²⁰

I do not want to completely suspend the notion of '*Artforum*' as a unified authored identity from a discussion that otherwise regards *Artforum* as an inconstant plurality when perceptions of the journal which themselves presume for *Artforum* an authorial identity partially inform that discussion. Instead, I too will at times assume a given unity '*Artforum*,' but I shall use that unity as a tool against itself in order to reveal its fiction, reaffirm *Artforum's* heterogeneity, and ultimately reconfirm Foucault's claim that 'the *oeuvre* can be regarded neither as an immediate unity, nor as a certain unity, nor as a homogeneous unity' (1972:24).

Artforum's Forum

In the September, 1993 issue of *Artforum* that belatedly commemorated the journal's 30th anniversary, founder John Irwin wrote,

I was working for a printer and had an opportunity to establish

¹⁷Annette Michelson, "Annette Michelson Replies" in Tanya Neufeld, "An Interview with Emile de Antonio" *Artforum*, March, 1973, p. 83.

¹⁸Lawrence Alloway et al, "Letter," *Artforum*, December, 1974, p. 9.

¹⁹Joseph Masheck, "Editing *Artforum*," *Art Monthly*, Dec/Jan. 1977/8, p. 11.

²⁰Ingrid Sischy, "Editorial," *Artforum*, November, 1980, p. 61.

a publication that might discuss both the creation and commerce of art: hence the magazine and the name *Artforum* (1993:117).

Irwin then continued along the theme of exchange central to his invocation of 'commerce,' claiming, 'It was quickly accepted. In the beginning readers even seemed to overlook its shortcomings in order to get the exchange they needed' (1993:117). Yet by calling his magazine *Artforum*, Irwin went beyond inserting commerce's connotation of exchange into his journal's title; he bound it up with the popular concept of the public denoted by 'forum.' 'Commerce' refers to both the social exchange of ideas and opinions and the commercial exchange of buying and selling commodities, whereas the word 'forum' emphasises *public* exchange. It alternatively denotes a public meeting space or marketplace (where, in *Artforum's* case, one might exchange discourse rather than goods and services), a medium through which the public expresses ideas, a public meeting with open discussion, and a publicly held discussion of a topic presided over by a panel of authorities. By calling the journal "*Artforum*," Irwin highlighted a public aspect of commerce's social exchange (here read as critical discourse) and its commercial exchange (art), and thus pledged a commitment to visual art and art criticism, and their public discussion.

Artforum tried to incorporate all of the art-forum's various aspects into itself throughout its first 15 years. First, as a commercially supported art journal²¹ it functioned as a kind of marketplace, its considerable critical sway even prompting, as mentioned earlier, museums and collectors to buy its featured works. Second, the journal operated as a medium for the public expression of ideas, opening up at least part of its page space to assorted artists and critics, though confining its readers' opinions to the 'Letters'

²¹Philip Leider once 'proposed the notion that *Artforum* should be totally free of commercial vested interest: no advertising,' but eventually conceded that without advertising, there could be no magazine. Walter Hopps, "No Phil, No Forum," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, pp. 118-119.

page.²² Last but not least, *Artforum* boasted a resident panel of 'authorities' in its East Coast critics available for debates on art and criticism. At this point, it is worth querying the degree to which *Artforum* devoted itself to fulfilling its titularly defined role.

From the beginning, *Artforum* demonstrated its commitment to discuss not only the creation of art, but also 'the commerce of art' and the social exchange of ideas by commissioning its first feature article, "Sidney Geist on Criticism." Geist's essay introduced to *Artforum's* readers, presumably in a way amenable to John Irwin, what he considered to be the role of art criticism and, most importantly for a journal pledged to the discussion of art criticism and theory, proposed its parity with art:

But even artists read criticism (that "even" is meant as a joke – they are its most avid readers) and if we do not know that any single critique ever brought forth a painting or caused an artist to change something in his work, a body of opinion certainly does arise which influences art...I see no difference in kind between what artists say to each other and what critics write or might write...There is a constant interplay between art and ideas, and if the relation is not clear, one thing is, and that is that criticism, in a large sense, is as human a need as art....²³

Despite this last resort to a certain vapid universalism, Geist's contentions make a point about the inextricability of ideas from art, a point *Artforum* evidently supported. In an interview published 26 years after his original essay, Geist informed the journal's then-editor Ingrid Sischy that it was a belief in the interconnection and interrelation of visual art and critical and theoretical discourse that determined the journal's project from the outset:

Ingrid Sischy: Can you feel back to why you thought it mattered so much to make a forum for criticism and for artists to speak their mind?

²²Notably, *Artforum* closed even this channel of public expression after publishing in March, 1977 a letter signed by 109 members of the art community protesting the firing of editors John Coplans and Max Kozloff. With a few exceptions, the journal then excluded the "Letters" page from its contents. See Vito Acconci, et al, "Letter," *Artforum*, March 1977, p. 9.

²³Sidney Geist, "Sidney Geist on Criticism," *Artforum*, June, 1962, p. 5.

Sidney Geist: Part of the reason was our objection to a certain silence around art. We wanted to open a discourse...because it's not true and not possible to have art without words. There's no way to have art without having thinking and talking about it. It's a dumb world the moment you think you can cut off language from art. There were plenty of journals then with critics speaking their pieces, but we often objected to what they said, and we never said anything about it. So we thought that this would be a place where people would say their objections.²⁴

Yet at first glance it would seem that *Artforum* displayed a duality towards Geist's claims for it. On the one hand, the magazine upheld the notion of the inseparability of art and ideas, and that of artist and critic, throughout its history by regularly encouraging artists to contribute not only specially-commissioned artworks but also criticism to its pages.²⁵ On the other hand, Philip Leider physically separated criticism from the journal's other contents in the 1960s by means of a self-contained **FORUM** section devoted to serious critical analysis.²⁶ One must therefore ask, was *Artforum*, from the moment of its inception, committed to the thorough integration of theory and criticism within its writing on visual art?

I would respond that the magazine's separate **FORUM** sections affirm the journal's complete support for such an integration, for a perusal of those **FORUMs** reveals them to be almost entirely devoted to the critical analysis of art and artists, thereby synthesizing critical and theoretical discussion and visual art. Through its **FORUM** sections, *Artforum* merged what was then within art journalism a seemingly conventional commitment to visual art with a less

²⁴Ingrid Sischy, "Interview with Sidney Geist," *Artforum*, Feb., 1988, p. 73.

²⁵Beginning with its first issue, wherein the "Contributors" page describes Geist himself as a "sculptor, editor, critic," and where Arthur Secunda reviews no fewer than nine exhibitions for the journal whilst simultaneously having his own Los Angeles exhibition reviewed by Gerald Nordland.

²⁶Philip Leider delineated the section by enclosing it between two coloured **FORUM** pages - a different colour nearly every month - before abandoning the concept in 1967. Ingrid Sischy resurrected the **FORUM** section in the 1980s, without its defining coloured pages. In contrast to Leider's focus on art and artists, Sischy's **FORUM** favoured essays on politics, movements, and critical trends both within and outside of the world of art.

conventional commitment to critical and theoretical debates about art. I would propose, without misrepresenting its project too much, that *Artforum* established itself upon, and maintained, an equal commitment to both art and language.

In fact, the journal introduced its inaugural issue with a self-defining statement located behind the table-of-contents that wove together its titular obligations to the ideas of language, commerce, and the forum:

ARTFORUM is an art magazine published in the west - but not only a magazine of western art. We are concerned first with western activity but claim the world of art as our domain. ARTFORUM presents a medium for free exchange of critical opinion. That center section, (starting on page 15 of this issue),²⁷ will contain a lot of divergent and contradictory opinion. We will search for the enlightening statement on art itself but much will fall short of this; criticism rarely offers the insight to art that it does to the critic himself. So ARTFORUM will publish a great many critics. Your letters and manuscripts are welcomed.

As discussed earlier, *Artforum* immediately moved to distinguish itself from its New York competitors. It did so here by promoting itself as a western pioneer laying claim to to an international artworld it saw as wide-open territory, seemingly applying Frederick Jackson Turner's theory of the frontier.²⁸ According to Turner, the frontier not only confirmed the Americanism of Americans, it threatened established society by asserting its independence from it. *Artforum's* decision to settle 'out West,' then, emphasised its freedom from the art establishment and threatened to subvert it. Yet Irwin's statement's second paragraph hints that the magazine's reclamation was more than geographical. It suggests that the art terrain enjoined encompassed not only culture in its myriad forms (thereby anticipating *Artforum's* subsequent attention to photography, film, music, dance, and, in the eighties, architecture, television, video, advertising, rock music, and fashion) but also art criticism

²⁷'That centre section' refers to the **FORUM** section: see pp. 15-32 inclusive.

²⁸Frederick Jackson Turner, The Frontier in American History (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962), p. 4.

and theory. By soliciting contributions from its readers and offering 'free exchange of critical opinion,' the journal implied that all critical and theoretical territory would be covered and readers' submissions published. Readers' submissions appeared within the afore-mentioned "Letters" page and, despite the perception of an 'old *Artforum*' comprising 6 or 7 critics in particular, the journal did publish a broad group of critics. Whether or not *Artforum* covered a wide range of theoretical territory during its first fifteen years, however, remains a contentious issue that provokes the following interrogation.

"Vulgarity with a Vengeance": *Artforum*, Modernism, & Formalism

In the second article that Clement Greenberg wrote for *Artforum*, "Complaints of an Art Critic," the critic defended and defined his role, rendering himself a judge for whom aesthetic judgments are completely 'immediate, intuitive, undeliberate, and involuntary.'²⁹ By describing critics as wholly objective personalities whose criteria are not consciously applied but rather in 'subliminal operation,' who relish their 'helplessness' before art, and who keep their 'prejudices, leanings, and inclinations...from interfering' with qualitative judgments (1967:38), Greenberg provided a portrayal of critics which refuted the possibility of their allegiance to a particular critical position. Personalizing the issue, he indignantly stated,

Of all the imputations to which this art critic has been exposed, the one he minds most is that his esthetic judgments go according to a position or "line" (1967:38)

However, by the time Greenberg's essay appeared in *Artforum*, his name had long since become inseparable from a notion of 'Modernist' artistic and critical practices which not only emphasised the objectivity and intuitiveness of

²⁹Clement Greenberg, "Complaints of an Art Critic," *Artforum*, Oct. 1967, p. 38. A letter from Greenberg about an alleged inaccuracy in a Max Kozloff interview with Friedel Dzubas appeared in the Nov. 1965 issue of *Artforum* (4), but his first commissioned article for the journal was "Manet in Philadelphia," *Artforum*, Jan. 1967.

the critic, but also insisted that 'Modernism' developed out of, and represented a continuation of, the art of the past. In particular, his 1940 essay "Towards a Newer Laocoon" argued for the continuation of what he saw as Courbet's seminal *avant-garde* Modern painting. He called for 'a new and greater emphasis upon form'³⁰ and championed the use of defined brush strokes, line, and primary colours in order to re-assert the shallowness of the flat picture plane (1940:43). Later, Greenberg would also identify Modernism 'with the intensification, almost the exacerbation'³¹ of a self-critical and self-defining tendency which he traced back to Immanuel Kant's method of employing the means of criticism to criticize itself. Greenberg outlined three of these tenets of Modernism - its self-critical tendencies, its continuation of past art, and its insistence upon spontaneous judgements - in his 1961 essay "Modernist Art," but denied any suggestion that they gave rise to a Modernist critical theory:

It should be understood that the self-criticism of Modernist art has never been carried on in any but a spontaneous and subliminal way. It has been altogether a question of practice, immanent to practice and never a topic of theory (1961:759).

Yet in spite of Greenberg's assertion to the contrary, by the time *Artforum* had begun publishing a year later his claims for a Modernist artistic practice had become inextricable from the language used to describe that practice, inevitably producing a 'Modernist' critical methodology. As Francis Francina has noted,

What Modernism stands for in the criticism of art is not a particular set of judgements and preferences alone, then, nor a particular interpretation of the history of modern art alone, but rather a certain *relationship* between the one and the other. It follows that to talk of Modernist *art* is to assume a kind of practice which is governed by similar preferences and by a similar interpretation of modern art

³⁰Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon," (1940) rpt. in Pollock and After: The Critical Debate, ed. Francis Francina (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 39. See also Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, "Avant-Gardes and Partisans Reviewed" in Pollock and After..., pp. 177-181.

³¹Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1961) rpt. in Art in Theory: 1900-1990, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 754.

itself.³²

The problems endemic to Modernist theory have been well-documented by critics such as Barbara Reise, who argued that Greenberg's faith in objective critical judgment within art history depended upon the critic's *subjective* version of that history (1968:256), and Jonathan Harris, who showed the inadequacies of a theory of artistic practice that refused to recognize historical circumstances, motivations, and artists' stated intentions as relevant information within its critical analysis.³³ What has been less frequently addressed, however, is the extent to which Greenberg's Modernist critical practice became conflated with a broad conception of 'formalist' theory. Greenberg himself recognized this tendency and denounced it in his "Complaints..." as 'vulgarity with a vengeance:'

...recently certain artists have been referred to as belonging to a "formalist" school for no other reason than their having been championed by certain critics whom some other critics call "formalist." This is vulgarity with a vengeance (1967:39).

Greenberg's chagrin at the 'formalist' label suggests his belief that his criticism went beyond 'formalism's somewhat limited concerns. Indeed, although Barbara Reise noted that Greenberg employed formal analysis (i.e. an attention to line, colour, and planes) within his critical practice, she also uncovered within it a 'revolutionary concept of history' (1968:254) which went beyond the pursuits of formalist criticism. She is therefore one of a handful of critics who resisted mistaking the formal concerns within Greenberg's criticism for 'formalist' criticism. In contrast, Michael Fried conflated the two when he presented his mentor's critical practice as paradigmatically 'formal' within his 1965 essay, "Three American Painters:"

³²Francis Francina, "The Politics of Representation" in Modernism in Dispute: Art since the Forties, eds. Paul Wood, et al (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 174.

³³Jonathan Harris, "Modernism and Culture in the USA, 1930-1960" in Modernism in Dispute..., pp. 60-62.

...this essay...tries to show why formal criticism, such as practiced by Roger Fry or, more to the point, Clement Greenberg, is better able to throw light upon the new art than any other approach.³⁴

In "Complaints of an Art Critic," Greenberg wrote that his earlier essays' critical focus on content probably led to his being considered 'an arch-'formalist'' (1967:39). Based on this explanation, one could assume that his conception of 'formalist criticism' was similar to Joseph Kosuth's broad definition of the term as 'no more than an analysis of the physical attributes of particular objects which happen to exist in a morphological context.'³⁵ Significantly, however, in the 1920s the term 'Formalism' with a capital 'F' more specifically denoted attention to an artwork's formal characteristics at the expense of its expressionistic capabilities. Leon Trotsky identified and criticized this aspect of 'Formalism,' claiming that its focus on form overlooked art's expression of a socially produced 'psychological unity' between artist and viewer, an interdependence which itself resulted in the creation and perception of art forms.³⁶ It is this notion of 'Formalism' as oppositional to expressionism that best demonstrates why such a description of Greenberg's views misrepresents them, for Greenberg's criticism can be seen to have valued an artwork's 'expressive' aspects as well. Michael Danoff, for example, has argued that within essays such as "Towards a Newer Laocoon" lies 'a definite and broad expressionistic side to Greenberg's art criticism' (1970:109). He contended that although Greenberg believed that the content of Modernist painting was in its form, he also believed that its form was expressive (1970:109). Hence, concluded Danoff, Greenberg dismissed Minimal Art precisely

³⁴Michael Fried, "Three American Painters," (1965) rpt. in Art in Theory: 1900-1990, p. 770.

³⁵Joseph Kosuth, "Art after Philosophy" (1969), rpt. in Art in Theory: 1900-1990, p. 843.

³⁶Leon Trotsky, "Literature and Revolution" (1922-3), rpt. in Art in Theory: 1900-1990, p. 430.

because it privileged form over feeling:

Greenberg's argument against Minimal Art is startling. First, his rejection of Minimal art does not derive from his ideological commitment to Modernism. If anything, Minimal Art is too Modernistic, albeit Modernism in its early, Cubist, phase. The main reason for the rejection comes from the expressionistic side of his thinking - Minimal Art is not felt enough (1970:131).

Yet despite both Danoff's recovery of an 'expressive' side to Greenberg's criticism and Greenberg's own rejection of the 'formalist' label, his Modernist critical practice continued to be conflated with that of a formalist practice, even within *Artforum* itself. Ian Burn, for instance, cited Greenberg and, significantly, *Artforum* as promoters of Modernism in a 1975 article published by the journal, but then reduced that Modernist critical practice to 'formalist' concerns:

The stress on exclusively formal innovation had the aftermath of content being in its last gasp reduced to such vacua as "color," "edge," "process," "ideas," "image," etc. plus a lot of fatuous jargon about qualities symbolized through these (cf. especially Greenberg's school of modernism, but also every issue of *Artforum*...).³⁷

Burn's comment, then, not only repeated the slippage that rendered formal considerations within Greenberg's work 'formalist,' he also compounded that slippage by assigning it to *Artforum*. His error echoed those of other critics who, citing the presence of the critics Barbara Reise called Greenberg's 'closest followers - Sidney Tillim, Jane Harrison Cone, Rosalind Krauss, and above all Michael Fried' (1968:254) - on *Artforum*'s editorial board from the mid-to-late-'60s to the early-to-mid-'70s, transferred a perception of the characteristics rightly or wrongly associated with Greenberg's critical practice

³⁷Ian Burn, "The Art Market: Affluence and Degradation" (April, 1975) rpt. in Looking Critically: 21 Years of Artforum (Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1984), p. 173.

onto the journal itself.³⁸ Such transfers manifested themselves in a flurry of articles published between 1968 and 1969 which publicly linked Greenberg's views to *Artforum*, the first of which was Amy Goldin's article for *Art News*, "Situation Critical." Calling the essay 'a sharp look at the current phenomena of formalist criticism and how it recreates art in its own image,'³⁹ *Art News* implicitly supported the indirect attack Goldin launched on *Artforum* by situating 'Formalist' criticism in the 1960s squarely within its pages. Quite literally as well, for across the top of the essay's first two pages stand four large boxes of equal size, each containing extracts from what Goldin considered to be exemplary 'Formalist' critiques. Significantly, in all four cases, the boxes quote Michael Fried from three 1967 *Artforum* articles and thus define his critical practice in the narrowest of terms.⁴⁰

Goldin does not begin her article with Fried, but with a straightforward remark about 'Formalism's focus: 'The presumption that all critical questions can be answered by reference to form tells us that we are in the presence of Formalist criticism' (Goldin, 44). Only thereafter does she conflate it with 'Modernist' critical practices, claiming, 'quality or esthetic value is the Formalists' key term' (Goldin, 44). In so saying, she attributes to 'Formalism' one of the tenets of Greenberg's Modernist criticism and thus induces the suspicion that her 'sharp look at 'Formalist' criticism was actually a misfired

³⁸Tillim, Cone, and Fried were contributing editors from Oct. 1965 to Nov. 1970, Dec. 1967 to Nov. 1969, and March 1966 to Feb. 1974 respectively, whilst Krauss was a contributing editor from Nov. 1969 to Jan. 1973 and an associate editor from Feb. 1973 to Dec. 1975. *Artforum's* afore-mentioned "History of Contemporary Art" slide series further linked Greenberg's Modernist views to its output, for by placing artists such as Pollock and de Kooning into the "Colorfield Painting" set, it perpetuated Greenberg's account of the latter artists as having developed later than, rather than concomitantly with, the former. For a discussion of Greenberg's account, see Reise, 1968:316, n. 47.

³⁹Amy Goldin, "Situation Critical," *Art News*, March 1968, p. 44.

⁴⁰Two extracts come from Fried's "Art and Objecthood" (*Artforum*, Summer, 1967), whilst the other two are from his essays "Anthony Caro" (*Artforum*, February, 1967) and "Ronald Davis" (*Artforum*, April, 1967).

attack on 'Modernist' criticism. Her next comment confirms this conceit:

The accompanying quotations illustrate the point; they...also give the reader a taste of the theoretical procedures of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried, respectively (Goldin, 44).

Despite the misdirection of her attack, Goldin succeeded in linking *Artforum* to Greenberg and especially Fried's critical practices,⁴¹ for by highlighting Fried's *Artforum* articles at her essay's beginning, and thus indirectly invoking his contributing editorship of the journal from 1966 to 1973, she implicated the journal in his alleged critical offences. No doubt this suited the editor of *Art News*, Thomas B. Hess, who was much closer to Harold Rosenberg than Clement Greenberg in both his views on art and in his affiliations with artists. Don Judd, too, linked Greenberg to *Artforum* through Fried, but was far more explicit in his approach than Goldin. In a 1969 essay whose title, "Complaints Part I" played upon that of Greenberg's "Complaints of an Art Critic," Judd accused *Artforum* outright of perpetuating Greenberg's critical views:

I didn't think about Greenberg much in the early sixties and he didn't write much. I suppose Fried and Philip Leider, the editor of *Artforum*, kept him going. When *Artforum* moved to New York it revived the roster of New York hacks.⁴²

Similarly, Francis Frascina has twice connected Greenberg's views on Modernism to *Artforum*. He first drew this link in his 1985 anthology Pollock and After, stating, 'When [Max] Kozloff became an editor of that journal in the 1970s, articles which implicitly criticized its Modernist stance of the decade before were published.'⁴³ More recently, Frascina repeated the connection in 1993's Modernism in Dispute, in which he showed that when *Artforum* moved

⁴¹It is an interesting coincidence that Goldin's essay appeared less than a year after the journal's move to *Art News*' home base, New York City. The coincidence adds a twist to the essay's publication: did *Art News* hope to undermine *Artforum* by attacking the critical practice associated with one of its most visible contributing editors and, allusively, with the journal itself?

⁴²Don Judd, "Complaints Part I," Studio International, April, 1969, p. 184.

⁴³Francis Frascina, Pollock and After: The Critical Debate (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 100.

its editorial offices to New York, 'the new generation of "Post-Greenbergian" Modernist critics acquired a kind of headquarters' (1993:174). Indeed, Fried, for one, remained committed to Greenberg's claims for Modernism during this period, though he developed his own variations on them, especially within his 1966 article "Shape as Form: Frank Stella's New Paintings" and its 1967 counterpart, "Art and Objecthood," both of which evinced his own peculiar concern with the viewer's eye. He has since reaffirmed his early commitment to Greenberg's views in a conversation with T.J. Clark filmed for the Open University:

Fried: One of the things that motivated us very strongly at the beginning, we were very interested in Greenberg's writings – and I'm not sure that this has ever emerged explicitly in writing about our mind-set in the late '50s – we particularly loathed...*Art News* and the rhetoric of art in *Art News* and...we hated the way Harold Rosenberg wrote about pictures as much as we found interest in the way Greenberg wrote about pictures.⁴⁴

Within the last decade, both Barbara Rose and Rosalind Krauss have also reconfirmed their early support for Greenberg's critical writing about art. In 1986, Rose described an encounter with the critic's work through her ex-husband Frank Stella and Michael Fried:

Frank and Michael, who were at Princeton together, went to hear Clement Greenberg lecture, and they were converted immediately to the Greenberg doctrine, because it offered a coherent way of looking at art. Nothing else did.⁴⁵

And in 1993, Rosalind Krauss announced in front of an ICA audience her enduring commitment to the formal concerns of Greenberg's work. She asserted, 'I am unashamedly, at a theoretical level, a formalist. That's just the way it is.'⁴⁶ Yet although these critics voiced commitments to Greenberg's

⁴⁴Jackson Pollock: Tim Clark and Michael Fried in Conversation, narr. Paul Wood, prod. Nick Levinson, Open University, Television Programme 20, 1993.

⁴⁵Janet Malcolm, "A Girl of the Zeitgeist – I," The New Yorker, 20 Oct. 1986, p. 60.

⁴⁶Rosalind Krauss, Peter Osborne, Adrian Rifkin, "Talking Art: On the Optical Unconscious," ICA, London, 1993.

critical practice, *Artforum* as a whole **did not**. Close examination of the journal reveals instead a contentious relationship with Greenbergian Modernism marked by polemic and rupture. The following investigation into *Artforum's* forum therefore aims to expand what has so far appeared to have been a persistently insular view of *Artforum's* critical prejudices.

The Editorial Board

In a June, 1964 special issue of *Artforum* entitled "The L.A. Scene Today," editor-at-large John Coplans reviewed Clement Greenberg's curatorial effort at the newly-opened Los Angeles County Museum of Art, "Post Painterly Abstraction." Coplans titled his review "Post Painterly Abstraction: The long awaited Greenberg exhibition fails to make its point," apparently underlining the notion that the exhibition had somehow 'failed' the public. In fact, the review's title is misleading, for Coplans' text launched an attack not on the exhibition, but on *Greenberg* himself in terms that plainly extended to his critical practices:

...in viewing 'PPA,' it is obvious that Greenberg has not focused upon what is actually being created in current American art. Instead, he has structured the exhibition to assert a personal notion of style; that is, to reveal what in his opinion the major ambitious art after Abstract Expressionism **ought to look like**, and what means it **ought to employ** to gain this look. For this purpose he goes to quite arbitrary and absurd lengths to lend credence to this view.⁴⁷

Coplans' criticism of Greenberg and his Modernist views pre-dated Barbara Reise's similar complaint that 'Greenberg's art history warps contemporary art to the shape of its own inflexible form' (1968:314) by four years. The first explicit assault on the critic published within *Artforum*, it evinced the journal's early refusal to ally itself with both Greenberg and his views and can even be seen as an attempt to hasten the decline of his critical influence.

⁴⁷John Coplans, "Post Painterly Abstraction: The long awaited Greenberg exhibition fails to make its point," *Artforum*, June, 1964, p. 5.

However, *Artforum* moderated the ferocity of Coplans' anti-Greenberg stance a year later when it discovered the talents of Michael Fried, a young critic who frequently acknowledged Greenberg's views in his articles. Fried first appeared in *Artforum* in September, 1965, when the magazine published another special issue, this time devoted to "The New York School." Boasting a cover by Hollywood actor/photographer Dennis Hopper, the issue contained an excerpt on Jackson Pollock from Fried's book, Three American Painters.⁴⁸ The following month, Three American Painters reappeared in *Artforum*, this time in a book review by Philip Leider. In Leider's opinion, Fried's work was nothing short of a critical landmark:

An extended, tortuous exercise of some 10,000 words, the essay takes its place as one of the most important pieces of critical writing to emerge since the Abstract Expressionist period and presents the position of the younger formalist critics in such extreme form that it will be, for a long time, the polar position around which, and against which, future critical dialogue will have to be oriented.⁴⁹

Notably, Leider's celebratory words - 'one of the most important pieces of critical writing to emerge since the Abstract Expressionist period' - implied a parallel claim for Fried himself. One infers from Leider's remarks that with Three American Painters, Fried himself became the most important *critic* to emerge since Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg. Certainly, his characterization rendered Fried, rather than the (then) more likely candidate Barbara Rose, *the* inheritor of Greenberg's mantle (which Leider, too, portrayed as 'formalist'), and suggested that Fried's polemic, as 'the polar position around which, and against which, future critical dialogue will have to be oriented,' would therefore inform *Artforum's* critical agenda immediately thereafter. These insinuations provoke the idea that *Artforum* indeed allied itself with Greenbergian Modernism, yet Leider's concluding words immediately confound it by admitting 'formal criticism's' limitations and thus declining to wholly embrace

⁴⁸Michael Fried, Three American Painters (Harvard: Fogg Art Museum, 1965).

⁴⁹Philip Leider, "Books," Artforum, Oct. 1965, p. 44.

Fried's judgements:

If, in the final analysis, the insights of formal criticism do not provide more than a scaffolding for the making of judgements, they do possess...the prodigious value of resulting from a face-to-face confrontation with the work of art, and not everything except the work of art (1965:45).

In spite of Leider's reservations about the capabilities of what he called formal criticism, but which sounded suspiciously like a Modernist critical practice with its attention to judgement-making, Leider's high esteem for Fried's critical capabilities led to his employment at *Artforum* as a contributing editor in March, 1966, a position he maintained until February, 1974.⁵⁰ Fellow contributing editors during his tenure included Max Kozloff, Rosalind Krauss, Annette Michelson, Barbara Rose, Robert Pincus-Witten, Joseph Masheck, Peter Plagens, Lawrence Alloway, Jane Harrison Cone, and Sidney Tillim, among others. The volatile interrelationships amongst these various staff members resonates in *Artforum's* uneasy relationship to Modernist criticism. To better understand the extent to which such personal and critical prejudices were intertwined, I turn to the editorial staff itself.

Upon reading Janet Malcolm's encounter with Barbara Rose, one might surmise that life at *Artforum* revolved around, in Rose's own words, 'a lot of hanging out together' (1986:60) with a homogenous, cohesive group who shared similar critical prejudices. Rose, a contributing editor from 1965 to 1973, informed Malcolm,

At *Artforum* in the sixties and seventies, we were talking to each other and we were talking to a group of artists who could understand us - Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Claes Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, the remaining Abstract Expressionists. They were people of a high intellectual calibre...We had all been formed by the same educational process. We were all trained art historians, and we all had a

⁵⁰John Coplans told Malcolm that Leider and Fried consequently formed a close friendship: '[Leider] was an enormously articulate man, and he couldn't stand inarticulateness in others. He was offended by it, by the dumbness of artists. His best friends eventually were the artist Frank Stella and the art historian Michael Fried, two of the most articulate men in the American art world' (52).

background in philosophy and aesthetics. We knew what we were talking about. Annette and Max and I had been pupils of Meyer Schapiro at Columbia, and Michael Fried and Rosalind had been at Harvard...After 1967, when Philip Leider moved the magazine to New York, there was a lot of hanging out together. You had a sense of not being isolated. I would write an article knowing that what I was basically doing was having a fight with Michael. We were a group of people who had had the same kind of education addressing the same topics from different points of view. The magazine had coherence, which the culture had at that point, too (1986:60).

I have repeated Rose's recollections at length, for they not only highlight the homogeneous educational background of *Artforum's* editorial staff but also expose Rose's idealized view of a 'coherent culture' in late-'60s America, despite that period's remarkable socio-cultural fractures. Of culture, Johann Gottfried Herder wrote, 'nothing is more indeterminate than this word, and nothing more deceptive than its application to all nations and periods.'⁵¹ Herder demonstrated that culture referred not only to the 'specific and variable cultures of different nations and periods, but also to the specific and variable cultures of social and economic groups within a nation' (Williams, 89) and thus must be spoken of in the plural. Rose ignores the multiplicity inherent in the term 'culture' and opts for a narrow understanding of it - as describing music, literature, painting, sculpture, theatre, and film (Williams, 90) - that itself neglects its intrinsic plurality. The civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam movement, and the women's liberation movement all impacted upon America's artistic and intellectual cultures in the 1960s and rendered them divisive, yet Rose insists upon their coherence. More astonishingly, given both her central position within the New York art world at the time and, as we shall see, her own writings, Rose's claim for cultural coherence glaringly overlooks what Richard Serra identified as 'the break in American culture in the late '60s' (1993:119): the decline of Modernism. Serra observed that 'Phil Leider's tenure at *Artforum* corresponded with a period of transition and upheaval in the art

⁵¹Johann Gottfried von Herder, "Ideas on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind" quoted in Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (Hammersmith: Fontana Press, 1976), p. 89.

world' (1993:119) that rendered it anything but coherent. Rose's comments thus mask the break to which Serra referred and, as I shall discuss, to which she herself contributed.

Rose's depiction of the *Artforum* editorial board as a group of intellectuals from identical educational backgrounds produces similarly jarring effects. It mitigates the board's critical disagreements, even lending them an air of civility. Rose may admit that she 'would write an article *knowing that what I was basically doing was having a fight with Michael*' (my italics), yet her reiteration of the staff's uniformity - 'a group of people who had the *same* kind of education addressing the *same* topics from different points of view' (my italics) - tempers that 'fight' and converts it into an intellectual exercise. Additionally, by asserting, 'We all had a background in philosophy and aesthetics. We knew what we were talking about,' Rose implies that art critics without backgrounds in those subjects did not know what they were talking about. She therefore grants *Artforum* a critical validity that she implicitly does not extend to its rivals. Finally, Rose's images of civilized disagreement and internal homogeneity undermine the journal's original commitment to 'present a medium for free exchange of critical...divergent and contradictory opinion,' presumably from diverse and dissentious critics, and automatically narrows the critical territory it sought to cover. In the end, the **FORUM** Rose describes resembles less *Artforum's* promised public space for open discursive exchange than authoritative and exclusive discussions of a topic made public.

It is worth noting that Rose characterized herself and her *Artforum* colleagues to Janet Malcolm as élitist, stating,

We were literary people - academic literary people. We didn't watch television. If we were interested in film - which Annette and I were - it was on the level of avant-garde film, not Hollywood...There wasn't this horrible levelling, where everything is as important as everything else. There was a sense of hierarchy of values. We felt we had to make a distinction between Mickey Mouse and Henry James...I don't believe in democracy in art. I think when élitism got a bad name in this country it was the beginning of the end for American culture' (Malcolm, 60-61).

T.S. Eliot contended that 'superior individuals must be formed into suitable groups, endowed with appropriate powers'⁵² in order to 'direct the public life of the nation' (Eliot, 36). He explained,

Those groups, formed of individuals apt for powers of government and administration, will direct the public life of the nation; the individuals composing them will be spoken of as 'leaders.' There will be groups concerned with art, and groups concerned with science, and groups concerned with philosophy, as well as groups consisting of men of action: and these groups are what we call élites (Eliot, 36).

Rose thus implied that she and her fellow *Artforum* editors were the best individuals available to direct public artistic life. Although they did not wield the governmental power which Eliot reserved for the élites, they nevertheless held considerable sway over the art world of the 1960s and early 1970s, directing public taste through critical discourse. As Eliot wrote, an élite-dominated society 'must see that the ablest artists and architects rise to the top, influence taste...' (Eliot, 45); the *Artforum* of Rose's recollection attempted to do just that.

Of course, Rose's version of *Artforum* lies open to dispute, and her former co-contributing editor Rosalind Krauss rises to the challenge. Krauss's caustic account of an editorial board in continual conflict shatters Rose's comforting image of intellectual and social compatibility, although, notably, she too casts herself in the role of an élite. Chatting with Janet Malcolm, Krauss reminisced 'with a sort of peevish relish,'

about the bad feeling that existed among the contributing editors of *Artforum* in the seventies: 'Lawrence Alloway was forever sneering at me and Annette for being formalists and élitists and not understanding the social mission of art. There was also a quite unpleasant quality emanating from Max Kozloff. He was always very busy being superior - I could never understand why. He, too, had this attitude that the rest of us were not aware of art's high social function (Malcolm, 49).

Similarly, John Coplans, *Artforum's* editor from 1971 to 1977, reaffirms Krauss' characterization of a fractious crew:

⁵²T.S. Eliot, Notes Toward the Definition of Culture (London: Faber & Faber, 1948), p. 36.

When I was editor of *Artforum*, I had half a dozen editors on my board. They were always quarrelling with each other. They all hated each other (Malcolm, 52).

However, he also supports Rose's assessment of both the editorial board's intellectual calibre and its aspiration to perform the role of the élitist:

They were all strong people, all academically very well trained, all extremely knowledgeable, the most experienced writers and critics in America, who had all gone through the various evolutions of art since the fifties.⁵³

Coplans' and, especially, Krauss's tales of a divisive *Artforum* reduce the editorial board to a clan of 'formalists' on the one hand (Fried, Rose, Krauss, Michelson) doing battle with social missionaries on the other (Alloway, Kozloff). Yet given what we shall see were Rose's attempts in particular to merge formal considerations with an awareness of socio-historical circumstances in her critical discourse, such a depiction is feeble and ultimately untenable. An analysis of an artwork's formal properties and one which interrogates its relationship to its social, cultural, and political milieu are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As Michael Fried remarked to an agreeing T.J. Clark, who were themselves identified in the '60s and '70s with Modernist criticism and the Social History of Art respectively, the difference between them was not that Clark would have been interested in the historical and Fried would not, but that they would construe that history differently (Open University, 1993). As if realizing the dubiousness of this opposition, Rosalind Krauss attempted to distance herself from it by accusing Alloway and Kozloff of its construction and promotion. In so doing, however, she reasserted her isolation from their views and thus perpetuated the same opposition which she sought to discredit:

Neither Annette nor I would buy into this simplistic opposition that they set up between formal invention and the social mission of art.

⁵³Malcolm, 51. Coplans also claimed that Phil Leider and *Artforum's* publisher Charles Cowles maintained an antagonistic relationship: 'Phil Leider couldn't stand Charlie...Phil was the kind of intense human being who could sit for five years in this tiny office next door to Charlie Cowles and never say a word to him' (51).

Our position was that the social destiny, responsibility - whatever - of art is not necessarily at war with some kind of formal intelligence through which art might operate, and that to set up that kind of opposition is profitless. It's dumb. I remember having all these stupid arguments with Lawrence, saying things like 'Why are you interested in art in the first place?' and pointing out that presumably one gets involved with this rather particular, rather esoteric form of expression because one had had some kind of powerful experience with it...And it's this experience that is probably what one calls an aesthetic experience. And it probably doesn't have very much to do with the message (Malcolm, 49).

Krauss could have added that the presence of contributing editors such as Robert Pincus-Witten, who resists categorization, topples this facile opposition as well. Speaking to Janet Malcolm, Pincus-Witten refused to align himself with either Krauss or Alloway. 'He speaks of Rosalind Krauss...with the grumpy familiarity of an older sibling,' wrote Malcolm (56), as Pincus-Witten proceeded to disparage Krauss's Hunter College students (both he and Krauss were faculty members of Hunter College at the time). He chided them for unquestioningly accepting Derrida and deconstruction, charging, '[they] are doing the eighties' equivalent of the fifties' Greenbergian formalist talk' (56). This complaint, coupled with an earlier comment - 'I myself am more interested in general cultural knowledge than in the interpretive skills with the new dispensation, under which the truth of Derrida, the truth of de Saussure...are replacing the truth of Greenberg' (56) - uncovered Pincus-Witten's reluctance to commit himself to any one critical practice, including formal analysis. He admitted only to feeling a kinship with 'the aristocracy of the intellect, the aristocracy of sensibility.' Unsurprising, then, that Pincus-Witten, like Rose and Krauss, rendered himself and his colleagues élitist, claiming,

As a group of writers - Philip Leider, Max Kozloff, Barbara Rose, Rosalind Krauss, Michael Fried, Sidney Tillim, Annette Michelson, and Lawrence Alloway, among others - we regarded ourselves as an entitled *cenacolo*...⁵⁴

When considered alongside his colleagues' similar remarks, Pincus-Witten's

⁵⁴Robert Pincus-Witten, "The Page was My Party," Artforum, Sept. 1993, p. 195.

comments reveal that despite the personal and professional rifts which characterized 'the old *Artforum*,' the one thing that connected its contributing editors to each other was a high esteem for, and a shared faith in, the power of their intellect.

One other link surfaces in the editors' quotes detailed above, especially with regard to Rose and Krauss. Both tended to invoke other colleagues in order to reinforce their positions. 'If we were interested in cinema - *which Annette and I were...*' began Rose, only to be twice echoed by Krauss: 'Lawrence Alloway was forever sneering at *me and Annette...* and '*Neither Annette nor I* would buy into this simplistic opposition....' Ironically, such remarks, along with Krauss's emphatic dissociation from Kozloff and Alloway, both create and sustain the very oppositions Krauss correctly denounced as simplistic.

Clement and Michael

Disruption amongst the staff spilled over into their critical writings, as evinced by *Artforum's* "Problems in Criticism" series. As part of its programme to promote critical discourse, *Artforum* introduced the series in September, 1967 with the following statement:

Volume Six of ARTFORUM, which begins with this issue, will feature a continuing series of articles on the subject, *Problems of Criticism*. The

essays, by various critics, historians, and artists, will concern themselves with the context, style, purposes, difficulties, and obligations of art criticism today.

Robert Goldwater (September), Clement Greenberg (October), and Max Kozloff (December) tackled the series' first three 'problems,' with Greenberg and Kozloff immediately declaring themselves at odds with each other via *Artforum's* "Letters" page. Kozloff objected to Greenberg's arguments within "Complaints of an Art Critic," citing especially their emphasis upon 'quality' and its 'provability' in a work of art, as well as what Kozloff considered to be Greenberg's 'reduction' of art criticism 'to a mute apologia for a visceral

reaction.⁵⁵ Greenberg responded with a brief defence of his views which concluded with the observation, 'the sarcasm in Mr. Kozloff's letter is on a level with its matter.'⁵⁶ That Philip Leider would solicit Greenberg for the series would not have surprised those, like Don Judd, who regarded *Artforum* to be critically oriented towards Greenberg's Modernist views. The problem lies in conflating Leider's biases with those of the journal he edited. There *is* evidence that Leider personally admired Greenberg's writings. Francis Frascina, to whom Greenberg gave access to his papers, recalls correspondence between the critic and the *Artforum* editor in the mid-'60s in which Leider, with 'almost obsequious deference,'⁵⁷ insinuated to Greenberg that he would 'publish anything of his.'. Similarly, in 1969 Dan Flavin wrote in *Studio International* that the previous year,

the editor of a popular American magazine about art...principally (discouragingly to me) directed to publishing criticism, advised me the three finest minds of contemporary art were Clement Greenberg, Michael Fried, and Sidney Tillim.⁵⁸

Since Flavin's article is littered with references to *Artforum* and Philip Leider, it is safe to assume that they are 'the popular American art magazine' and the editor to whom he alluded. Yet despite Leider's clear admiration for Greenberg, the critic's presence within the pages of *Artforum* must not be misread as a tacit acknowledgement on *Artforum's* part that it supported Greenberg's views. On the contrary, we shall see that the acrimonious debate which characterized the "Problems..." series, the "Letters" pages, and the journal's **FORUM** sections exposes the magazine's irresolution over Greenberg's

⁵⁵Max Kozloff, "Letter," *Artforum*, November, 1967, p. 4.

⁵⁶Clement Greenberg, "Letter," *Artforum*, November, 1967, p. 4.

⁵⁷Letter received from Francis Frascina, 26 October, 1994.

⁵⁸Dan Flavin, "Several More Remarks...", *Studio International*, April, 1969, p. 174. Flavin's title plays upon his "Some Other Comments," written for *Artforum* in December, 1967.

beliefs.

The December, 1967 issue is a case in point. Once again, the "Letters" column contained a complaint against Greenberg's essay, this time from Robert Goldwater. Four months into the series, and already its first three contributors were squabbling. Goldwater, whose criticism Greenberg labelled 'indifferent and wanton' within his "Complaints..." for attributing emotion to painting (1967:39), retorted,

...if the critic can never carry his audience with him along the road from analysis to feeling or quality of feeling, why pay him any mind at all?...One might just as well listen to the sly assured declarations of Tom, Dick, or Harry, who also know what they like, or at the very least, to Hilton, Max or Larry (4).

With this last sentence, Goldwater directed *Artforum's* readers away from Greenberg's critical beliefs and offered them an alternative in the writings of Hilton Kramer, Max Kozloff, and Lawrence Alloway. Dan Flavin then went a step further in that same issue's **FORUM** section, eradicating altogether Greenberg's relevance to critical discourse by declaring his Modernist belief in objective critical judgement to be 'quaint' and 'anachronistic:'

Dad, who was Clement Greenberg?
Oh, he's that pseudo-anthropologist who contrives before and after post-something or other scenarios, particularly for painters - a curious king of consistent, congested polemical conceit of sacrosanct critically didactic sub-contracting. Lately, his cant claims that most other art than that of his own brand is mere 'novelty'...remember that such a seemingly quaint anachronistic politically intransigent attitude has been religiously propagandized as the modern critical 'objectivity.'⁵⁹

Flavin's essay highlighted the breach that had been developing between the part of *Artforum* which still rated Greenberg's critical views highly and the part which recognized both their inadequacies and their shrinking sway. Moreover,

⁵⁹Dan Flavin, "Some Other Comments," *Artforum*, December, 1967, p. 25. By the time of the *Studio International* essay, he had fallen out with *Artforum* over what he viewed as its focus upon art criticism and theory at the expense of art practice. He especially disapproved of Michael Fried's central status at the journal, and attempted to undermine it by underscoring Fried's ties to Greenberg's critical beliefs, which had by then lost their primacy within critical discourse: 'Hyper-tense, super-serious (or is it supercilious - well, slight matter) artfully footnotable pious promo-proto-art historical polemicists... M. Fried or Friedberg or Greenbfried...' (174).

it underlined a correlative rift in the New York art world, in which Flavin, a respected artist, was a renowned figure. According to Robert Pincus-Witten, this was intentional; *Artforum* sought to replay the splits it saw in the New York art community within its pages. He claimed, 'We felt honor-bound to mirror the developing rifts in the New York art world' (1993:195). But by encouraging its critics to reproduce the art world's disjunctions, *Artforum* internalized them. As we shall see, it not only 'mirrored' those rifts, it produced them.

In the case of Dan Flavin, however, *Artforum* hedged its bets. A non-contributing editor though a frequent contributor to the magazine, his recruitment to attack Greenberg specifically indicated a shrewd strategical move on the part of Philip Leider. Ostensibly an outsider to *Artforum* artistically (if one accepts Barbara Rose's list of insiders: 'Robert Morris, Donald Judd, Claes Oldenburg, the remaining abstract expressionists') and professionally (i.e. not on its editorial board), Flavin's assault comes *externally*, rather than from within the journal's circle. By allowing this dissenting voice explicitly against Greenberg, and implicitly against his disciple Fried, into the journal's FORUM, Leider adhered to his journal's pledge to publish 'divergent and contradictory opinion.' However, he controlled the potential threat such an attack might pose to *Artforum's* internal well-being by recruiting dissidents from outside the magazine's offices.

Yet Flavin's relationship to the journal allowed Leider to have it both ways, because as a regular contributor, Flavin was not wholly outside the journal. His steady ties to *Artforum* might have led its readers to infer that Flavin's argument articulated opinions held by the magazine itself. As editor, Leider neither discouraged nor encouraged such an inference. His request to Greenberg to participate in the "Problems of Criticism" series, and his publication of Flavin's sardonic critique of Greenberg only two issues later, exemplify what was throughout his editorship a wider refusal to commit the

journal outright to a pro-Greenberg or anti-Greenberg stance. Flavin's ambiguous status as neither *Artforum* outsider nor insider thus underscored the precariousness of the journal's own position on Greenberg's Modernist beliefs.

In contrast, Michael Fried clearly stated his position on Greenberg's critical views in an essay written for a Summer, 1967 special *Artforum* issue on "American Sculpture." The centrality of his article, "Art and Objecthood," to late-'60s' Modernist criticism has been asserted and reified by its ubiquitous presence on university art history course syllabi and its multiple appearances within anthologies devoted to art criticism and theory. Hal Foster, for one, has hailed Fried's essay as the classic text of late Modernism⁶⁰ and further declared, 'this essay was and is of prime importance - a catalyst' (1994:193). On the basis of Foster's claim, I would even argue that *Artforum's* enthusiasm for Greenbergian Modernism reached its apogee with "Art and Objecthood," as Amy Goldin intimated through her boxed extracts in her "Situation Critical."

In "Art and Objecthood," Fried decried minimalist art, a style so distasteful to him that he re-named it 'literalist' art. What is at stake for Fried is whether artworks are experienced as paintings or as objects;⁶¹ he believed that unlike modernist painting, which had to 'defeat or suspend its own objecthood' (15), literalist art aspired to 'discover and project objecthood as such' (15). Citing Clement Greenberg, who had written of minimalist sculpture, 'it would seem that a kind of art nearer the condition of non-art could not be envisaged or ideated at this moment' (15), Fried posited minimalism as antithetical to modernist painting and sculpture. Yet he took Greenberg's argument a step further by claiming that minimalism's 'espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theater, and theater is now the

⁶⁰Hal Foster, "Re: Post," *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), p. 193.

⁶¹Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum*, Summer, 1967, p. 15.

negation of art' (15). For Fried, then, minimalism did not merely 'approach' the condition of non-art, it *was* non-art.

Literalism's (I am now employing Fried's terminology for a reason, as I shall discuss later) theatricality particularly offended Fried, impelling him to devote a significant portion of his essay to explaining the various ways in which this theatricality manifested itself. First, he contended that the literalist work was theatrical because it depended upon the beholder and was in fact 'incomplete' without him or her (21). Second, argued Fried, 'a kind of latent or hidden naturalism, indeed anthropomorphism, lies at the core of literalist theory and practice' (19) which in turn rendered it 'incurably theatrical.' Last but not least, Fried uncovered within literalism a 'preoccupation with time [and] with the *duration of the experience*' (22) which he suggested was 'paradigmatically theatrical' (22).

In contrast, Fried opined that modernist painting and sculpture defeated theatricality by being both perpetually present and instantaneous. He wrote,

if only one were infinitely more acute, a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it (21).

Reading Fried's explanation, it would seem as though the onus of time were on the *viewer*, for it is he or she who must possess an infinite acuteness in order to appreciate the instantaneousness of the modernist work of art.

It is worth noting the degree to which Fried invoked the spectre of illness in order to bolster his argument against theatricality. Witness his discussion of anthropomorphism in the literalist work:

...what is wrong with literalist work is not that it is anthropomorphic but that the meaning and, equally, the hiddenness of its anthropomorphism are incurably theatrical (19).

Fried's use of the adverb 'incurably' suggests that literalist sculpture or painting suffered from a terminal illness. Similarly, his pronouncement that modernist painting was forced to suspend its own objecthood due to the 'same general, enveloping, *infectious*, theatricality that corrupted literalist sensibility in the

first place' (20 – my italics) characterized literalist 'non'-art as the victim of a contagious disease that, in Fried's words, corrupted and perverted (20). He then propounded, 'Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre' (21), implying that literalist artists and their work are themselves degenerate. In so doing, he provokes an unfortunate allusion to the Nazi notion of degenerate art, '*Entartete Kunst*,' and thus transforms literalist works not just into non-art, but into something despicable and sick.

Rosalind and Rose

Like Clement Greenberg's "Complaints of an Art Critic," "Art and Objecthood" incited criticism from such *Artforum* readers as Allan Kaprow, Robert Smithson, and Robert Irwin ("Letters," Sept. 1967, Oct., 1967, Feb. 1968, respectively). The most notable rebuttal to Fried's essay, however, came unquestionably from within the magazine's core: Barbara Rose. Given her personal friendship with Fried, who had stood Best Man at her wedding to Frank Stella, and their shared high regard for Greenberg's critical views, Rose emerges as perhaps the most unlikely source for such a challenge. Yet for these same reasons, her critique powerfully exposes the disjunctions interrupting Fried's attempts within *Artforum* to continue Greenberg's Modernist critical practice.

From 1968 to 1969, Rose submitted three essays to the "Problems in Criticism" series, collectively entitled "The Politics of Art." Each essay took on Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," and Greenbergian Modernism respectively. Her first article, published in February, 1968, begins by denouncing some American art writing of the 1960s for displacing political idealism from the arena of action to the sphere of aesthetics. The result, contends Rose, was that for some, art had become 'the surrogate for the revolution' (31). She locates this displacement historically within Harold Rosenberg's criticism, but proposes that it had resurfaced in the writings of Michael Fried. Whilst acknowledging

Fried as 'our most brilliant critic,' Rose reproaches him for both this twist to his writing and for what she perceived as two related critical transgressions. First, she accused him of adding to his writings 'the vocabulary of Marxist pamphleteering' to the already virulent 'tone of outrage' found in Rosenberg's commentary, as well as the 'actual content' of Marxist polemics (31). Second, she bridled at Fried's self-acknowledged 'angered and stunned reaction' to 'bad or meretricious criticism' (31). Although she admitted that this latter transgression stemmed from the former,⁶² Rose's indignation over Fried's reaction dominates the tone and content of her essay.

According to Rose, Fried first articulated his position at a Brandeis University symposium on "Art Criticism of the Sixties" in 1967, where he announced,

Indeed, I am surprised to find that I feel more desperate about what seems to me bad or meretricious criticism written in praise and ostensibly, in elucidation of art than I do about bad or meretricious art (31).

Clearly irritated by Fried's confessed intolerance, Rose replies,

Certainly one must agree with Fried that what is at stake in any serious critical discussion is nothing less than a critic's view of history. What ought to be questioned, however, is why Mr. Fried should feel such anger, frustration and desperation, or for that matter, as he himself put it, why it should matter so much to him (31).

Complicating Rose's response is her addition of 'anger' and 'frustration' to Fried's admission of 'desperation,' thereby resulting in a critique that itself evinces anger and frustration. Indeed, one might easily turn her query on its head and ask Rose why Fried's emotional reaction to criticism should matter so much to *her*. In the beginning of "The Politics of Art," Rose articulates her disapproval of Fried's alleged adoption of Marxist polemics within what she considered to be the relatively 'neutral' vocabulary of Modernist critical debate.

⁶²Rose's argument in short: Fried alleges that the inability of bad critics 'to see what qualifies the works in question as paintings' and their inherent 'distrust of extremism of all kinds' reflects their 'values of bourgeois liberalism.' He thus 'destroys' his opposition by claiming that critical discourse between them is impossible due to their 'fundamentally divergent thought systems' (31).

In contrast, her antipathy toward his inflamed critical sensibilities strays away from the field of such debate, veering dangerously close to personal attack. In fact, part I of "The Politics of Art" bares an internal conflict wherein the critical attempt to dispassionately discuss some problems of criticism struggles against the personal desire to vent her - personal? professional? - grievances against Michael Fried. As Rose's battle plays itself out, her reader's focus oscillates between her critical argument and her palpable anger, bringing to mind both her comment to Janet Malcolm, 'I would write an article knowing that what I was doing was having a fight with Michael,' and a variation on *Artforum's* introductory moral: criticism rarely offers the insight to *criticism* that it does to the critic herself.

As if sensing this latter vulnerability of her offense, and presumably wishing to keep the critical spotlight on Fried and away from herself, Rose attempts to downplay her initial anger by adopting a more reasoned tone several paragraphs later:

Obviously I view Mr. Fried's charge of ideology and his own exclusive position as quite dangerous to any kind of appraisal of art. I feel that the sense of outrage he experiences when he reads contemporary criticism is both disproportionate and misplaced, and that it leads him to excesses in his own criticism having implications that must be considered (31).

Yet in spite of her new, muted tone, Rose continues to snap at Fried, as in her consideration of his critical 'excesses.' Significantly, she pinpoints them within Three American Painters, the book her editor had hailed only 2½ years earlier as 'one of the most important pieces of critical writing to emerge since the Abstract Expressionist period.' To have chosen this example of Fried's writing, instead of one of the pieces he had written specifically for *Artforum*, suggests that Rose was unwilling to implicate her magazine in Fried's 'excessiveness.'

Having read in Three American Painters Fried's contention that 'the most important single characteristic of the new *modus vivendi* between the arts and bourgeois society...has been the tendency of ambitious art to become more concerned with problems and issues intrinsic to itself,' Rose infers a conviction

that not only has 'art...become purged of all political content,' but that 'political content can actually work against esthetic quality, so in fact it *must* be purged' (31). The result, she warns, is that

...the sublimation of political issues within an esthetic context makes it possible to ignore (or even begrudge) the political content of art. In Mr. Fried's case it even makes it possible to discuss critical issues with a sense of passion and outrage once reserved for questions of life and death. But art has never been a question of life and death, and to address it with the intensity and sense of urgency that should be reserved for questions of life and death is repugnant (32).

With this last sentence, Rose again imbues her writing with the very things she condemns in that of Fried. Just as his 'anger, frustration, and desperation' when confronted with bad criticism provoked Rose into a similarly irate response, so Fried's 'sense of passion and outrage' impels her to passionately decry his critical tone as 'repugnant.' In short, Rose, too, allows 'intensity' to creep into her own criticism. She does not seem wholly unaware of this paradox, however, for having mitigated such intensity earlier in her essay by following an outburst with reasoned explanation, she again succeeds a stinging attack with tempered commentary:

I am not objecting to the intellectual content of Mr. Fried's criticism, which is of the highest order, but to the exclusivity of his position and the passion and urgency of his tone, which might be appropriate to a discussion of black power, urban renewal or war resistance, but which seems somehow out of context in a relatively dispassionate and morally and politically neutral activity like art criticism (32).

As well as marking a return to reasoned language and, given her own stinging attack, unveiling a somewhat naive conception of art criticism as dispassionate, Rose's comments beg the question of *Artforum's* own attention, or lack thereof, to political issues. Discussions of black power, urban renewal, and war resistance were virtually alien to the pages of *Artforum*. Except for its publication of a symposium on artists and politics in September, 1970.

Artforum's coverage did not extend to the effects of the Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War, and political assassination upon America's art world. Later, in 1971, it made a brief stab at opening up its pages to 'political communications,' a venture which did not see out the year. After publishing an

open letter on behalf of the Judson Three Defense Fund (Jan. 1971), an article which first appeared in *The New York Post* on an artists' protest at the administration of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Feb. 1971), and a letter denouncing the Whitney Museum's 'misrepresentative' survey of African American art (May, 1971), *Artforum* abandoned its "Politics" page. Only when it featured workers picketing the Museum of Modern Art on its December, 1973 cover did the journal make anything approximating a political stand. Since *Artforum* ignored social and political issues in favour of cultural issues, it is not surprising that Rose should find political passion displaced into its critical discourse.

Concluding her essay, Rose fires two parting shots at Fried. She scorns his idealism as fanaticism (32). And then, in an act that bares her personal disenchantment with the formal (i.e. line, shape, colour, flatness, materials, and techniques) considerations of Greenbergian Modernist criticism and thus signals disruption within *Artforum*, she rails against her colleague's criticism for its inherently 'obnoxious' assumptions:

For some time now I have found certain of the assumptions of a criticism that confines itself to a discussion of exclusively formal issues, denying that others exist, obnoxious for the reasons I have tried to qualify here...This criticism has by now itself become a form of excess. And I am not talking now about academic followers of Greenberg and Fried...I am talking about Greenberg and Fried themselves, whose original contributions must be acknowledged and appreciated by anyone writing today. I see their necessity to purge art of all social and political meaning as issuing from a frustrating inability to come to terms with a political position calling for action in a situation in which action is virtually impossible (32).

Rose then completes her renunciation of Modernist criticism by offering an alternative critical practice to take its place:

Better suited to the complexity of the current situation than a linear or cyclical view of art history is perhaps a criticism based on a general field approach. Such an approach could contrast and compare material horizontally instead of trying to organize it vertically as a series of radical advances constituting a 'perpetual revolution.' Evaluation would necessarily be part of such a criticism, but...it would come *after*, not before, classification and investigation (32).

Notably, the critics whom Rose singles out as practitioners of what she calls

this 'synthetic' criticism – William Rubin, Robert Rosenblum, and Leo Steinberg – were virtual strangers to the magazine throughout her contributing editorship. Steinberg and Rubin produced only the odd article for the journal during the '60s and/or '70s. Nevertheless, she clearly encourages *Artforum's* readers to forsake Greenberg and Fried in their favour and asserts that their new 'rational, inclusive criticism should be the aim of younger critics entering the field' (32). In so doing, Rose simultaneously recalls and ridicules Philip Leider's earlier establishment of Fried's criticism as 'the polar position around which, and against which, future critical dialogue will have to be oriented.' Though she stops short of taking on Leider directly, one infers from her concluding paragraph that her personal determination to counteract the 'excesses' she perceived in Fried's critical practice, and thus protect the journal's critical well-being, partially motivated her continued presence on *Artforum's* editorial board and feature pages after "The Politics of Art, Part I."

Artforum published "The Politics of Art, Part II" in January, 1969. At three times the length of Rose's original essay, part II picked up where its predecessor left off by continuing both its appeal for a new criticism and its rebuke of Michael Fried. But instead of repeating the aggressive strategy Rose deployed in part I, part II evinces a subtler approach.⁶³ Rather than take Fried on directly, her essay evoked and to some degree modelled itself after "Art and Objecthood." The result, as I will show, is a critique conducted metonymically: by attacking "Art and Objecthood," Rose pursues her assault on its author, Fried. Despite this change in strategy, Rose maintains the same

⁶³Rose employed such subtlety at one point in "...Part I." Writing of the Wölfflinian-Hegelian-Greenbergian analytical model upon 'which Fried admittedly relies,' she announced that Wölfflin's thesis had already been superseded by Alois Riegl's 'more sophisticated evolutionary approach' (32). Her fleeting tribute to Riegl, whose "Geertgen tot Sint Jans" argued for both the art object as performance, rather than depiction, and form as dependent on the beholder, implicitly undermines "Art and Objecthood"'s diatribe against literalism's theatricality and its inherent dependence on the beholder.

objective: to undermine the Modernist critical tradition Fried brought to *Artforum*.

Echoes of "Art and Objecthood" first resonate within the second epigram which prefaces "...Part II," an excerpt from a Dan Flavin essay that the journal had published two years earlier. Placed after a quote from Apollinaire which predicts, 'perhaps it will be the task of an artist...to reconcile art and the people,' and before Claes Oldenburg's statement, 'My monuments and other manifestations signal not the arrival of something but its disappearance, a leveling...,' the Flavin excerpt announces,

I believe that art is shedding its vaunted mystery for a common sense of keenly realized decoration...We are pressing downward toward no art - a mutual sense of psychologically indifferent decoration - a neutral pleasure of seeing known to everyone.⁶⁴

Laura Mulvey, for one, has demonstrated that the 'pleasure of seeing' cannot be considered 'neutral' and that not all viewers would derive pleasure from seeing in the same way as everyone else⁶⁵, but it is not this aspect of Flavin's comments that I believe Rose wished to stress. Rather, it is Flavin's reference to 'no art' that is of interest here, for Rose apparently wields it in order to invoke and overturn "Art and Objecthood"'s conception of non-art. Remember that Fried reasoned that the literalist work's projection of objecthood rendered it theatrical, which in turn transformed it into non-art, with all the negativity that that prefix denoted. Rose inverts Fried's negative notion of non-art by situating Flavin and his concept of 'no art' between two statements whose key words carry positive connotations. Apollinaire's term 'reconcile' connotes resolution, congruity, acceptance, or adaptation. Oldenburg's use of the word 'leveling' paradoxically implies either an attainment or a razing, or an equalization. Although Apollinaire's 'reconcile' suggests a more positive action

⁶⁴Barbara Rose, "The Politics of Art Part II," *Artforum*, Jan., 1969, p. 44.

⁶⁵Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in *Visual and Other Pleasures* (Houndmills: The MacMillan Press, 1989). An extended discussion of Mulvey's argument appears in my second chapter.

than Oldenburg's 'leveling,' both verbs allude to an achievement of sorts. When coupled with Flavin's notion of a 'pleasurable neutrality,' their words imbue his 'no art' with an affirmative connotation free of the corruptive taint pervading Fried's non-art. Rose thus posits Flavin's condition of 'no art' not as something which art must defeat, as Fried would have it, but as that to which it might aspire.

Having implied her agenda epigrammatically, Rose continues her tactic of inversion and/or imitation throughout her text's main body. Like Fried, who began "Art and Objecthood" by dividing '60s American art into literalist/Minimalist and Modernist aesthetics, Rose opens her essay by identifying two camps of American art: colour abstraction, 'championed by Clement Greenberg' (44), and Pop/Minimal art. Unlike Fried, who then stripped Minimalism of its art status, Rose preserves Minimalism's status as art whilst at the same time upholding Fried's description of it as antagonistic to Modernism.⁶⁶ Where the two critics deviate is in their interpretation of this antagonism. For Rose, Pop and Minimal art share a connection with earlier 20th-century American art and are therefore antagonistic to Modernism 'as a European or alien *style*' (44), rather than as something which strives to defeat objecthood and theatricality. And in contrast to "Art and Objecthood," which depicted Minimalism as an Athena-like entity springing fully-grown from the collective heads of Donald Judd, Tony Smith, and Robert Morris, "...Part II" historicizes the movement within an American tradition. Rose connects Minimalism to the Precisionist movement of the early 20th-century - albeit problematically, in view of her wish to eliminate linear views of art history from art criticism - and, through this link, pursues her challenge to both Fried

⁶⁶Rose actually refers to 'modernism' with a miniscule 'm' but makes clear in her first footnote that the modernism to which she refers is Clement Greenberg's characterization of it as what she sees as 'a single coherent period style of European tradition' (49, n. 1). Since she is alluding specifically to Greenberg's views on Modernism, I shall write it with a capital 'M' in order to remain consistent with my earlier references to Greenberg and his claims.

and Modernist criticism.

Rose allies Minimalism and Precisionism by avowing that 'the deliberate if ironic eschewal of the heroic by painters like Sheeler and Demuth...has obvious analogies with the ascetic simplicity of volumetric sculptures by Judd, Morris, Bladen, Grosvenor, *et al...*' (44). In a lengthy statement, part of which I repeat here, she characterizes this bond and its attributes as peculiarly American:

If we examine the statements and works of American artists, both past and present, I believe we will find that certain esthetic prejudices consistently color American taste. The natural, the uncontrived, the immediate, the direct, the 'honest,'...the physical and the literal are not merely preferences of sixties' artists; these qualities are constantly emphasized by American artists, often in conscious opposition to antithetical qualities in the European tradition. In many respects, the 'heroic' postures of the Abstract Expressionists went very much against the American grain...Minimal attitudes toward the heroic – that it must be mocked or rejected – are far more characteristic of inbred American attitudes (44–my emphasis).

Rose's positing of 'the literal' amongst such other positive 'American' qualities as the honest, the direct, the natural, and the uncontrived, re-contextualizes Fried's notion of literalism within an environment that is now wholly unperverted and wholly uncorrupted. In fact, by encouraging her reader to conflate literalism with honesty, and by equating Modernism with 'antithetical qualities in the European tradition,' Rose turns Fried's argument on its head and portrays Modernism as *unnatural*, contrived, *indirect*, and *dishonest*. For her, then, it is Modernism, and not literalism, that is 'perverted' and 'corrupt.'

As the above statement shows, Rose elevates Minimalism at the expense of Greenberg's ideas of a Modernist tradition 'descending from Manet and Cézanne through Cubism and Abstract Expressionism' (49, n. 1) in order to articulate her challenge to both Fried and the Modernist critical practice he embraced. The actual thesis statement of her text – 'I am suggesting that the only way to understand what is at bottom the significance of Andre's rock and brick accumulations or Smithson's epicene disquisitions on the beauties of Passaic...we must look back...to Precisionism' (44) – does not itself defy "Art and

Objecthood." Instead, it is through the *defense* of her thesis and its correlative elevation of Minimalism that Rose either explicitly or implicitly undermines that essay and the Greenbergian critical practice which informed it. For instance, Rose, like Fried, enlists Donald Judd and Robert Morris to exemplify the literalist enterprise. But whereas Fried described their work as having a 'hollowness' (1967:19), thereby implying an inherent emptiness, lack of substance, or even falsity, Rose elects to champion their 'ascetic simplicity' (44). In her depiction, their works are transformed from something empty and/or false to pieces that are, like work of the Shakers to whom she compares them, pure in their severe simplicity (45).

Rose in fact reserves the notion of falsity for Modernism. She writes,

...many artists have made desperate attempts to reconcile the heroic with, on the one hand, the overwhelming grandeur or the American landscape, and on the other, the overwhelming banality of much of the democratic experience. Deprived of a classical tradition, American artists have often attempted to create something positive out of the local culture, *without falsifying it with a European veneer* (45—my italics).

Having already twice linked Modernism to Europe through her definition of it 'as a European or alien *style*,' and in her footnote reference to Greenberg's claims for the development of the 'Modernist tradition,' her remarks end with the strong implication that those who do 'falsify' their art 'with a European veneer' are those, like Anthony Caro, who work within what Fried and Greenberg would consider to be a Modernist artistic practice.

In the second half of her essay, Rose goes after Greenberg himself by establishing a Clement Greenberg/John Cage opposition in order to valorize the latter and denigrate the former. Announcing, 'if an illustrator wished to adumbrate the history of American art in the sixties, he might do so in the single image of Greenberg and Cage with crossed swords, she then asserts,

Greenberg, the champion of the traditional values of Western culture contingent on the existence of a cultural elite, is challenged by Cage, the prophet not only of the technological future, but of a genuinely democratic art which extends the esthetic beyond the unique object into the life and environment of everyman (47).

Cage, along with Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Merce Cunningham, did indeed offer an alternative to Greenberg's conception of avant-garde art as that which emphasised its own form, its own medium. Daniel Bell noted that 'the aleatory or chance factors in the music of John Cage... [are] expressions of the self, rather than formal explorations of the limits and nature of the medium itself.'⁶⁷ For Rose, the difference between the two men derived from their views on radicality: Greenberg discovered radicality in form, whereas Cage located it in disruptive function (47). She therefore considers their positions to be 'mutually exclusive' (47). Yet her choice of Cage as Greenberg's polar opposite still seems curious. Curious, that is, until one returns to "Art and Objecthood." For in defense of his argument that 'art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theater,' Fried too used Cage to exemplify that which he believed to be antithetical to a Modernist artistic practice:

Theater is the common denominator that binds a large and seemingly disparate variety of activities to one another, and which distinguishes those activities from the radically different enterprises of the modernist arts. Here as elsewhere the question of value or level is central. For example, a failure to register the enormous difference in quality between, say, the music of Carter and that of Cage or between the paintings of Louis and those of Rauschenberg means that the real distinctions - between music and theater in the first instance and between painting and theater in the second - are displaced by the illusion that the barriers between the arts are in the process of crumbling (Cage and Rauschenberg being seen, correctly, as similar)... (1967:21).

By valorizing Cage's 'democratic art esthetic' at the expense of Greenberg's support for a 'cultural elite,' Rose kills two birds with one stone. She recuperates Cage from the depreciation he received within "Art and Objecthood," thereby overturning Fried's claims, and she denigrates Greenberg himself and so the Modernist critical practice he and Fried were determined to preserve. That she does so at the expense of 'élitism,' whose downfall she was to later mourn in Janet Malcolm's *New Yorker* profile, becomes a retrospective

⁶⁷Daniel Bell, "Modernism and Capitalism" (1978) rpt. in Art in Theory 1900-1990, p. 994.

irony.

Rose reserves her most emphatic charges against both Michael Fried and his critical practice for "...Part II"'s conclusion, where she fires two volleys at the critic. First, after arguing that pragmatist aesthetics, which stress 'function, behavior, and concrete consequence in action' (47), inform both the Precisionist movement of the 1920s and Minimalism, she offers a final retort to "Art and Objecthood:"

Indeed, the literalism Michael Fried has discerned in contemporary American art is so consistent a feature of the American mind that it forms the basis for the sole philosophy created by Americans. Given this, we can hardly be surprised that as immigration ceases and the European current subsides, literalism has re-emerged as a central feature of American art (48).

In other words, Rose proposes that the literalism Fried discerned within Minimalism is that which renders it specifically American. Therefore, what he abhors in Literalism is its very 'Americanicity.' Her second volley occurs in her dismissal of anyone offended by '[Donald] Judd's casual remarks about European values going down the drain' since they are 'bound to appall anyone whose entire value structure is dependent on perpetuating those values' (48). Knowing full well that "Art and Objecthood" strove to maintain precisely those values, Rose's dismissal retroactively *devalues* that essay's discussion of both Judd in particular, and Minimalism in general (48).

Four months after publishing "The Politics of Art Part II," *Artforum* presented the last installment in Rose's series. "...Part III"'s objectives included extolling the benefits of a 'pragmatic criticism' that focused on consequences rather than 'first things,' investigating the death of the avant-garde, and pondering the relationship between media and art. However, the collective burial of a Modernist critical practice, Clement Greenberg, and Michael Fried remained paramount. As she did in "...Part II," Rose signals this intention epigrammatically, this time through Kasimir Malevich's *To the New Limit of 1918*:

We are revealing new pages of art in anarchy's new dawns... You who

are bold and young, make haste to remove the fragments of the disintegrating rudder.

Wash off the touch of the dominating authorities.⁶⁸

Rose's recitation of these words harks back to part I of her series, in which she persuaded young critics to forsake a Greenbergian critical practice and to look to an 'inclusive' criticism as their aim. Reading Malevich's words against her earlier argument, rather than against his own Russian revolutionary conception of modernism as a new 'creative path of economic movement,'⁶⁹ it would seem that Rose employs Malevich allusively in order to urge young critics to remove from their work the fragments of a critical practice that was by 1969 indeed disintegrating. Rose herself had never hid her original admiration of Greenberg: 'We did not esteem Rosenberg's writing, but we were uniformly impressed by Clement Greenberg.'⁷⁰ And, in fact, Michael Danoff observed of her early writings, 'she does little more than reiterate Greenberg's theses and formalistic approach. Even her style and vocabulary are reminiscent of Greenberg' (Danoff, 168). Yet by the time *Artforum* published her "Politics of Art" series, Rose had washed her hands of Greenbergian Modernist beliefs. Thus, Rose here removes from Malevich's cry to 'wash off the touch of the dominating authorities' its specific revolutionary import and changes it into a contemporary instruction to *Artforum's* readership to forsake the two men who had until then both dominated and authorized Modernist criticism: Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried.

Rose's bid to convince her readers to abandon Greenberg's critical practice and take up a new 'pragmatic' practice begins by pondering the cultural and critical ramifications of art practices devoted to the creation of what she

⁶⁸Barbara Rose, "The Politics of Art Part III," *Artforum*, May, 1969, p. 46.

⁶⁹Kasimir Malevich, "The Question of Imitative Art" (1920), rpt. in Art in Theory 1900-1990, p. 294.

⁷⁰Barbara Rose, Autocritique (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), p. xiii.

significantly calls 'non-objects.' Of the 24 works Rose cites as examples of non-objects, at least a third arguably or loosely qualify as land art projects, whilst the remainder are linked only by their potential or inherent impermanence. Yet in no case does the term 'non-object' accurately apply. Even the most ephemeral of Rose's examples - Robert Morris' 'sculpture' made of steam and Lawrence Weiner's Air Force dye marker thrown into the sea - are at some instant visually and/or sensually tangible to the spectator who beholds them, however fleetingly, and are thus momentarily objectified. Furthermore, the residue an ephemeral object leaves behind exists only in the individual or collective memory of those who witness its display, thereby transforming the spectator into part of the art experience itself. If one accepts for the moment Michael Fried's assertion in "Art and Objecthood" that objecthood is essentially theatrical specifically because it requires the beholder to be part of the experience, then one realizes that the works Rose cites function precisely as objects.

Of course, we have seen that Rose herself did not accept Fried's assertions in "Art and Objecthood." Her adoption of the term 'non-object' continues her rebuke of that essay; her description of the 24 works as examples of 'artistic activity' denies their potential as 'objects' in Fried's sense of the word. Most importantly, it prevents their co-option as 'non-art' by reaffirming their status as art.

What is at stake for Rose is that these works be accepted as art. She thus ensures that they cannot be regarded as 'non-art' by not only denying their objecthood, but by transporting them beyond objecthood. She writes,

By making immaterial, ephemeral, or *extra-objective* work, the artist eliminates intrinsic quality (46, my italics).

Rose's addition of the prefix 'extra' to the word 'objective' moves such artworks outside the realm of objectivity and places them out of Fried's reach. She further removes them from his critical grasp by excluding from the outset their potential for intrinsic quality, on which a Greenbergian criticism depended.

In his "Complaints of an Art Critic," Greenberg advised, 'You cannot legitimately want or hope for anything from art except quality' (1967:38).

Rose's confirmation of the works' art status and her simultaneous rejection of their intrinsic quality confutes Greenberg's claim and reveals the inadequacies of his critical practice in addressing a non-Modernist artistic practice.

In their elimination of an essential quality, 'non-objects' mounted a challenge to critical practice itself. Rose acknowledges this, proclaiming that such artworks defy

not only the market mechanism, but also the authority of the critic by rendering superfluous or irrelevant his role of connoisseur of value or gourmet of quality (46).

Having already invoked both Greenberg via his central belief in quality and Fried via the notions of 'extra-objectivity' and non-objecthood, and having shown the deficiencies of a Greenbergian Modernist criticism which valued quality above all else, Rose's comment implicitly directs the challenge of the new art toward them. Her action ultimately discredits their authority by making not the critic in general, but Greenberg and Fried in particular superfluous and irrelevant.

Warming to her theme, Rose warns,

If criticism is going to exist at all in relation to this art...then it can no longer function as *gourmandise*..., but only as a form of heightened perception...Criticism must re-orient itself at this time because younger artists are responding to a new world view which holds far more in common with pragmatism than with idealism (46).

Notably, in part II of her series, Rose had conflated 'idealist' aesthetics, which she described as holding 'that the work of art is a timeless Absolute, whose value transcends any specific social and historical context' (Jan., 1969:46), with Modernism. In fact, she contended that 'the most important recent source for the anti-Idealist point of view is John Cage' (Jan., 1969:46), against whom, as we have seen, she opposed Clement Greenberg. By giving criticism in general the chance to 're-orient' itself away from 'idealist' or Modernist aesthetics, she rescued it from obsolescence. Her elimination of value judgements from its

role, on the other hand, proclaims a specifically Modernist critical practice essentially dead.

For "...Part III," Rose pins her defiance of Greenberg and Fried on her confidence in the new art's significance. She argues that Richard Serra's work in particular had 'more substance, sophistication, logic and cohesion than that of virtually any young artist to appear recently...' (48). Moreover, she praises it as 'active: it acts upon space, controlling or defining a situation, clearly in command of the environment rather than vice versa' (49). In so doing, she inverts Fried's negative view of the literalist work's theatricality as deriving from its imperative to remain 'the focus of the situation' (1967:15), turning it into something praiseworthy. Here, as in her two previous essays, Rose rebuts "Art and Objecthood" by valorizing that which Fried denigrated.

Nowhere is this clearer than in her recovery of literalism as a positive notion. At one point, she achieves this by invoking Jackson Pollock, whose central position within Greenberg's Modernist beliefs is unquestionable. Rose observes,

Ultimately the innovational qualities of the new art are obvious and familiar. They depend on the *literalization* of certain elements in Pollock's paintings, such as the coincidence of making and forming, and the cultivation of random and chance effects, as well as the assertion of the physical qualities of materials (49).

Subverting completely Fried's Modernism/literalism opposition, Rose forges links between literalism and Modernism's formal considerations. For her, the new artists 'literalized' the form and materials of their work, thereby moving beyond Modernism's imperatives. Crucially, she distinguishes between the concerns of a Modernist *artistic* practice, which she recognizes as having been assumed and transformed by literalists and other new artists, and those of a Modernist *critical* practice, which she declares obsolete. Her alliance of literalism to Modernist art completes her recuperation of the former from the degeneracy to which Fried had consigned it. Rose nevertheless drives the point home one last time:

One need not claim the necessity for purity of medium or conclude, as Michael Fried has, that theater or literalism is the enemy of art (49).

If I have insisted on rehearsing Rose's writing against Modernist criticism in what might seem to be labourious detail, it is due to my conviction that "The Politics of Art" series convincingly demonstrates that the case for Greenbergian Modernism was being seriously contested within *Artforum* as early as the 1960s. This writing and its publication went on for 15 months. That much one can read in the texts. Outside the texts, and outside the art critical debates around them, there may have been other more private and personal determinations informing them. In any event, "The Politics of Art" series was more than a prolonged squabble between critics. It struck a blow against the continued publication of Modernist critical practitioners within the pages of *Artforum* by both contributing to, and testifying to, the breakdown of Modernism:

Of all the assaults we are currently witnessing - against critical authority, against existing institutions, against the notion of art as private property - the revolt against modernism as the religion of art is, I believe, the most significant, the most profound, and possibly the most lasting (May, 1969:51).

According to Barbara Reise, Michael Fried's devotion to Clement Greenberg's critical beliefs was matched only by that of Jane Harrison Cone and Rosalind Krauss (1968:314). Calling Fried, Cone, and Krauss Greenberg's 'Harvard-student disciples,' she charged,

the constant quoting of Greenberg's statements and respectful footnoting to each others' ideas leads one to believe that they are unaware that any alternative view of art exists (1968:314).

But in the September, 1972 issue of *Artforum* which commemorated its tenth anniversary, Krauss demonstrated her growing disaffection from Greenbergian Modernism in an essay entitled, "A View of Modernism." Published nine months after Philip Leider's departure from the magazine, and John Coplans'

assumption of the editor's chair, Krauss's essay begins as a defence of Greenberg's critical practice and ends up critiquing what she sees as its limitations. I want to conclude with Krauss's view for, like Rose's "Politics of Art" series, its emanation from both inside *Artforum* and inside 'Greenberg's group' effects a powerful rupture in the perception of *Artforum* as a journal that was, in the words of *Art & Language*, 'propagandizing for the Greenbergers.'⁷¹ Don Judd, too, complained in *Studio International*,

Greenbergers such as Krauss review all the shows;...and articles come steadily out of the Fogg. I once complained to Leider that the magazine was dominated by Michael Fried and the third string and he said that he didn't think it was biased, that he published Robert Smithson too (1969:184).

Coming from one so close to Greenberg, Krauss's published desertion of his critical framework confirmed to *Artforum's* readers its irrelevancy, thereby once and for all 'substantiating,' as Richard Serra put it, 'the break in American culture in the late '60s.' We have seen that *Artforum* had been publishing views contrary to Greenberg's since John Coplans' 1964 review of the "Post-Painterly Abstraction" exhibition, but Krauss's critique puts the final nail in the coffin. *Artforum's* publication of her essay can thus be seen as ushering in the journal's *post-Modernist* critical sensibility.

Krauss introduces her essay with a recollection of a day spent, appropriately enough, with Michael Fried at the "Three American Painters" show at Harvard's Fogg Museum. While standing in one of the galleries, a student confronted Fried and asked him 'what's so good' about a Frank Stella painting that was hanging nearby. According to Krauss, Fried replied,

Look...there are days when Stella goes to the Metropolitan Museum. And he sits for hours looking at the Velázquezes, utterly knocked out by them and then he goes back to his studio. What he would like more than anything else is to paint like Velázquez. But what he knows is that that is an option that is not open to him. So he paints stripes.⁷²

⁷¹See *Art & Language*, "Letter," *Artforum*, Sept. 1973, pp. 10-11.

⁷²Rosalind Krauss, "A View of Modernism," *Artforum*, Sept. 1972, p. 48.

Krauss relates this anecdote in order to underscore her immediate understanding of Fried's point in its relationship to a Modernist criticism which emphasized a linear progression of artistic practice: 'that Stella's need to say something through his art was the same as a 17th-century Spaniard's; only the point in time was different' (48). This last comment points up her internalization of what Victor Burgin has shown to be the underlying assumptions of Greenberg's views: that '*art* is an activity characteristic of humanity since the dawn of civilization' and that 'in any epoch the *Artist*, by virtue of special gifts, expresses that which is finest in humanity....'⁷³ In other words, Krauss (and Fried) could only believe that Stella and Velázquez shared a need to say something through art if she accepted the fundamental notion that such a need persists through the centuries and that it is that need which prevails in the artwork, rather than its relationship to a complex network of cultural, social, and historical operations at play at the time of its production and original reception. Krauss herself contends that she grasped Fried's point at once because their shared beliefs about art and, I would add, the homologous discourse they employed in articulating those beliefs, allowed them to 'cut down on the amount of explanation one member of the group ha[d] to make to the others' (49). Her remark, with its allusion to an idiomatic shorthand, confirms what was then her thorough absorption of Greenberg's critical practice. It also reveals Krauss's own perception of herself and Fried as belonging to a group - what Barbara Reise would identify specifically as Greenberg's group.

Indeed, Krauss freely admits her original commitment to Greenberg's critical project, and even acknowledges the wit and reason behind Judd's description of her as a 'Greenberger:'

Beyond its wit, Judd's remark implied the danger of self-objectification inherent in our position, mine and the others, in espousing a doctrine,

⁷³Victor Burgin, "The Absence of Presence" (1984), in Art in Theory 1900-1990, p. 1098.

the doctrine to which we were committed was 'modernism.' But it was a danger which I suppose I was willing to run in the service of describing as objectively as possible my responses to works of art and in attempting to account for the sources of power that certain art possessed, to create or elicit those responses. Far from bothering me, the charge of being a 'modernist' critic was something I was proud of (49).

Krauss's statement again reveals the extent of what had been her complete faith in the tenets of Greenberg's 'doctrine,' for she unquestioningly accepted his belief in a critic's objectivity. Greenberg wrote, 'esthetic judgements are immediate, intuitive, undeliberate, and involuntary, they leave no room for the conscious application of standards, criteria, rules, or precepts' (1967:38).

Krauss could accept this judgement because she already had confidence in a conception of art as fulfilling the need of a self-determined artist/creator 'to say something.' This conception, as I shall discuss below, is itself based upon a notion of art as autonomous. Victor Burgin, for one, demonstrated how art ought to be seen instead as 'a set of operations performed in a *field* of signifying practices, perhaps centred on a medium but certainly not bounded by it' (1984:1098). His action, which opened up artistic practice into a wider field of relationships, references, and operations of social construction, clearly render Greenberg and Krauss's conception of an autonomous art untenable. Yet it is clear why Krauss held on to it, for only through that conception could she then conceive of the critic as equally self-determined, equally untouched by her relationship to the cultural, social, and historical conditions in which she produced her work.

Krauss's additional faith in art's ability to possess power further attests to her thorough assimilation of a Greenbergian critical practice at that time, for it again supported his assurance in art's autonomy. The notion of an autonomous art demands that

art is seen as significantly provoked or fired or inspired by other art, by insight, intuition, emotion, etc, rather than as caused within some open system of causal relations compatible with the project of historical

materialism.⁷⁴

To assume autonomy for an artwork presumes a peculiar kind of authority for its artist. In 'attempting to account for the sources of power that certain art possessed,' Krauss would have had to have believed that she could trace that power back to the artist as its sole producer. But as Roland Barthes has shown in his essay, *The Death of the Author*, 'to give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text.'⁷⁵ To assign autonomy to an artwork, and to a self-determined artist/'author,' puts closure on it, reinstates the artist as the sole origin of the artwork's meaning, and excludes the viewer/reader from its production of meaning. Therefore, Krauss's reassertion of the artwork's innate power underlines what was at stake in her critical insistence upon authorship and/or autonomy: her role as a critic. As Barthes observed, 'once the author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile' (147).

Krauss comes to understand the precariousness of her position, and presents her dissatisfaction with her critical practice's limitations. She points to what she calls the 'curiously dissociated tone' of its language, which had led Philip Leider to guess her age through her critical writings as 40 at a time when she was only 31. According to Krauss,

That that language was also something I could hide behind, that it accounted for why I wrote like a 40-year-old, for why I, along with some of the other 'modernist' critics, adopted a curiously dissociated tone, did not strike me at the time. For I was being carried by an idea of historical logic, buoyed like the others by the possibility of clarity (49).

⁷⁴Charles Harrison and Fred Orton, eds., Modernism, Criticism, Realism (London: Harper & Row, 1984), p. xvii.

⁷⁵Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1968), in Image Music Text, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), p. 145.

Krauss concedes her original attraction to Modernism's emphasis on a progressive history, stating,

I never doubted the absoluteness of that history. It was out there, manifest in a whole progression of works of art, an objective fact to be analyzed. It had nothing to do with belief, or privately held fantasies about the past. Insofar as modernism was tied to the objective datum of that history, it had, I thought, nothing to do with 'sensibility' (49-50).

As well as revealing a misguided trust in a notion of historical objectivity, Krauss reaffirms her assurance in Greenberg's historical idea of artistic practice as a progressive and linear tradition. However, it is whilst conceding these points that she relinquishes her ties to a Greenbergian critical practice, realizing at last that,

modernism *is* a sensibility – one that reaches out past that small band of art critics of which I was a part, to include a great deal more than, and ultimately to criticize, what I stood for (50).

What Krauss stands for in "A View of Modernism" is a *larger* 'Modernist sensibility.' As she describes it, this new Modernism includes an 'attention to self-reflexivity,' an abhorrence of a 'prior assumption of meaning,' and the recognition that 'if we make up schemas of meaning based on history, we are playing into systems of control and censure. We are no longer innocent' (50). Of course, Greenberg's critical practice had always attended to Modernist art's self-reflexive properties; remember his emphasis in his 1940 essay *Modernist Painting* upon its self-critical tendencies: 'I identify Modernism with the intensification, almost the exacerbation, of this self-critical tendency that began with the philosopher Kant' (1940:754). And Krauss's assumption of a prior innocence in determining a hierarchy of cultural values betrays either extreme ignorance or extreme arrogance on her part. Yet her renunciation of Greenbergian modernism is sincere, as made evident by her admission of what she sees to be the shortcomings in its critical practice, including a lack of suspicion toward 'what it sees as self-evident, its critical intelligence having ceased to be wary of what it has taken as given' (50), its inability to 'come up with a satisfactory history of sculpture' (50), its ignorance of the ways in which

its faith in the 'reality' of the past has led it to construct the present, and its persistent denial to treat film as a Modernist art. This last complaint seems to have been made on behalf of both *Artforum* and Annette Michelson, for *Artforum* employed Manny Farber from November 1967 to June 1970 as its resident film critic, thereby asserting its acceptance of film as a significant artistic practice. In June, 1971 it placed a still from Michael Snow's film *Wavelength* on its cover and made an essay by Annette Michelson on the director its lead feature article. And in September, 1971, *Artforum* devoted an entire issue to film, which seemingly claimed for film Modernist status:

This present issue of *Artforum* is...designed to evoke - largely through the work of younger critics - for some of the artists, critics, and their audiences, who compose a visually literate public here and abroad, the urgency of recognition for an achievement whose importance will eventually be seen as comparable to that of American painting in the 1950s and onwards... (9).

Like Barbara Rose before her, Krauss completes her abandonment of a Greenbergian critical practice with a call for a new critical practice. Unlike Rose, however, she places herself, rather than 'the consequences of an artist's activity' ("...Part II:"49) at the centre of such criticism:

I began as a modernist critic and am still a modernist critic, but only as part of a larger modernist sensibility and not the narrower kind. Which is further to say that what I must acknowledge is not some idea of the world's perspective but simply my own point of view; that it matters who one sounds like when what one is writing about is art. One's own perspective, like one's own age, is the only orientation one will ever have (51).

Though of course unaware of it at the time, Krauss's recognition that she must acknowledge her own point of view presages what has been called the 'new historicism,'⁷⁶ a critical practice that uses a personal or autobiographical perspective in order to challenge the objectivity associated with literary, historical, and art criticism and theory. More importantly, however, "A View of Modernism" marks a turning point in *Artforum's* consideration of Modernist criticism. As befits a journal celebrating the closing of one chapter in

⁷⁶See The New Historicism, ed. H. Aram Veeseer (New York: Routledge, 1989).

anticipation of the next, Krauss leads *Artforum* into its next decade by re-defining the terrain within which it had traditionally staged its debates. That is, she replaces discussions predicated on binary oppositions – i.e. Flavin vs. Greenberg, Rose vs. Fried, Minimalism vs. Modernism, etc. – with an attempt to stretch the concept of Modernism itself. That she succeeded in changing public perceptions of the journal as tied to Greenberg's critical practice is evinced by Hilton Kramer's 1975 attack on *Artforum* in *The New York Times*, "Muddled Marxism Replaces Criticism at Artforum," wherein Kramer lamented,

Artforum magazine, in the pages of which a muddled and strident Marxism, insistent upon a tendentious sociopolitical analysis of all artistic claims, has now routed all but the last traces of the formalist criticism that was once a house specialty in that journal.⁷⁷

Hal Foster has argued that 'Postmodernism...may be less a break with modernism than an advance in a dialect in which modernism is re-formed.'⁷⁸ If we take Foster at his word, then we might consider the possibility that Krauss's expansion of a Modernist critical practice heralds *Artforum's* inauguration into a postmodernist 'sensibility.'

⁷⁷Hilton Kramer, "Muddled Marxism Replaces Criticism at Artforum," The New York Times, December 21, 1975, p. D40.

⁷⁸Hal Foster, "Re: Post" in Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), p. 200.

Chapter Two:

Shameless Hussies

"She had shown her artistic intelligence in selecting a type so like her own that she could embody the person represented without ceasing to be herself."¹
 - Edith Wharton.

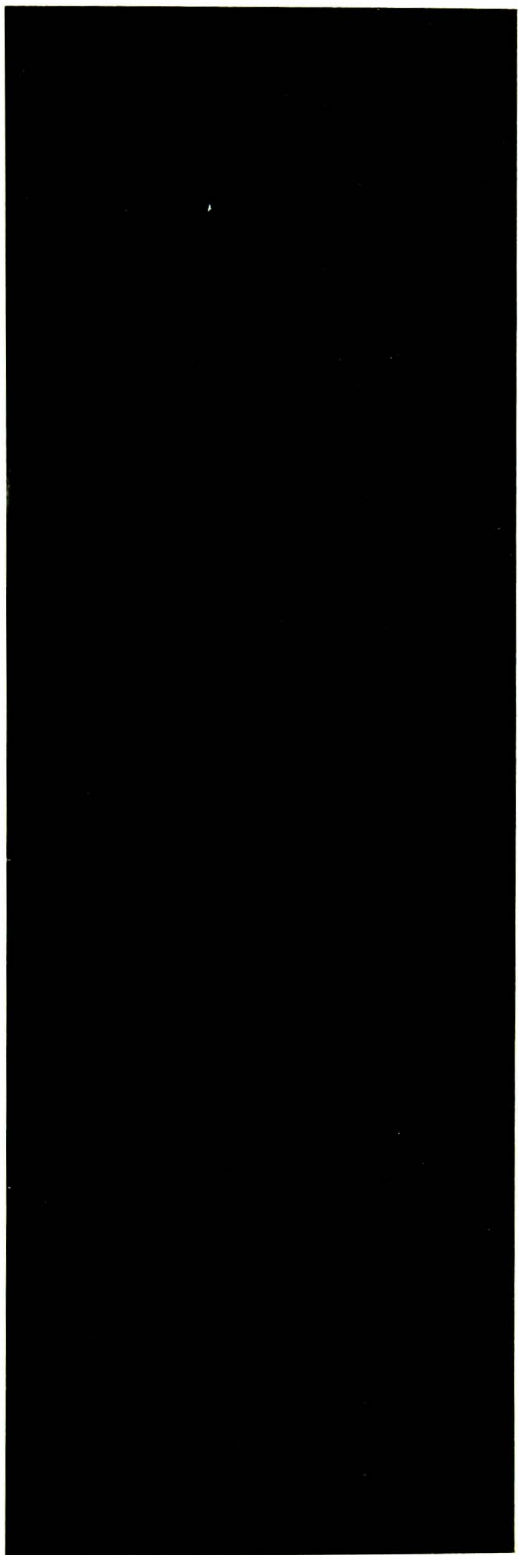
Under the editorship of Philip Leider, *Artforum* virtually ignored the human figure in art. The combined efforts of Leider's contributing editors Michael Fried and Rosalind Krauss to uphold Clement Greenberg's views on what constituted a Modernist artistic and critical practice, and to continue his valuation of abstraction in painting, presumably contributed to the journal's neglect of this theme. During John Coplans' editorship (Jan., 1972-Feb., 1977), however, *Artforum* was forced to confront the issues surrounding the human body in art after its publication of an advertisement for and by the artist Lynda Benglis in November, 1974 (fig. 1).

The ad, a two-page colour spread, devoted only a third of its space to its human figure. The remaining two-thirds are blacked out, the total blackness relieved only by miniscule white letters crediting 'Lynda Benglis courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery copyright 1974 Photo: Arthur Gordon.' The blackness spills over into the first third of the right-hand page, but ends abruptly at a green-tinged rectangle which both contains and exhibits a three-quarter shot of Benglis herself, completely nude except for three accessories: diamond earrings, harlequin sunglasses, and an enormous dildo held against her crotch, suggesting hermaphroditism. Strong lighting reveals that she has greased the dildo, and accentuates the fact that she has oiled her tanned body, rouged her cheeks, and lipsticked her mouth. Benglis in fact plays to the lights; she twists her head and body to catch their reflection in the lenses of her sunglasses and causes them to produce the sheen which highlights her lower forehead, the tip of her nose, her chin, her neck, her left upper arm, her left rib cage, her left thigh, and the dildo's creases. Benglis' body, and the rectangle which contains

¹Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth, 1905 (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 129.

Lynda Benglis courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery copyright ©1974 Photo: Arthur Gordon

Fig. 1



it, glare at the viewer, their brightness heightened by the blackness leading up to them. But despite the harsh lighting, Benglis casts no shadow against her green-tinged backdrop. Her gleaming body stands in sharp outline against its background, as if she had pasted a cut-out of herself onto a piece of paper. By amplifying the unnaturalness of her image through garish over-lighting, the exaggerated dildo, obvious rouge and lipstick, and an unrealistic omission of shadow, Benglis manipulates and underlines the artificiality of the soft-porn 'come hither' poses it evokes. In so doing, she problematises *Artforum's* later insinuation that her image is pornographic.

The third ad to open the November issue, Benglis' appearance in the journal might have been remembered simply for having 'caused [*Artforum's*] readers to disbelieve their eyes,² as one writer later remarked. Instead, it mushroomed into a controversy generated by *Artforum* itself when five of its six associate editors publicly dissociated themselves from the Benglis pages in a statement published the following month. Notably, then-associate editor Rosalind Krauss has since referred to this episode in *Artforum's* history as 'the Lynda Benglis thing' (Malcolm, 1986:49), an ambiguous phrase at best and at worst a prissy euphemism that collapses both the ad's content and its effect into the evasive word 'thing.' Her recourse to this term demonstrates her refusal to find words adequate to the articulation of the elements comprising the Benglis controversy and thus her refusal to engage with those elements critically. The associate editors' statement, which I shall detail shortly, similarly betrays a puritanical repulse of critical confrontation with a female body in art that insisted upon brandishing the notions of sexuality and eroticism implicit in its own depiction. Their statement thus explodes Barbara Rose's assertion in 1969 that the radical artist could no longer 'come up with anything unacceptable to the media.'³ It

²Janet Malcolm, "The Girl of the Zeitgeist - I," The New Yorker, Oct. 20, 1986, p. 50.

³Barbara Rose, "The Politics of Art II," Artforum, May, 1969, p. 48.

also validates *Artforum's* admission in its debut issue that 'criticism rarely offers the insight to art that it does to the critic himself,'⁴ for the journal's critical reactions to Benglis and, later, female body artists Lisa Lyon and Carolee Schneemann and male body artist Vito Acconci uncover what can be seen as its biases regarding the human figure in art. Specifically, *Artforum* could not critically engage with the work of these three female artists without first attempting to wrest artistic authority from them. Since it presumed such authority in the body-centred work of male artists Acconci, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Robert Morris, for example, *Artforum's* reluctance to extend this presumption to female body artists exposed its own critical myopia towards the human figure within its pages when she was figured as female.

Lisa Lyon, Carolee Schneemann, and Vito Acconci all featured within *Artforum's* November, 1980 issue, the ninth to appear under Ingrid Sischy's editorship. It was only then, six years after Benglis placed her advert within *Artforum*, that the journal deliberately undertook to explore what Sischy described as 'the intellectual and physical ideology'⁵ of the human figure in art. Perhaps Sischy had in mind the Benglis controversy, which as we shall see had thrown *Artforum* into the media spotlight, and hoped to inspire similar controversy by devoting an entire issue to the human body in art. Yet what is at stake here is not simply the fallout from 'the Lynda Benglis thing,' but the disclosure of *Artforum's* own 'ideology' of the human figure, discernable through a trajectory bracketed by its November issues of 1974 and 1980 and spanning the departures and arrivals of no less than three editors, three publishers, and numerous writers.

Artforum's 'ideology' can be mapped across the bodies of Lynda Benglis, Carolee Schneemann, and Lisa Lyon, the subjects of the three case studies

⁴Artforum, June 1962, introductory statement.

⁵Ingrid Sischy, "Editorial," Artforum, Nov. 1980, p. 61.

which follow, for their treatment within the magazine varied in accordance with the different ways in which each artist approached her body and asserted her artistic authority. Significantly, both Benglis and Schneemann used their bodies as their artistic medium and thus erased, or at least blurred, the delineation which usually separates product from producer, object from subject.

Schneemann staged performances that emphasised her body's use as artistic material and her own authority over both her body and its representation. Benglis, insofar as her two appearances within the November, 1974 issue of *Artforum* are concerned, played with the female body; more precisely, she played with the erotic stereotypes the female body invoked. Lisa Lyon, on the other hand, unwittingly upheld the delineations which Schneemann and Benglis rendered indefinite. Having utilized her body to interrogate the theme of transformation, she documented the results of her investigation in a collaborative venture with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. But by involving Mapplethorpe in her project, she inadvertently gave *Artforum* the opportunity to throw the issue of her artistic authority into question. The journal suppressed the collaborative nature of the Lyon/Mapplethorpe photographs by declaring him her 'author,' as evinced by its 1980 heading, 'LISA LYON by Robert Mapplethorpe (fig. 2). More generally, it will become clear that *Artforum* attempted to maintain producer/product, subject/object distinctions within the work of these three female body artists by attempting to cede their artistic authority to male figures, thereby denying the artists themselves that authority.

Despite *Artforum's* efforts to the contrary, we shall see that the circumstances of Benglis' advert's inclusion within the journal ultimately reinforced her authority over her images. In contrast, *Artforum's* invention of male 'authors' for Lyon and Schneeman in the form of Mapplethorpe and Ted Castle succeeded – within its own pages, at least – in subverting their claims to artistic authority. It also succeeded in reinserting into their body art the

LISA LYON

by Robert Mapplethorpe



Lisa Lyon is a performance artist and winner of the *First Women's Body Building Championship*, Los Angeles

Fig. 2

producer/product distinction. And, in the cases of all three women artists, it succeeded in divulging *Artforum's* resistance to the female body and thus its gender biases regarding the human figure in art. As we shall see, when the magazine printed essays which fundamentally undermined Benglis and Schneemann as artists in 1974 and 1980 respectively, yet tacitly endorsed Mapplethorpe's photographs of Lyon - and virtually heroicized Vito Acconci's work - in the same 1980 issue, it demonstrated that the degree to which it resisted images of the female figure grew in direct proportion to the degree of identification between artist and body depicted. In short, *Artforum's* conscious or unconscious resistance to such images increased when the body represented belonged to the artist herself, and waned when artist and body were distinct identities or, better yet, male.

'The Lynda Benglis Thing'

The first public version of how Lynda Benglis' nude body entered the advertisement pages of *Artforum* was disseminated by the journal's own editorial staff a month after its publication, through a narrative that remained unchallenged in print for over 15 years. Of the journal's six associate editors, five - Lawrence Alloway, Max Kozloff, Rosalind Krauss, Joseph Masheck, and Annette Michelson - denounced the Benglis ad in a letter to the editor:

For the first time in the 13 years of *Artforum's* existence, a group of associate editors feel compelled to dissociate themselves publicly from a portion of the magazine's content, specifically the copyrighted advertisement of Lynda Benglis photographed by Arthur Gordon and printed courtesy of the Paula Cooper Gallery in the November, 1974, issue of the magazine.⁶

In the same paragraph with which they dissociated themselves from Benglis' image, the associate editors published what would effectively become the official version of 'the Lynda Benglis thing,' a version whose authenticity for so long derived not only from its authorship - a group of high-ranking *Artforum*

⁶Lawrence Alloway et al, Letter, *Artforum*, December, 1974, p. 9.

insiders, united in their account of the story – but also from Benglis' enduring public silence. I want to revive this story, not to debate the accuracy of its account, but to interrogate its contents and omissions, its articulations and silences, its representations and distortions.

The story, a mere five sentences in length, begins with the editors' assertion that the 'history' behind the advert's inclusion in the journal 'needs to be told,' and ends with *Artforum's* near-erasure of what it called 'the artist's original intention' (9):

The history of the copyright mark and the 'courtesy,' so anomalous among the advertisement, needs to be told. Ms. Benglis, knowing that the issue was to carry an essay on her work, had submitted her photograph in color for inclusion in the editorial matter of the magazine, proposing it as a 'centerfold' and offering to pay for the expenses of that inclusion. John Coplans, the editor, correctly refused this solicitation on the grounds that *Artforum* does not sell its editorial space. Its final inclusion in the magazine was therefore as a paid advertisement by some arrangement between the artist and her gallery. The copyright and the caption linger as vestiges of the artist's original intention (9).

According to this brief account, which remained unamplified until former editor John Coplans expanded but in no way contradicted it in an interview in 1986, Lynda Benglis 'solicited' *Artforum* to run the image as a 'centerfold,' an offer Coplans 'correctly' rebuffed. My further interpretation underscores an implicit moral tone to the associate editors' words, an impression they reinforce by casting Benglis and Coplans into emblematic roles. Benglis the artist becomes Benglis the temptress, whose solicitation renders her, on the one hand, a vendor attempting to trespass onto *Artforum's* editorial space (space which the magazine was in fact devoting to her that month) and, on the other hand, nothing less than a prostitute, a woman who would willingly sell her body for a magazine centerfold.⁷ At best, the editors portray her as a *Playboy* centerfold, a rendering which Benglis herself presumably wanted to evoke and play upon.

⁷Although Alloway et al ignore the fact that Benglis' 'solicitation' went against usual practice: by offering to pay *Artforum* rather than expecting the journal to pay her, she assumed the power and control inherent in the buyer's position.

given that the centerfold idea evidently originated with her. However, in the associate editors' depiction, Benglis loses her playfulness, thereby losing also her artistry and her authority. They reduce Benglis to a prostitute and her image to a *Playboy* centerfold.⁸ In stripping both artist and image of their playfulness, Alloway and his colleagues deny them their power to subvert those reductive representations. Therefore, the editors temporarily achieve authorial control over the delineation of both image and artist.

Ironically, *Artforum's* editors fail to recognize that by analogizing Benglis to a *Playboy* pin-up, they implicitly analogize *Artforum* itself to *Playboy*. For if, as they contend, Benglis 'solicited' the journal for a centerfold lay-out, then one could regard *Artforum* as the kind of magazine that featured such lay-outs. Benglis herself apparently tried to promote this analogy; her proposal that the image should be a centerfold suggests that she viewed *Artforum* as potentially correlative to *Playboy*. If so, then the editors unwittingly reinforce her view through their representation. But more importantly, their insinuation that Benglis approximated a prostitute through her act of 'solicitation' links not only *Playboy* but also the attendant notion of pornography to *Artforum*, for, as Susanne Kappeler points out, the Greek origin of the word pornography is 'porne..., prostitution, and -graphy, writing:'⁹ the writing of prostitutes. Kappeler notes,

The derivation of the term pornography from prostitution is highly significant. The presence of the root 'prostitution' indicates the centrality, in pornography, of a relationship of power and exchange, an emphasis clearly over and above 'sex'....(156)

By linking Benglis to prostitution through the term 'solicitation,' *Artforum's*

⁸Notably, *Playboy* contacted Benglis and asked if they could use the image in an article on women artists, suggesting their (erroneous, I would argue) belief that it could be co-opted by the magazine. Susan Krane recounts that Benglis offered instead to create a pietà depicting a beautiful madonna with a nude man in her lap. *Playboy* rejected her offer. Susan Krane, Lynda Benglis: Dual Natures (Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 1991), p. 60, n. 103.

⁹Susanne Kappeler, The Pornography of Representation, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986), p. 155.

editors cast the journal in the role of the patron, thereby ceding to the journal the power inherent in the prostitute/patron relationship. Yet because the (male) assumption of power is central to both prostitution and pornography, Kappeler observes, 'The relationship of prostitution is the paradigm relationship of pornography, to which all variants can be led back' (157). Therefore, the editors' representation of Benglis as a prostitute, which implicitly assigns power to *Artforum* and thus gives it 'authorial control over the scenario and over the woman' (Kappeler, 159), converts the journal into a potential pornographic magazine and renders John Coplans a potential pornographer. Small wonder, then, that the associate editors counterpoint Coplans to Benglis in their version of the story. He becomes the honourable hero, the dutiful man who in 'correctly' refusing the artist's advances, ultimately prevented her from transforming *Artforum* into a pornographic magazine.

John Coplans' appearance at this point in the editors' story raises the issue of his representation within a narrative purportedly directed to him. Indeed, Coplans first appears symbolically within the statement's opening salutation, '*To the Editor*,' thereby intimating that the ensuing declaration is in fact addressed to him. However, his reappearance takes the form of a third-person reference to him by name. The associate editors thus slide from employing the second-person address implied within their opening salutation to that of the third-person. In so doing, they avoid critiquing directly their editor-in-chief for his role in the Benglis affair, demonstrating early on both the refusal to wrestle with controversial issues and the evasiveness that characterized Krauss' later designation of the entire debate as a 'thing.' Rather than implicate Coplans, they effectively distance him from the story and steer it away from its stated audience - *Artforum's* editor - and toward its assumed audience: its readers.

Such manipulations automatically raise a further question: to what extent do Alloway and the others implicate Coplans in their dissociation? Whilst they never address this issue explicitly, an implicit response lies in their

representation of the editor, who becomes not only distanced from the story, but eliminated from it altogether. For having introduced Coplans as the man who refused Lynda Benglis, the associate editors remove him again in their next sentence, eradicating the need for his representation and absenting him from their dissociation. In fact, by claiming that the image's 'final inclusion in the magazine was therefore as a paid advertisement by some arrangement between the artist and her gallery,' the associate editors redirect attention back to Lynda Benglis herself. They imply that the final transaction occurred not between Benglis and *Artforum*, nor between the Paula Cooper Gallery and *Artforum*, but between the artist and her gallery. The journal and its editor vanish from the sphere of negotiation altogether. In effect, the editors sever any possible links between *Artforum* and Benglis' advertisement and so eliminate from consideration the journal's potential correlation to *Playboy* and pornography, for with the journal no longer involved in the negotiation process, it cannot be seen as adopting the role of patron/pornographer. At the same time, they reestablish *Artforum's* and John Coplans' propriety by displacing Benglis' solicitation to her gallery, hinting with the phrase 'by some arrangement' that she more successfully concluded her business transaction there.

The fact remains, however, that whatever Benglis' arrangement with her gallery, *Artforum's* 'final inclusion' of her image necessarily involved John Coplans' consent. Indeed, mention of the 'paid advertisement' inadvertently suggests Coplans' authoritative role in ultimately determining the journal's editorial and commercial content. Moreover, it resurrects the issue of solicitation, only this time with a twist. For despite the editors' efforts to tinge Benglis with the taint of solicitation, their allusion to her expenditure underscores the journal's own financial need to solicit advertisements to ensure its survival. Fortunately for *Artforum*, the artist's purchase of two of its advertising pages spared the magazine the trouble of having to solicit buyers for that very same space.

I intend to return to that space, but have yet to pursue a little further my discussion of the associate editors' response. The point at which I close their version of the Benglis affair coincides with the point of their own conclusion, where they assert, 'the copyright and the caption linger as vestiges of the artist's original intention.' For Alloway and the others, Benglis' 'original intention' thus seems to metonymically reside within the copyright and the caption. Hence the hint of triumph with which they parade her alleged intention's written remains in front of her public, reminding them of her exclusion from the journal's editorial pages and so *Artforum's* ultimate authority over the artists it features. Yet perhaps for Benglis, these 'vestiges' reinscribe her own triumph: her 'final inclusion' within the magazine. Whatever the case, the copyright and the caption textually record the site of *Artforum's* dispute over 'the Lynda Benglis thing.'

The associate editors' version of the Benglis controversy remained the only one in public circulation until John Coplans granted an interview to Janet Malcolm of the *New Yorker* in 1986. In a story where five voices speak as one, and where those of its principal characters are stifled, it is fitting that the one person removed from the original story should reinsert his voice. In fact, in Malcolm's interview we hear nothing *but* Coplans' voice, for she presents his tale through what appears to be a single, uninterrupted quote which occupies the majority of the page. Coplans' version of the 'Lynda Benglis thing' is nearly identical to that of his staff in its general drift. Yet whereas Alloway and the others begin their story with Benglis' approach to *Artforum*, Coplans opens his with the advert itself:

The ad was in response to Robert Morris's photograph of himself as a macho German, wearing a steel helmet and iron chains over bare muscles, which he used as a poster for a show of his work at Castelli/Sonnabend. This was her message to him. She wanted to run it in *Artforum*, and I said to her, 'Look, the editorial content of the magazine can't be interfered with in any way. We don't allow any artist to have a role in what is published. I'm sorry, but you just can't have this in the magazine.' So she said, 'Well, can I do an ad?.'

and I said, 'There is a publisher, and you'll have to ask him. I don't interfere with him, and he doesn't interfere with me. Go to Charlie Cowles and ask him' (Malcolm, 55).

According to Coplans, Charles Cowles later came to him and asked what he should do about Benglis' request. Coplans responded by telling the publisher that it was his decision, as he would have to 'face the art world and the artists.' He then announced, 'I'm not saying anything. Make a decision' (55).

Notably, Coplans' story up to this point mirrors that of his associate editors in two ways. First, by referring Lynda Benglis to Charles Cowles, Coplans deflects attention from himself and onto his publisher in the same way that the editorial group refocussed *their* readers' attention from Coplans to Benglis in their own rendering. He also distinguished himself from the publisher verbally, asserting, 'I don't interfere with him, and he doesn't interfere with me.' Second, Coplans' self-imposed silence via his declaration, 'I'm not saying anything,' effectively removes him as a primary character from within the text, thus employing a rhetorical device from the earlier tale. Although he continues as the story's narrator, he now chooses not to, as he himself might put it, 'interfere' with it.

With Coplans no longer directly involved, Cowles was forced to reach his decision alone. The editor relates that after 'about three days of heavy sweating,' the publisher concluded, 'I can't *not* publish it. They would hate me' (55). It is unclear exactly *who* Cowles feared would hate him - Benglis and her gallery? The art world in general? - or *why* he felt that he, and by association *Artforum*, would become hated. Perhaps, having excluded Benglis from the magazine's editorial section in a show of authority, Cowles was unwilling to extend that show of authority to its logical conclusion - i.e. exclude her from the journal altogether - and risk generating artists' support for Benglis and against *Artforum*. In any event, Cowles' unspecified fears apparently propelled the November issue of the magazine, including the ad, to the printers.

Interestingly, an article in *The New York Times* published in the same month

as Benglis' *Artforum* ad offers a less dramatic account of Cowles' decision-making process. The newspaper reports that at a dinner party held shortly after the advert appeared in print, the publisher declared (over 'coquille St. Jacques, veal, pasta, carrots with grapes, and vanilla ice with strawberries') that the artist 'had been something of a nuisance about the advertisement. Miss Benglis...had worn him out,'¹⁰ a circumstance which Cowles says determined the outcome of his decision. According to John Corry, the journalist covering the story for the *Times*, Cowles told the assembled dinner guests,

She called me and called me. Then her lawyers called me and called me - copyright, credits, things like that. Finally, I got tired of it. I decided that if I got one more call I'd never run the advertisement. I never got the call, and so that was that. I ran the advertisement' (Corry, 78).

Hence, the publisher's final agreement to print Benglis' ad apparently resulted not from days of pondering the personal and commercial ramifications of his potential decision, as Coplans would have it, but from the fact that Benglis refrained from being 'a nuisance' one time too many. This discrepancy between the two stories reveals an editor who, by representing *Artforum* as a journal that regarded both Lynda Benglis and itself seriously, strives to protect its position as a reputable art magazine,¹¹ and a publisher whose representation undermines those very efforts. Coplans' version of events, with its reference to Cowles' 'days of heavy sweating,' characterizes the publisher's decision as carefully considered and therefore suggests an awareness that a refusal of Benglis' advert could have adversely affected *Artforum's* relationship with the art world. In contrast, Cowles' statement, in concert with the patronizing tone

¹⁰John Corry, "About New York: A Serious Dirty Picture?," The New York Times, 22 Nov. 1974, p. 78.

¹¹Coplans' efforts echo those of his associate editors, who in removing *Artforum* from Benglis' negotiation process and denying a correlation between the magazine and any *disreputable* connotations of *Playboy*, similarly attempted to preserve the journal's good name.

adopted by *The New York Times* article, trivializes the artist, her artwork, and the publisher's own decision by minimalizing Benglis' position as an artist in favour of her capacity for annoyance, collapsing an important decision-making process into a game of chance, and reducing the entire *Artforum*/Benglis episode into a dinner-party anecdote.

The result of both Coplans' and Cowles' versions, however, is that the ad eventually arrived at the printers. Nevertheless, the editor's story doesn't end there. Coplans relates that the printer refused to print the ad,¹² causing Cowles to exclaim, 'It's solved. I'm off the hook' (Malcolm, 55). But Coplans replied,

No, Charlie, you're not off the hook. Those printers have no right to refuse to print, and out lawyer will tell them so. They can't select what's going to appear in the magazine (55).

Ironically, this sign of 'interference' from the printer impelled Coplans to reinsert himself back into his text as its primary character. It is therefore Coplans and not Cowles who approached the head of the printing firm, reminded him of their contractual agreement, and convinced him to print the ad. And it is Coplans who informed Cowles that the ad would indeed appear in print. He does not report the publisher's reaction. Instead, he closes his story by delineating his own moral position within it and, in so doing, once again finds representation as the honourable hero:

I insisted that it had to be printed as a matter of principle. Now I was obviously interested in seeing that ad get published. My position was that every woman had the right to make her individual choice as to how she faced her womanhood. This was an artist, and she had made this choice, and I was determined to protect her choice. Annette

¹²*New York Magazine* reported, '*Artforum*'s printers in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, refused to make prints for the ad, insisting that it was offensive to the workers in the plant and would jeopardize their standing in the community.' Dorothy Seiberling, "The New Sexual Frankness: Good-bye to Hearts and Flowers," *New York Magazine*, 8, No. 7 (13 Feb. 1975), 39. Seiberling also quotes *Artforum*'s then-Managing editor, Angela Westwater, as declaring, 'If we'd had any doubts about running it in the first place, this forced us to be positive about our stand. We told the printers, 'We don't want you censoring our material,' and we insisted they consult a lawyer about their position. The lawyer told them they had to print the ad' (39).

Michelson and Ros and Max thought that it was obscene, that it was too sexually explicit. They were wholly opposed to me. Whether I was right or wrong I don't know (Malcolm, 55).

Of course, the two stories which emanated from *Artforum's* staff members have more than just an honourable hero in common. They also share a heroine, Lynda Benglis, although they both control her representation in different ways. Alloway and his cohorts, invoking their authority as *Artforum* associate editors, presume to speak for Benglis when giving their account, thereby usurping her voice. However, Coplans elides the artist as an individual altogether by refusing to address her by name. Instead, he consistently refers to Benglis by the pronouns 'she' and 'her,' and finally universalizes her in his statements, 'My position was that *every woman* had the right to make her individual choice...' and 'This was *an artist*, and she had make this choice...' Though this may seem circumstantial evidence, we can read Coplans' words as significant in that they deny Benglis her name. By refusing to use her name, he too usurps her voice. And by transforming her into a generic artist, Coplans generalizes her image, even sacrificing it to the altar of 'principle.' He therefore undermines not only the choices he 'was determined to protect,' but also the very work he 'insisted...had to be printed.'

Although Lynda Benglis herself has spoken about the advert in public interviews, she has rarely addressed either the controversy it engendered or the events leading up to its publication. However, she did speak to Dorothy Seiberling for a *New York Magazine* article published three months after the ad's appearance. In that article, she not only responded directly to the associate editors' virulent reaction and thus began the process of reclaiming her voice from them, she also claimed *their* reaction, *their* voices, for the artwork itself:

The ad has opened things up...Duchamp said that when you send out a work of art, it's not completely done. The reaction of the person who views it completes the creative act. I paid \$3,000 for those critics to write that letter. I couldn't have asked for anything better (Seiberling, 44).

Furthermore, Benglis used Seiberling's essay to reclaim her representation by posing for yet another photograph (fig. 3). This photo, taken by Steve Myers for *New York Magazine*, finds Benglis reprising the hand-on-hip pose she adopted for her ad for *Artforum*. This time, however, she is seated and dressed in jeans and a tee-shirt. Across the top of the tee-shirt, in the journal's own typeface, sits the word ARTFORUM; beneath it lies a reproduction of the image from the advert. Benglis also sports two accessories, including the harlequin sunglasses she wore in the ad. Her right hand again grasps the other, but instead of a dildo, she now holds a sequined and feathered eye-mask, thereby evoking the notion of masquerade and its effect of doubling representation. Benglis' mask thus accentuates the photograph's own doublings of representation: the tee-shirt's recovery and re-contextualization of her advert's hermaphroditic image, as well as its double representation of Benglis herself – Lynda Benglis on the tee-shirt and Lynda Benglis in the tee-shirt. Finally, she completes her reclamation of her image through the tee-shirt itself. Her appropriation of the *Artforum* logo, with its now-unavoidable allusion to the associate editors' reaction, and its merger with the advert's image, which is now 'transferred' onto the cover of *Artforum*, results in a tee-shirt which itself represents the 'completed creative act.' I would argue that by appearing in the photo wearing the tee-shirt, Benglis wrests control of this 'completed' act away from *Artforum* and restores it to the artist herself.¹³

¹³*New York Magazine* reported, 'Benglis had the picture printed on 50 white T-shirts...She gave half of the shirts away to friends; the rest she plans to mount on pool-table baize and sell for \$350. "That will pay me back what I spent on the Artforum ad," she says practically' (Seiberling, 38). Similarly, Benglis regained control over the copyright mark by rendering it, too, part of the completed artwork: 'From the beginning it was intended to be a paid ad, not part of an editorial feature on me. It was an art piece, and that's why copyright was important, so it couldn't be reproduced at will. If it's taken out of the original context, it's not a piece of my work' (42).



Fig. 3

In a catalogue for a 1991 exhibition at Atlanta's High Museum of Art, Susan Krane attempts to further reclaim for Benglis her representation by circulating a lengthy account which seems, albeit indirectly, to relate Benglis' side of the story. Like Coplans, Krane begins by recalling Robert Morris' poster for his Castelli-Sonnabend Gallery exhibition (fig. 4), an image she describes as 'tough, nasty, and stereotypically male' (Krane, 40). Morris indeed presages the Benglis advertisement here, for he too appears covered in body oil and naked save for three accessories: sunglasses, a German helmet, and chains. Yet unlike Coplans, Krane goes on to cite not the *Artforum* ad in the context of Morris' image, but a different work: a photograph of the artist taken by Annie Leibovitz in a '40s pin-up pose, nude but for the jeans pushed down to her ankles and a pair of platform shoes (fig. 5).

The Leibovitz photograph adorned Benglis' invitation to her exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery in May, 1974. It reappeared within the November, 1974 *Artforum* article on the artist, the one for which, according to the journal's editors, the two-page advert had been 'originally intended' and from which it had been notoriously excluded. The journal's inclusion of the Benglis/Leibovitz image within Robert Pincus-Witten's essay therefore ascribes to it a legitimacy it denied her other photograph.

Notably, *Artforum* accentuates the legitimacy it grants Benglis' 'pin-up' photo at the expense of her advertisement photo, by replicating the advert's lay-out within the essay itself. Within the advert, Benglis' image appears on the far right; *Artforum* similarly posits Leibovitz' photo on the far right of the essay's opening two-page spread. Furthermore, the magazine accords the photograph nearly the same breadth of page space Benglis concedes to her image, 6¼ inches versus 6⅞ inches in the ad, and virtually the same space in length. In thus imitating the advert in both lay-out and size, *Artforum* implicitly supplants the representation of the artist which appears at the beginning of the November issue with another, editorially sanctioned one.

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Fig. 4

Lynda Benglis. Announcement for show. May, 1974



Fig. 5

Notably, however, the attention the journal gives to Leibovitz' photo pictorially does not extend to its text. Robert Pincus-Witten devotes only three sentences to the image's discussion, which he relegates to the essay's back page. These sentences do little more than support Krane's story (and contradict that of Coplans) by claiming that Benglis'

...cheesecake invitation is the pendant to [Robert Morris'] recent S-M fantasy poster announcement, which in turn references recent videotapes done conjointly.¹⁴

Yet although this statement confirms the dialogical nature of the artists' work, its succeeding sentence undermines Benglis' contributions:

Morris exemplifies in stringent terms another intellectual artist attracted and repelled by instances of brute irrationality; something of Benglis' free-floating openness seems sympathetic to this conflicted outlook (59).

Pincus-Witten's depreciation of the artist occurs in his gendered casting of Morris and Benglis' artistic personalities. According to his description, Morris plays the masculine 'intellectual' to Benglis' feminized 'free-floating openness;' the 'conflicted' artist to her 'sympathetic' one. In short, he appears as the artist with ideas, she as his sympathetic helpmate. In contrast, Susan Krane's discussion of Morris vis-à-vis Benglis eschews such gendered terminology and in fact mentions his work only to underline the 'dictatorial themes of power and control integral to his dialogue with Benglis' (40).

In taking up *Artforum's* inclusion of the Leibovitz photo, I have detoured from recounting Krane's version of the journal's encounter with Lynda Benglis. But before I rejoin it, one last element of the 'pin-up's' magazine appearance merits inquiry: the public reaction of Alloway, Kozloff, Krauss, Masheck, and Michelson to Leibovitz' photo. For when confronted with an image in which a nude woman is crowded into the corner of a room, photographed closely and even intrusively from behind, has her arms twisted above and behind her head

¹⁴Robert Pincus-Witten, "Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture," *Artforum*, November 1974, p. 59.

as if bound, finds her legs immobilized by a pair of jeans pushed to her ankles, and has her feet hobbled by exaggeratedly high-heeled platform shoes, the editors respond with...silence. Having reacted so vociferously to Benglis' dildo image, which in my view assertively challenges notions of sexual difference through its blatant portrayal of hermaphroditism, I can only interpret their reserve over her other photograph, which sustains a certain feminine ideal, as tacit acceptance.

Of the two Benglis images, the one photographed by Leibovitz, who at the time was best known as *Rolling Stone's* house photographer, is surely the more problematic, for while it plays to the pin-up's iconography, it ultimately preserves it. Laura Mulvey has demonstrated that the pin-up functions as one of the arenas in which women connote 'to-be-looked-at-ness.' She writes,

Woman displayed as sexual object is the *leitmotif* of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire.¹⁵

Within representation, woman appears as image, man as bearer of the look, which thus splits the pleasure in looking between active/male and passive/female (Mulvey, 19). Leibovitz' photograph of Benglis emphasises the passivity of the female's position by rendering it physical, binding the artist's legs with the fallen jeans. But if Benglis had meant to critique rather than reify pin-up conventions through such emphasis then she failed, as Benglis herself was forced to acknowledge. Susan Krane reports,

Benglis had been disturbed by the reaction to her Betty Grable advertisement and particularly by the comment of a female gallery-goer who asked Paula Cooper 'who did that to her?' The *Artforum* advertisement was conceived to thwart any such misunderstanding of Benglis' directorial position (Krane, 60, fn. 105).

The gallery-goer's question demonstrates that Benglis' 'pin-up' over-states its passivity and so sustains rather than challenges it, prompting what Benglis seemed to believe was a misreading of her image. Instead of critiquing the

¹⁵Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" in Visual and Other Pleasures (Houndmills: The Macmillan Press, 1989), p. 19.

female's passivity within spectatorship, she is seen as embodying that position: instead of gaining recognition as creator of the image, she is seen as its victim. Benglis' 'pin-up' therefore does nothing to subvert the gendered paradigm Mulvey describes, nor the psychoanalytic construction of woman as lacking and hence the sign of sexual difference.

I would argue that Benglis' dildo image, on the other hand, defies this construction explicitly. Susan Krane explains,

Benglis wanted to ridicule and debunk the Freudian concept of penis envy and to reject the concomitant theories that posited a male-centered self-image - next to which woman was always seen as inferior and lacking. She seemed to ask, angrily and rhetorically, while wielding the enormous plastic phallus as a weapon, if this indeed were still the equipment one needed to be taken seriously as an artist (42).

Certainly it was necessary 'equipment' if one wanted to be regarded seriously by *Artforum*. From 1970 until 1980, the magazine devoted only five of its ninety-nine covers to works by female artists.¹⁶ However, Benglis' image is more than a comment on the lamentable coverage women artists received from the art world, and more than a critique of a Freudian construction. It is even more than a refusal of Lacan's concept of the phallus as that which figures sexual difference, despite her appropriation of the penis in her advert. Rather, the photograph of her nude body flaunting an exaggeratedly large dildo eliminates, or at least confuses, notions of sexual difference by fusing them into one hermaphroditic image. Benglis herself confirms,

My intention was to mock the idea of having to take sexual sides - to be either a male or a female...I was involved in how I could mock both sexes. The idea of a hermaphrodite is ideal because then you employ and embody without contradicting. The condition is a contradiction in itself. You embody the perfect condition in a neither/nor state (Krane, 42).

In calling attention to her intention, Benglis' statement invokes her authority as artistic creator to refute *Artforum's* editors' own theory of what her 'original intention' was. Similarly, Susan Krane's account of Benglis' interaction

¹⁶They are Nov. 1970: Georgia O'Keeffe; May 1971: Diane Arbus; Mar. 1972: Dorothea Rockburne; Apr. 1973: Agnes Martin; and Jan. 1974: Yvonne Rainer.

with *Artforum* quotes the artist frequently, readmitting her voice into a discourse from which it had been twice barred, in order to rebut the words of the journal's editorial staff. Unsurprisingly, then, her narrative contrasts strikingly from those of the associate editors and John Coplans, most noticeably in its depiction of how the advert evolved:

The now infamous advertisement was conceived initially as an independent work, before Benglis knew that Pincus-Witten's article "Lynda Benglis: The Frozen Gesture" was to appear in the same issue. *After declining the magazine's offer to run the image in the context of his article*, Benglis decided (*at the editor's suggestion*) to buy two advertising pages for the hefty sum of \$3,000, a large investment for her and nearly a quarter of her income at the time (Krane, 41 - my italics).

Krane's assertion that *Artforum* approached Benglis and offered her the opportunity to run the image within Pincus-Witten's article not only contradicts the magazine's version of events, it also crucially transfers the act of solicitation from the artist to the journal. Her story even attests to *two* instances of solicitation, for Krane contends that after Benglis (correctly?) refused *Artforum's* offer to submit the image within the context of the article, John Coplans suggested that she buy two pages of advertising. In which case the dildo image's ultimate inclusion within the magazine resulted not from an act of solicitation on Benglis' part, as its editors would have it, but from two on the part of the journal.

There may even have been a third. In a footnote, Krane reinstates Robert Pincus-Witten, to whom neither the associate editors nor Coplans ever referred, as a central and possibly solicitous figure within the story:

Benglis originally had considered staging a male-female pinup with Morris, yet ultimately decided she wanted to make the statement herself. She recounts being encouraged and '*given permission*' by *Morris and Pincus-Witten to undertake the Artforum project*, and being supported in her decision to work within the context of an advertisement by Paula Cooper¹⁷ (Krane, 59, n. 88 - my italics).

¹⁷Dorothy Seiberling also suggests that Pincus-Witten knew of the image from the start. She writes, 'another artist whose work *is* explicitly sexual dismissed Benglis as "a bad sculptor," her ad as "a cheap publicity device," and the whole affair as "a fabrication of Pincus-Witten"' (Seiberling, 42).

Admittedly, Krane consigns this information to the marginality of a footnote; yet its effects are nonetheless significant. For in bringing Pincus-Witten back to the story's fore, she closes the distance the *Artforum* staff tried to put between the magazine and the artist. Remember, both the associate editors and John Coplans limited the extent of Benglis' encounter with the journal to Coplans himself, and admitted to knowledge of her image only after the artist allegedly approached them. Krane, in contrast, stretches the range of the artist's contacts to include the writing staff, and maintains that Pincus-Witten knew of the image from the beginning. More importantly, by reporting that Benglis was 'encouraged and "*given permission*" by Morris and Pincus-Witten to undertake the *Artforum* project,' she implies that the journal not only knew of Benglis' photograph beforehand, but had already sanctioned its inclusion.

Indeed, in 1977 Benglis informed France Morin,

I was encouraged to do it by Pincus-Witten and by Morris. They kind of gave me permission and I payed (sic) \$3,000 for the space. I don't think you do anything in this world without say (sic) the permission.¹⁸

Yet the fact remains that the magazine eventually excluded Benglis' dildo image from Pincus-Witten's article and that its associate editors would have omitted it from the issue altogether. In order to tease out the implications of the various representations of the Benglis controversy, I have waited until now to rejoin their dissociative statement, wherein Alloway and the others clarify the reasons they object to the photograph's appearance 'between *Artforum's* covers.' I shall recount them individually:

1. In the specific context of this journal it exists as an object of extreme vulgarity. Although we realize that it is by no means the first instance of vulgarity to appear in the magazine, it represents a qualitative leap in that genre, brutalizing ourselves and, we think, our readers (9).

Obviously, the editors had not read Pincus-Witten's essay. If they had, they would have learned that Benglis' project entails 'question[ing] what vulgarity

¹⁸France Morin, "Lynda Benglis in Conversation with France Morin," *Parachute*, 6, Spring 1977, 11.

is,' and that she believes 'taste is context' (Pincus-Witten, 55). Any vulgarity they discern in her work is therefore intended and functions precisely as the instrument through which she articulates her resolve to present 'artwork that questioned all extremes by being extreme or outrageous' (Krane, 41).

The editors neglect to define exactly which feature of this particular image transforms it into a 'brutalizing' object of 'extreme vulgarity.'¹⁹ It cannot be Benglis' nude body alone, for hers is hardly the first to appear within the pages of *this* art magazine. The dildo itself might be to blame, and yet its exaggerated size, double head, and patently absurd texture render it parodic. Could it be that the editors perceived in the object the threat of a weapon by Benglis' holding it erect, thereby 'brutalizing' them? No, I would argue that the most likely explanation for their distress resides in what I see as two related features of the photograph. First, Benglis' decision to trade the passive stance she affected in the pin-up pose for the advert's more aggressive posture signifies a refusal to continue to play female image to the male gaze. Second, by actively returning the viewer's gaze through her sunglasses whilst grasping the 'phallus,' Benglis appropriates the masculine position as bearer of the look and thus upsets certain conventions of spectatorship.

In the editors' view, Benglis also upsets the progress of a sociopolitical movement:

2. *Artforum* has, over the past few years, made conscious efforts to support the movement for women's liberation, and it is therefore

¹⁹It is worth noting that the associate editors' use of the term 'brutalizing' again raises the spectre of pornography, for words like 'brutalizing' and 'degrading' often crop up in anti-pornography discourse. Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW), for example, have asserted that when they see porn, 'We see ourselves being degraded and we reject it.' They have also argued a link between such degradation and violence against women, a link they see as having been taken to extreme in "Deep Throat" actress Linda Lovelace's revelation that she was 'forced to perform at gunpoint' (Rosalind Coward and WAVAW, "What is Pornography?" in Rosemary Betterton ed., Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media [London: Pandora Press, 1987], pp. 179-180). It is also worth noting that the Nov. 1974 issue featured a Ralph Eugene Meatyard photograph with the word 'shit' written in large white letters along its right-hand side, a 'vulgarity' the editors left unnoted.

doubly shocking to encounter in its pages this gesture that reads as a shabby mockery of the aims of that movement (9).

Sadly, there is little evidence within the magazine to sustain the editors' claim that they made 'conscious efforts' - note that it did not come 'naturally' to them - to promote 'women's liberation' and the sexual equality that was central to that movement in America. Besides allowing only one woman per year for the first five years of the 1970s to grace *Artforum's* covers, the magazine maintained throughout those years an appalling ratio of male:female coverage within its editorial section. In 1970, for example, this section featured only three women artists: Eva Hesse in May, Nancy Graves in October, and Georgia O'Keeffe in November. In 1971 and 1972 the figure rose to five; it climbed to six in 1973; and culminated in 1974 with seven, the largest number of featured women artists for the rest of the decade. Notably, not even these articles restricted themselves to females, for in several essays the women discussed comprised part of a wider group of male artists. Furthermore, from 1970 to 1971, the Tamarind Lithography Workshop surveyed the coverage of living artists' work by five American art magazines (*Art News*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Arts Magazine*, and *Craft Horizons*). It discovered that *Art in America* devoted 92% of its coverage to men, *Art News* gave 96.1% article lineage to men, and *Artforum* spent 88% of its space reviewing and reporting on work by male artists.²⁰ Though perhaps not the only index of *Artforum's* support for women, it is the most explicit, for it demonstrates the journal's failure to manifest its self-declared support for women artists on its covers and in its editorial and review pages. Despite the editors' contention otherwise, then, *Artforum's* record reveals that the 'shabbiest mockery' of the aims of the women's movement existed within its own editorial policies.

²⁰When confronted with these figures, John Coplans responded by accusing the museum and gallery structures of perpetuating discrimination and suggested that the National Foundation for the Arts fund art reviewers to enable them to 'ferret out and cover artists' work in their studios. 'Grace Glueck, "No Fair Play for the Fair Sex?" in The New York Times, 11 June, 1972, p. D23.

The third, and most arresting, of the editors' objections to Benglis' advert raises the issue of media intervention within the art world:

3. Ms. Benglis' advertisement insinuates two interconnected definitions of art-world roles that are seriously open to question. One is that the artist is free to be exploitative in his or her relation to a general public and to that community of writers and readers who make *Artforum*. The other is that *Artforum* should be a natural accomplice to that exploitation, for the advertisement has pictured the journal's role as devoted to the self-promotion of artists in the most debased sense of that term. We are aware of the economic interdependencies which govern the entire chain of artistic production and distribution. Nonetheless, the credibility of our work demands that we always be on our guard against such complicity, implied by the publication of this advertisement. To our great regret, we find ourselves compromised in this manner and that we owe our readers an acknowledgement of that compromise (9).

Raymond Williams has shown that the word 'exploitation' derives from the Latin *explico*, 'in its range of senses from unfold and spread out to arrange and explain (this last leading to explication...).' ²¹ Significantly, it can also connote publicity and advertising. ²² The associate editors, though, employ the term in the critical sense it took on during the 19th-century, when the processes it denoted within industrialization and commercialism began to be applied to people (Williams, 130). On the one hand, then, the editors' charge of 'exploitation' ignores the fact that, in one sense of the word, an advert is intrinsically exploitative, making their charge irrelevant. On the other hand, their charge disregards the possibility of Benglis' 'exploitation' as an artistic 'explication' of artist/media relations and thus fails to analyze it as such. Equally, they fail to consider that, in the term's explicative sense, *Artforum's* own commitment to critical and theoretical discourse within art arguably renders it 'exploitative.'

In spite of their stated awareness of media/artist interdependencies, the editors' condemnation of Benglis for using *Artforum* for her own profit exposes their reluctance to admit that *Artforum* functions precisely as part of the media.

²¹Raymond Williams, Keywords (1976; rpt. London: Fontana Press, 1988), p. 130.

²²Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1987 ed.

As such, the journal potentially acts as an alternative venue to the museum/gallery system, if, as former *Artforum* contributing editor Barbara Rose argued within the magazine in 1969, the media comprises the best audience for 'art that does not traffic in objects, but in conceptions.'²³ Notably, Rose also advises that by fulfilling the role of both promoter and audience for work which does not produce a tangible object – like the image in Benglis' advert – the media enables that work to challenge 'the authority of the critic by rendering superfluous or irrelevant his role of connoisseur of value or gourmet of quality' (Rose, 46). In the case of Benglis and her advertisement, the fact that she bypassed her gallery – which Krane informed us supported her in her decision – meant that she also avoided the mediation of the art critic. Therefore, we can infer that the editors' anger springs less from the idea that *Artforum* acted as a 'natural accomplice' to Benglis' 'exploitation,' than from their realization that the journal was 'complicit' in rendering its own staff redundant.

There is another feature of Benglis' ad which makes relevant Barbara Rose's "Politics of Art" essay. For Rose,

Media participation in art creates a situation in which the would-be radical artist is left stranded: even if he can make art sufficiently far-out to exceed the museum-gallery context, he can't come up with anything unacceptable to the media (48).

Certainly Benglis' advert proves Rose wrong. It exemplifies an artwork dependent on media participation to reach its audience which nevertheless proved absolutely unacceptable to some media members. Thus, when Rose later proposes in her essay that the media has shaped the taste of the middle class and inquires, 'In a situation where anything goes, whose taste then is there left to challenge?' (48), Benglis' ad ironically replies, 'the media itself.'

Within Susan Krane's construction of events, Benglis set out quite specifically to challenge the media with her ad, asserting, 'I was mocking the

²³Barbara Rose, "The Politics of Art Part III," *Artforum*, May 1969, p. 47.

media' (42). And in another quote, which incidentally recuperates her 'original intention from *Artforum's* editors, Benglis states,

I felt that placing the gallery's name on the work strengthened the statement, thereby mocking the commercial aspect of the ad, the art-star system, and the way artists use themselves, their persona to sell the work. It was mocking sexuality, masochism, and feminism. The context of the placement of the ad, in an art magazine, was important (Krane, 41).

In interviews with both France Morin and Dorothy Sieberling, Benglis clarifies her statement that she was mocking feminism. For her, the *Artforum* advert specifically mocked what Benglis considered to be feminism's condemnation of some roles for women and its sanction of others. She revealed to France Morin that the ad therefore attempts to recuperate from feminism the notion of the objectification of women through its extension of the pin-up iconography featured in the gallery announcement photographed by Annie Leibovitz:

...all these things just developed gradually out of a system I was experiencing [in Los Angeles], as well as say being very aware of the feminist movement and wanting to make a sort of statement; I could make a pin-up out of myself; that would be fine. A lot of the feminists there who were really hard core got very angry, they thought, well OK you have an OK body, so you can do that...that was the basic criticism, which is totally illogical...That was a very bad criticism (Morin, 9).

However, in her conversation with Dorothy Seiberling, Benglis both recovers women's objectification *and* denounces it:

...if women have any strength, they'll have to approve of themselves in whatever role they choose. That's why I did the pin-up. I wanted to put myself on a pedestal and feel okay about it. I wanted to present myself in all roles, but in a joke manner. It's all symbolic. I can choose to make myself into anything, even into an object. In the pinup ad, I am both accepting and denying the idea of woman as object - and thus getting rid of it. As for the last ad, it was meant to be a statement to end all statements, the ultimate mockery of the pinup and the macho (42).

And, she concludes,

Women today feel very strongly about being women and about being artists. They object to being cast in certain kinds of roles. But in order to get rid of roles, you have to mock them (Seiberling, 44).

While I would agree with Benglis' last comment, I would argue that neither her pin-up nor her dildo image successfully insinuates both an acceptance and a

denial of the objectification of women. The pin-up, in my view, magnifies the passivity of the woman's position; it neither denies it nor derides it. It plays up to that passivity; it doesn't play with it. For me, it not only accepts a notion of women's objectification, it reifies it. In contrast, the dildo image seems to reject but not accept this notion by adopting less the pose of the pin-up than that of the body-builder, as we shall see in the photos of Lisa Lyon. Although Benglis 'makes herself into an object' insofar as she uses her body as her artwork's medium, her aggressive stance, returned gaze, and enormous dildo/phallus arguably preclude her objectification by placing her in the male position of bearer of the look. Benglis' stated intentions notwithstanding, it would seem that she does not mock feminism so much as create an image that may be seen as iconic to its concerns regarding women's position within patriarchy. Therefore, I would propose that Benglis' dildo image is more effective than her pin-up in 'getting rid' of the concept of woman-as-object not because it both accepts and denies that concept, nor because it mocks feminism, but because it creates a mockery of the notion of sexual difference upon which the objectification of women is predicated.

Benglis also wanted to mock the media by placing the ad within an art magazine. The importance of contextualizing the ad within an art journal lies in the fact that Benglis thus stages her mockery internally rather than externally. By deriding the media from within the *art* media, she forces it to acknowledge the undeniable complicity between art journals and artists in all its facets. Benglis' ad compels *Artforum's* editors to realize the implications of their magazine's dependency upon artists, and particularly its economic dependency upon the advertisements placed by their galleries. Characteristically, Alloway and the others react by shifting the blame onto Benglis. The tactic ultimately fails them, however, for their protest against her 'self-promotion' suffers under the weight of their earlier admission that *Artforum* refused the artist anything but its promotional space.

Whilst Benglis' above-cited comment to Susan Krane explains her version of the inclusion of the gallery courtesy, it fails to account for the black space on which it appears. And yet this blackness seems crucial to her work, since the artist devotes to it two-thirds of her advert's space. In her only comment regarding the ad's blackness, Benglis stated,

It was a media statement and I worked very hard on it. *It had to be the right black*, the right gloss, it had to be just slick enough (Sieberling, 42 - my italics).

Certainly, the ad's blackness heightens the effect of the dildo image itself. It ensures that nothing could appear next to it that could detract from the effect of the photograph, and claims importance for the image by claiming the space around it. But since neither Benglis nor *Artforum* supply a rationale for its presence, I offer my own hypotheses, taking Benglis' ongoing dialogue with Robert Morris as a point of departure. It is possible that Benglis conceived the left-hand page of her ad as the space in which Morris' macho poster implicitly resides, thereby alluding to the dialogic nature of her work. If so, then the ad's blackened space might act as the antithesis to Morris' poster as a full-page exposition of male selfhood either (depending on how one looks at it) by rendering that part of her ad selfless, or else by replacing his manifestation of male selfhood with the right-hand page's provocative interpretation of a bi-gendered selfhood. Alternatively, given Benglis' assertion that she is mocking sexuality, the artist might be scoffing at the phallic form Morris' body and helmet create, depriving it of its symbolic potency by smothering it in blackness.

However, the most intriguing hypothesis for the advert's blackness lies in Theodor Adorno's 1970 essay, "Black as an Ideal." In his opening paragraph, Adorno states, 'Radical art today is the same as dark art: its background colour is black.'²⁴ We need not fall into the trap of thinking that Adorno is right, or

²⁴Theodor Adorno, "Black as an Ideal" in Contemporary Critical Theory, ed. Dan Latimer (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), p. 348.

that Benglis knew of his essay when conceiving her advert, but we can appropriate his ideas as a way of coming to terms with the ad's pervasive blackness. Adorno allows us to see the possibility that Lynda Benglis has, through her use of blackness, built radicality into her very advertisement. Taking him at his word, Benglis again refutes Barbara Rose's contention that the media's intervention in art strands the would-be radical artist, for she not only incorporates blackness and thus radicality into her work, she also audaciously employs the media to reconfirm its radical status.

So far, I have referred only to the five associate editors who dissociated themselves from Benglis' ad. There was also, as I mentioned earlier, a sixth associate editor, Peter Plagens. He too wrote a letter regarding Lynda Benglis' ad, which John Coplans printed immediately ahead of his colleagues' statement:

I am shocked. For some years now I have depended on *Artforum* as consistently, patently inoffensive family reading, a publication filled only with photographs of Minimal, Process, and Conceptual art devoid of even a trace of sensuality, which I could place on my coffee table next to *Reader's Digest*, *Family Circle*, and *Art & Language*, and have it blend in nicely. Frankly, I never thought I'd see the day when I would have to keep it from the reach of my children. Your November issue, with that color photograph of some shameless hussy showing everything from here to Bakersfield is disgusting. Imagine my perplexity when my nine-year-old son, who'd met the 'artist' only weeks before, here, in our *home*, asked me if that dildo was really made of some Japanese plastic which would further depress the situation in our domestic styrene industry! What could I say? I gave him the best evasive fatherly answer I could and assured him that Robert Morris owned controlling interest in the company. And imagine my chagrin when my wife, looking up momentarily from her copy of *Screw*, asked me if she couldn't trade me and four box boys for that...thing! Our household is now in a shambles, and my students hound me with queries on the myth of the vaginal orgasm. If your publication cannot return to its former dignity (I suggest covering the offensive anatomy with a small Don Judd insert) then cancel my subscription immediately.

P.S. On the other hand, anyone who could win Edye Gorme and Steve Lawrence look-alike contests simultaneously, can't be all bad.

Yours for a cleaner SoHo,
Peter Plagens.
Studio City, California.²⁵

²⁵Peter Plagens, Letter, *Artforum*, December, 1974, 9.

Plagens' letter, which shares with Benglis' advert a playfulness that nevertheless articulates a strong position, responds to both the ad itself and his colleagues' statement. By referring to his wife's perusal of *Screw* magazine, Plagens seems to be suggesting that pornography is no stranger to the homes of *Artforum's* art critics, and thus allusively charges the editors with hypocrisy. Moreover, he reasserts Benglis' own implicit correlation between *Artforum* and magazines such as *Screw* and *Playboy*, and reinforces that correlation when citing *Artforum's* 'former dignity.' Plagens' also refutes his colleagues' portrayal of Benglis in their statement. His admission that Benglis was a visitor to his own home implies that Benglis was a familiar figure, even a friend, to *Artforum's* staff members (at least to Plagens and, as we have seen, Pincus-Witten) and not, as the editors' statement made out, an interloper blatantly soliciting *Artforum*. Finally, Plagens' postscript plays up Benglis' disavowal of sexual difference by casting her in the combined role of husband-and-wife singing duo Steve Lawrence and Edye Gorme and thus supports her refusal to accede to conventions of spectatorship which I believe so 'brutalized' his colleagues.

Whilst Alloway, Kozloff, Krauss, Masheck, and Michelson vehemently divorce themselves from Benglis' *Artforum* ad, Plagens' witty response quite adamantly isolates himself from their dissociation. His letter represents the only voice of editorial support for Lynda Benglis as an artist, thereby upholding her ad's content as well as its implicit critiques.²⁶ Plagens has since continued to voice his support for Benglis and her advert at the expense of *Artforum's* former staff, as in a 1993 interview with John Coplans for *Artforum's* thirtieth anniversary issue. Discussing the 'politicization' (Coplans' term) of *Artforum* under Coplans' editorship, Plagens remarks,

²⁶John Coplans explained Plagens position to *The New York Times* as representing the difference between West Coast and East Coast intellectualism: 'What it turns out to be in practice...is that the California intellectuals say the advertisement is a woman expressing herself. In New York, the intellectuals are more Victorian' (Corry, 78). Robert Pincus-Witten apparently agreed, for he labelled such responses to the ad, 'sanctimonious puritanism' (Seiberling, 44).

You dealt with a purer, truer kind of politics, the kind that can get you fired...Your record isn't perfect though. Weren't you the editor of *Artforum* when the infamous Lynda Benglis dildo ad ran? Didn't you get protests from your own editors, complaining that, among other things, the ad was extraordinarily vulgar?²⁷

It may seem at first glance that by phrasing his last two sentences in the interrogative, rather than the declarative form, Plagens feigns a hazy knowledge of the Benglis controversy and thus distances himself from both the ad and its aftermath. However, having already admonished Coplans for his imperfect 'political' record, his interrogations may also be read assertively, accusingly: 'Weren't you the editor...?' and 'Didn't you get protests...?' In this reading, Plagens actually associates himself with the controversy by evincing his familiarity with both the events and its key players. His reproof of Coplans nineteen years after the Benglis affair sustains a support for the artist that, as we shall see, his colleagues continue to deny her.

In contrast to Peter Plagens and his fellow associate editors, *Artforum's* readers had to wait until March, 1975 to see the publication of *their* letters to the editor. Coplans printed only four, in spite of the fact that the ad 'elicited the biggest mail response of anything published in the magazine's thirteen year existence.'²⁸ All four letters denounced the editors' statement, with Robert

²⁷Peter Plagens, "John Coplans," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 190. Coplans replied, 'Lynda said she wanted an ad within the article itself, and I refused. Any artist or gallery could take an ad, but not within an article. As for whether the ad would run elsewhere in the magazine, editors are supposed to have nothing to do with ads; publishers decide about ads. I left it to Charlie. We ran the ad, but then the printer refused to print it because he thought it was obscene. We had a contract with the printer, and we forced him to print it. Once he could object to one ad, he could object to another, or even to an article. We were protecting the magazine, the artists, the writers, and their freedom of speech' (190).

²⁸Seiberling, 39. Seiberling relates, 'one outraged [*Artforum*] reader...didn't bother to write. He marched into the Philadelphia Museum of Art brandishing the infamous issue and, making a beeline for a Benglis work on display...grabbed the sculpture off the wall and hurled it to the floor' (42). Interestingly, even though the ad provoked *Artforum's* 'biggest mail response' of its then-13 year existence, the journal's current editor has denied the existence of anything in the journal's archives regarding the Benglis affair. Fax received from Jack Bankowsky, 25 Jan. 1994.

Rosenblum referring to Alloway et al as 'the Sons and Daughters of the Founding Fathers of Artforum Committee on Public Decency and Ladies Etiquette,'²⁹ whilst three of them strongly supported the artist. No other correspondence regarding the ad ever appeared in print.

The 'Lynda Benglis thing' coincided with the beginning of the end of *Artforum* as it had existed for the previous decade. Indeed, the editors' concluding remarks foretell the journal's fate:

This incident is deeply symptomatic of conditions that call for critical analysis. As long as they infect the reality around us, these conditions shall have to be treated in our future work as writers and as editors (9).

As with Rosalind Krauss' later recourse to the word 'thing,' the editors' referral to the Benglis affair as an 'incident' - a word that can describe a minor occurrence - collapses the ad and its effects into a single ambiguous word and demonstrates an unwillingness to 'critically analyze' the advert itself. Indeed, the editors cannot even bring themselves to name the 'infectious conditions' surrounding them: 'Exploitation?' Sexuality? Pornography? Feminism? Artistic authority? Ultimately, the unnamed 'infectious conditions' embodied by Lynda Benglis were never satisfactorily resolved, for within a year, Krauss, Michelson, and Masheck had resigned from the journal. They never publicly recanted the position they took over Benglis' ad. Speaking to Janet Malcolm twelve years later, Rosalind Krauss reaffirmed,

We thought the position represented by that ad was so degraded. We read it as saying that art writers are whores (Malcolm, 50).

With these words, Krauss keeps in play the recurrent image of the prostitute so prominent within the Benglis controversy's discourse. Her telling transference of that representation to herself and her colleagues reasserts the correlation between *Artforum* and pornography at which Benglis' ad hinted, for Krauss' comment again brings to mind the fact that the Greek origin of the

²⁹Robert Rosenblum, Letter, *Artforum*, March 1975, pp. 8-9.

word pornography - *pornographos* - denotes 'writing of prostitutes.' As Shelly Killen pointed out in a letter to *The Feminist Art Journal*,

Given the origin of the word pornography...it appears that Mr. Coplans and Pincus-Witten...are the genuine pornographers...³⁰

Before the Spring of 1993, I might have followed Krauss' words, and ended this section, by seconding a quote from critic Lucy Lippard who, in a 1976 article written for *Artforum's* rival art journal *Art in America*, averred, 'The uproar that this...image created proved conclusively that there are still things women may not do.'³¹ However, *Artforum* itself changed all that. In May, 1993, it reran Benglis' dildo image within its covers (fig. 6). This time, the photograph comprised a centrally prominent part of a collage commissioned by *Artforum* from artist Darryl Turner. Arguably, the image lost part of its impact by becoming one amongst many. More importantly, though, it gained in Turner a creator who could not be conflated with the object - Benglis - itself. Therefore, Turner not only reasserted the producer/product distinction that Benglis herself had eroded, but he also became, within the context of his collage, 'author' of the image. His 'authorship' thus reestablished Benglis' conventional role as spectacle, highlighted what Laura Mulvey called woman's 'strong visual and erotic impact' (19), and disabled Benglis' image from 'brutally' upsetting male pleasure in looking. Turner's 'project-for-*Artforum*' temporarily enabled both himself and the journal to appropriate Benglis' image, authorize it, and so mitigate the disruptive effects of the ambiguity it described.

The Human Figure in Art

In a 1993 article for *Women's Art Magazine*, Susan Croft and Claire

³⁰Shelly Killen, Letter, *The Feminist Art Journal*, 3, No. 4, Winter 1975, 2.

³¹Lucy R. Lippard, "The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: Women's Body Art, " *Art in America*, May-June, 1976, 76.



Fig. 6

MacDonald begin an analysis of performance art with the claim that 'the explicit body has returned from exile to occupy a central position in contemporary performance art.'³² Croft and MacDonald cite the 1980s as the decade in which the body found itself 'exiled' from art practice, the same decade in which *Artforum's* new editor Ingrid Sischy paradoxically felt the time was right to 'face up to the complex and ubiquitous existence of the human form in contemporary art' (1980:61). Sischy therefore devoted the November, 1980 issue of the journal to essays which explore, through critical discourse which at times seems to purposely evoke the presence of Michael Fried, the human figure through, amongst other things, performance art, fashion photography, feminist art, and gay art. 'Only then,' she said, 'will it be possible to insist that this figure have (sic) an ideology' (61).

It would seem that there is no sociopolitical purport to Sischy's use of the term 'ideology.' She does not appear to use the term in its Marxist pejorative sense as an 'upside-down'³³ version of reality, the false consciousness of ruling class thinkers, nor in its Althusserian sense as that which 'has the function (which defines it) of "constituting" concrete individuals as subjects'³⁴ in order to achieve social conformity. Sischy appropriates a radical word, but uses it broadly, referring to nothing more than 'a manner of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture.'³⁵ As well as refusing to define her use of the term 'ideology, Sischy refuses to explain her decision to use the word in the singular. Nor does she elucidate whence this presumed 'ideology' emanates, nor, for that matter, of what *Artforum's* 'ideology of the human figure in

³²Susan Croft & Claire MacDonald, "Performing Postures," Women's Art Magazine, no. 57, March/April, 1994, 9.

³³Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels quoted in Williams. Keywords, 155.

³⁴Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in Lenin and Philosophy (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 171.

³⁵Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1987).

contemporary art' might consist. She simply writes,

This issue has been assembled because it appears that the foundations have been set over the last 20 years for both an intellectual and a physical ideology and that it is now time to recognize it (61).

In my own references to *Artforum's* 'intellectual and physical ideology,' I will adopt the term's common 20th-century usage: a conflation of Marx and Engels' notion of illusion with 'the set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests or, more broadly, from a definite class or group.' (Williams, 156).

We shall see that *Artforum's* 'set of ideas' regarding the human figure are indeed illusory, for they promote a notion of sexual difference that is based upon the illusion of the castrated female intended to uphold the law of the father within patriarchal culture. As I argued at the beginning of this chapter, I tend to understand *Artforum's* 'ideology' of the human form in visual art to be gendered. The journal's reaction to Lynda Benglis' advert and, as I shall demonstrate, the biases underpinning the November, 1980 issue devoted to the human body in art affirm that the journal's 'ideology' of the body oscillates between resistance, tolerance, and outright approval depending on the gender of the artist, that of the body depicted, and the degree to which the two figures can be identified as one.

The two cover photographs adorning *Artforum's* November, 1980 issue signal the journal's biases immediately (fig. 7). The photographs were taken at a contemporaneous performance of Scott Burton's *Individual-Behavior Tableaux*, each showing a seated nude man adopting two different poses. The small print which credits the cover photograph on the journal's contents page identifies the artist as Burton and the performer as Kent Hines. *Artforum's* special issue gives its cover to an artist who distinguishes between the producing body and the performing body and thus keeps the producer/product delineation in play. Notably, however, *Artforum* does not grant Scott Burton a feature article inside the November issue (a highly unusual occurrence for an artist whose work merits its cover), nor does he receive mention within one of its more

ARTFORUM

NOVEMBER 1980 \$5.00 £ 2.50 DM 10 FF 25 FB 150

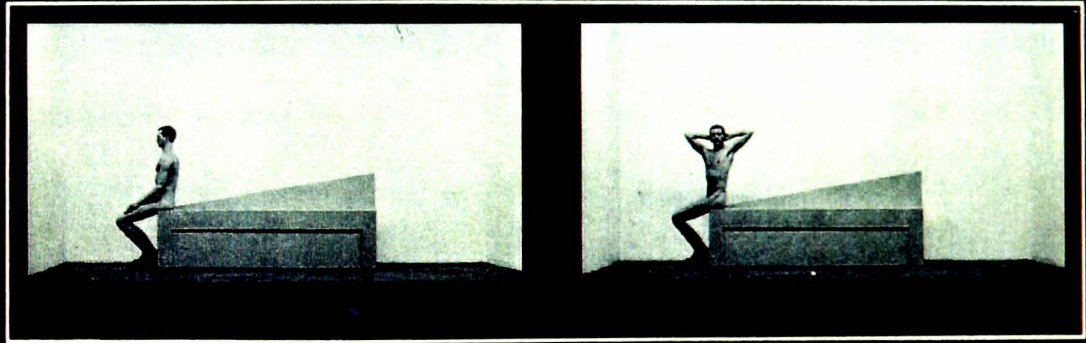


Fig. 7

generalized essays. *Individual-Behavior Tableaux's* presence on *Artforum's* cover is enough to confirm both the magazine's approval of Burton as a performance and body artist and its more general validation of such art when the performing bodies are male.

As with the cover image, two male figures inform the first article to appear after the journal's usual parade of gallery advertisements. Indeed, Klaus Kertess' essay on human figuration in visual art, "Figuring It Out," is less noteworthy for its banal central argument (which contends, 'the human figure...carries more direct references and associations than any other subject'),³⁶ than for its establishment of Eduoard Manet as a figure central to the development of abstraction, and its evocation of a figure central to the *Artforum* of an earlier time: Michael Fried. Though admittedly subtle, allusions to Fried nevertheless emerge. The first occurs on the opening page, where a reproduction of Manet's *Dead Christ with Angels* of 1864 stands above the essay's title. To the long-term *Artforum* reader, the Manet image recalls "Manet's Sources," a special issue from March, 1969 in which then-editor Philip Leider devoted the entire magazine to Fried's article of the same name. Unlike Kertess, who looks at Manet's influence on 20th-century visual art, Fried investigates the artist's insistence upon pictorial references to art of the past (He argues, for example, that Manet based *Dead Christ with Angels* on Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa* and, to a certain extent, David's *Death of Marat*). Yet like Kertess' essay, "Manet's Sources" features a painting by the artist of a dead body on its cover: *The Dead Torero*, 1864. Through the figure of Manet, then, Kertess invokes that of the former *Artforum* contributing editor.

Kertess' second reference to Fried lies within his essay's biblical references - its Book of Genesis-inspired subheading, "In the Beginning;" Manet's depiction

³⁶Klaus Kertess, "Figuring It Out," *Artforum*, Nov. 1980, 32.

of the dead Christ; a reproduction of Andrea Mantegna's *Dead Christ*, ca. 1465-66 - which conjure up what seems to be the religious undertone of Fried's 1967 polemic, "Art and Objecthood." Fried's essay begins on a spiritual note with a quote from Jonathan Edwards - 'The abiding assurance is that "we every moment see the same proof of a God as we should have seen if we had seen Him create the world at first"' (Fried, 1967:12) - and ends with the sentiment, "Presentness is grace."³⁷ In between, its argument develops along what T.J. Clark has termed a 'religious perspective'³⁸ and what Mary Kelly has identified as the elevation of 'Greenberg's commonsense notion of "good art"...from the realm of opinion to that of faith'³⁹ by insisting upon the concepts of purity, corruption, infinity, and grace. Kertess' own imposition of religious referents within his article implicitly summons up what can be read as the overt spirituality of "Art and Objecthood."

Finally, the spectre of "Art and Objecthood" reappears in Kertess' first sentences: 'It starts with Manet. Everything always starts with Manet -or so it

³⁷Fried, 23. Fried scholar Chris Riding offers an alternative reading of "Art and Objecthood," which denies the presence of spirituality within the essay and instead takes off from Charles Harrison's detection of an 'ethical rigour' in Fried's work (Charles Harrison, Essays in Art and Language, [Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1991], p. 294). Riding argues that the 'presentness' Fried finds in 'Modernist painting and sculpture is the antithesis of the 'literalist' work's presence. In the 'literalist' work, its presence is specifically a stage presence: it plays to the beholder, provoking in the beholder both an awareness of the duration of time in which he/she is looking at the object and the realization that the object is indeed playing to him/her. In contrast, the 'Modernist' work ignores the beholder in that it does not play to him or her; the work is always present, immediate. The 'literalist' work achieves its effect through stage presence, whereas the 'Modernist' work achieves *its* effect through immediacy. Thus, concludes Riding, the 'grace' to which Fried refers is a moment of becoming, when all conditions (especially presentness) come together in the work, transcending the scriptures of (Greenbergian) Modernism through quality and conviction (Telephone interview with Chris Riding, 6 December 1994).

³⁸T.J. Clark, "Arguments about Modernism: A Reply to Michael Fried," in Pollock and After, ed. Francis Frascina (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 87.

³⁹Mary Kelly, "Re-viewing Modernist Criticism" (1981) in Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), p. 94.

seems' (31.) His words give rise to the thought that just as Kertess posits Manet as central to abstraction's development, so too has "Art and Objecthood" been central to *Artforum's* evolution into a serious art journal. Indeed, in the history of *Artforum*, a surprising amount of the magazine's output after that essay's publication appears to either directly or indirectly refer back to it. The authority Philip Leider's *Artforum* ostensibly granted Fried - emphasising the significance of his essays by according them more page space than those by other contributors (a practice which reached its apogee with the publication of the issue-long "Manet's Sources"), for example - continues even in issues published years after his departure from the journal in 1974, as Kertess' essay demonstrates. "Figuring It Out"'s projection of the critical figure of Michael Fried into Sischy's special issue reasserts his predominance within the journal's history. It can also be seen as an attempt to imbue the issue with the critical power the well-regarded Summer, 1967 special issue on sculpture in which "Art and Objecthood" first appeared retrospectively obtained.

Fried's implicit critical presence effects the criticism promoted in the issue's next offering, a section organized by Moira Roth entitled "Visions and Re-Visions." The title, with its references to opticality, alteration, correction, and newness, serves as an umbrella term for a segment containing three pieces: an article by Roth which attempts to define the terms "feminist art," "feminist criticism," and "feminist artist" and sets up a system for so doing; a two-page selection of works from 1970 to 1980 by nine women artists, reproduced without text and thus without explanation of how and why Roth chose them; and a conversation Roth conducted with California performance and self-described feminist artist Suzanne Lacy. At first glance, the inclusion of these three pieces, and their inferential juxtaposition to the arguments propounded by Fried, would seem to bespeak *Artforum's* revision, alteration, and/or correction of the critical views with which it had been often associated in the previous two decades, in favour of a commitment to feminist art, criticism, and theory under

its new editor for the 1980s, Ingrid Sischy. Yet as I shall argue below, the journal dilutes the strength of its apparent commitment to feminist practices through its placement of these articles within the context of the issue.

Before I expand upon that argument, however, the two contributions to the issue which follow Moira Roth's "Visions and Re-Visions" section need to be addressed, for they too demonstrate the hollowness of *Artforum's* support for feminist artistic and critical interventions. The first is Carol Squiers' "Slouch Stretch Smile Leap," an examination of 20th-century fashion photography to which Sischy grants an unusually high proportion of feature article space: nine pages, double the length of the average *Artforum* essay and the longest one in the issue. Moreover, she permits it four large colour reproductions (out of a total of thirteen), double or even quadruple the amount accorded the issue's other articles. Such exceptions to *Artforum's* general format imply an exceptional essay; yet Squiers' text distinguishes itself only through its refusal to critically address the depiction of women within the photographs under discussion. As evinced below, Squiers observes but does not analyze the ways in which certain photographers objectify their models, a lack of critical rigour made all the more noticeable and lamentable by its placement after Roth's call for incisive feminist criticism. Despite the impression given by the commands comprising her essay's title that its text will question the objectification of female models within fashion photography, such an interrogation never occurs. Squiers apparently perceives that objectification, for she describes representations of women which can only be described as distorted. She observes, for example, that Cecil Beaton's models are 'helplessly, blindly swaying...or literally dangling from strings, puppets on a stage;'⁴⁰ that Irving Penn defined 'three essential types [of woman]; the reacting woman, the straightforward woman, the woman-as-object' (50); and that a Richard Avedon

⁴⁰Carol Squiers, "Slouch Stretch Smile Leap," *Artforum*, Nov. 1980, p. 48.

model sits 'with legs spread and mouth pursed,' exemplifying one of his 'fickle, irresponsible creatures' (50). Yet Squiers presents these comments as mere description, not critique. She refers to Beaton's 'puppet'-like women in order to substantiate her claim that the photographer was influenced by the 'clearly defined Surrealist sensibility' Man Ray brought to fashion photography (48). She cites Irving Penn's 'woman-as-object' not to underscore the objectification of women within fashion photography, but to assert that he used 'clear, even light to define the crisp edges and exacting detail' of his three types of women (50). And she describes Avedon's spread-legged model not to raise the issue of woman-as-spectacle, but to demonstrate the 'self-confidence' of the 'new kind of woman...in Avedon's work' (50). Similarly, Squiers notes that Avedon himself pursued 'a convulsive vision of women' who 'seem to be the victims of their own overabundant leisure time' (51), but she mentions them only to say that they are 'the source of the kinky, motion-filled figures leaping across bare studio spaces which characterized Avedon's work in the '60s and into the '70s' (51). Furthermore, when Squiers says that Hiro's photographs for *Harper's Bazaar* in the late 1960s feature 'hands, legs and feet in accessories, parts of things rather than the whole' (52), she is not addressing the notion of women being severed, but rather the 'oddness' of his images, 'all photographed from quirky angles with a frightening edge of clarity' (52). Finally, Squiers notes Guy Bourdin's 'horrific image of a woman mongrelized into a half-human freak' (54), but does so only to propose that his images comment upon the 'instability and even weightlessness' of fashion photography and to praise 'his extraordinary handling of color' (54). Yet the surprising element in Squiers' article is not her own descriptions' ironic mimicry of fashion photography's objectification of women, nor even its lack of rigorous analysis of that objectification *per se*. Rather, it is the significance Ingrid Sischy evidently ascribes to it by allowing it its lengthy text and extra colour reproductions. Her placement of the essay after Moira Roth's promotion of feminist art, criticism, and theory suggests

that, for Sischy, Squiers' essay succeeds Roth's in terms of the magazine's layout because it supercedes it intellectually.

It seems appropriate that Squiers' essay should itself be succeeded by Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of performance artist and 1979 Women's Body Building Champion Lisa Lyon, for whilst the former records fashion photography's penchant for sectionalizing its models ('parts of things rather than the whole'), we shall see that the latter refines it. Mapplethorpe's photographs appeared in the journal three years before their publication in a book entitled Lady Lisa Lyon. *Artforum*, on the other hand, gives the photographs the title, "LISA LYON by Robert Mapplethorpe," implying that it is Mapplethorpe, rather than Lyon, the project's creator, who merits artistic authority. The journal published six photographs. As with Moira Roth's two-page review of women's art over the previous decade, these photographs appear unaccompanied by text, and thus offer no explanation for the process by which they, rather than any of the other 110 photos in Lady Lisa Lyon, were chosen for inclusion in *Artforum*.

The few words which open *Artforum's* selection of photographs introduce Lyon herself: 'Lisa Lyon is a performance artist and winner of the *First Women's Body Building Championship*, Los Angeles' (55 - Mapplethorpe's reputation seems to have preceded him, since the journal does not introduce him to its readers). They also announce the section's title, "LISA LYON by Robert Mapplethorpe," which itself points up the performance artist's dependence upon photography to preserve an art form that is inherently ephemeral:

What remains of performance, with its temporality, its specific relation of audience and event impossible to trace, is the film or the photograph (Kelly, 95).

More importantly, however, *Artforum's* title grants artistic authority of the photographs to the photographer, thus contesting Mary Kelly's argument that it is the *artist*, not the photographer, who merits the title of author:

What is lost in *that* image, in so far as it can no longer be emphatically marked as the property of the creative subject, is gained to the extent that it is, precisely, a photograph of the artist and as the possessive subject (in law) he has 'the right of the photographer' over the disposal of his own image (95).

For Kelly, product (the body photographed) assumes the state of producer (the photographer), resulting in the performance artist's claim to authorship. But as *Artforum* wants to maintain the distinction between the two, it gives the photos a title that assigns Mapplethorpe authorship of not only the photographs, but of Lyon herself. *Artforum* wrests from Lyon her 'rights as photographer,' insisting instead upon retaining those rights for Mapplethorpe. In the journal's view, *he* becomes the artist/author. *Artforum* reduces Lyon to a model and converts 'photographs of the artist' into photographs *by* an artist. It therefore refutes its own introduction of Lyon by ultimately denying her status as a performance artist and thus her legal status as possessive subject.

Significantly, *Artforum's* act sets the tone for the book's own struggle with the attribution of authorship. At one point, Bruce Chatwin's introduction to *Lady...* asserts Lyon's artistry and authority: '

[She was] a sculptor whose raw material was her own body...she was on the lookout for the right photographer to document it.⁴¹

Meeting Mapplethorpe a year after winning her championship, *she* selected *him* to record the body she had sculpted. However, Chatwin later transfers her authority to Mapplethorpe, hinting broadly that *he* authorized the project by virtue of his approval of her:

She and Robert met at a party in a SoHo loft. It was very dark, but he liked her quivering lip and glittering eyes. He liked the mop of loose black curls that give her the air of an Old Testament heroine. He liked her leather jacket and her tight black rubber pants: it was obvious that her body was superlative – small, supple, svelte, without an ounce of surplus fat, and so very different from the sinewy torsos of the ladies in muscle magazines (12).

Chatwin's enumeration of the things Mapplethorpe 'liked' about Lyon suggests

⁴¹Bruce Chatwin, "An Eye and Some Body," *Lady Lisa Lyon* by Robert Mapplethorpe (New York: The Viking Press, 1983), 11.

that her selection of him was irrelevant; *his* final approval of *her* determined whether or not the project would proceed. Indeed, Samuel Wagstaff, in his forward to *Lady...*, remarks,

I don't suppose he would ever have taken a second exposure of Lisa if her classicism and ideals of order had not been a match for his.⁴²

But whilst Wagstaff acknowledges Lyon's parity with Mapplethorpe, Chatwin's introduction finally privileges the photographer. He, too, refutes his introduction of Lyon by rendering Mapplethorpe a sculptor, Lyon his raw material: 'His eye for a face is the eye of a novelist in search of a character; his eye for a body that of a classical sculptor in search of an "ideal"' (9). In so doing, Chatwin strips Lyon of her artistry, denying her as sculptor of her own body.

Similarly, the title to Chatwin's introduction, "An Eye and Some Body," pares Mapplethorpe and Lyon down to artistic eye and generic body respectively. His text maintains these depictions, but in promoting Mapplethorpe's artistic vision, Chatwin eventually goes beyond generalizing Lyon into 'some body;' he actually makes her immaterial:

He keeps a weather eye open for an 'ideal' model, someone who combines a face, a body, and an arresting personality; and who, because most men are vainer and less versatile in front of a camera, is likelier than not a woman (11).

Chatwin implies here that the 'lady' of the book's title could have been anyone fulfilling Mapplethorpe's criteria, even a man. Within Chatwin's text, Lisa Lyon loses her identity as a performance artist and instead becomes fragmented into a face, a body, and a personality which happen to fit the photographer's paradigm.

Like *Artforum*, Chatwin eventually reduces Lyon to mere model. He then compounds her reduction by *twice* casting her as character to Mapplethorpe's novelist:

⁴²Samuel Wagstaff, "Forward," *Lady Lisa Lyon*, 8.

His eye for a face is the eye of a novelist in search of a character (9).

This book does not simply document Lisa Lyon; it is the work of the imagination – the visual counterpart of a novel, which, like all good novels, mixes fact and fantasy to reveal a greater truth (14).

By portraying Mapplethorpe as eye, imagination, novelist, and even revealer of truth, Chatwin follows the magazine and renders him Lyon's author. Her authority as performance artist deteriorates under the authorization Mapplethorpe receives from the two publications.⁴³ Within *Artforum* and *Lady...*, the photographs truly become 'Lisa Lyon by Robert Mapplethorpe.'

Lyon's loss of artistic authority helps to explain the book's documentation of her resultant body, rather than her actual performance – the process of her body's metamorphosis into sculptural form. As Susan Butler observes, 'Lisa's physique is given to us mainly as product and effect, rather than as work.'⁴⁴ Laura Muivey has argued that 'the sexual impact of the performing woman takes the film into a no man's land outside its own time and space' (20). Hence, rather than run the risk of disrupting the photos' narrative flow ('product and effect'), the book ignores Lyon's performance and its inherently threatening sexual impact. Notably, however, *Artforum* then disregards even the narrative aspect of the work by plucking the six images out of context. Its selection and presentation of the photos therefore highlight only that aspect of the collaboration which Lynda Nead has accurately described as a 'double metamorphosis:' Lyon's transformation of herself through body building into a living art object, and Mapplethorpe's repetition of the process when framing and

⁴³Novelist Edmund White, writing in *The Independent*, authorizes Chatwin's text, which in turn reinforces Chatwin's own authorization of Mapplethorpe: '...I think Bruce's text on Robert (his introduction to Mapplethorpe's book on Lisa Lyon, *Lady*) is the most brilliant' (Edmund White, "The Writer and the Photographer," *The Independent*, 20 May 1994, Section II, p. 19).

⁴⁴Susan Butler, "Revising Femininity? Review of *Lady, Photographs of Lisa Lyon by Robert Mapplethorpe*" in *Looking On: Images of Femininity in the Visual Arts and Media*, ed. Rosemary Betterton (London: Pandora Press, 1987), p. 123.

'capturing' Lyon's body through his photographs.⁴⁵

In fact, *Artforum* itself triples the metamorphosis of Lisa Lyon into an art object through its own function as an art journal. By re-presenting the Lyon/Mapplethorpe photographs within its pages, and even framing them with blue borders it added itself, the magazine appears to validate Lyon and Mapplethorpe as art object and artist respectively. It also again draws the crucial distinction between the body which produced the image and the body contained therein. Therefore, despite the fact that four of the six *Artforum* photographs feature Lyon's nude body in various displays of strength (figs. 8, 9, 10, 11), and at least one conveys the assertiveness of Lynda Benglis' advert pose (fig. 11), the journal's own participation in delineating product from producer apparently earns the images its tacit endorsement, and thus prevents a recurrence of the hostile reaction provoked by Benglis' nude body six years earlier.

Lyon's 'containment' within Mapplethorpe's photographs raises the notion of the body-as-container, which Christine Battersby locates within the new field of 'cognitive semantics.'⁴⁶ She contests the field's underlying assumptions - 'we all inhabit our bodies in similar ways. We all experience the body as a container for the inner self' (31) - by claiming,

I as a *woman* have a different relationship with my body than does a man...the containment model for bodily boundaries and selves might be more typical of *male* experience (32).

Battersby's hypothesis helps to explain Bruce Chatwin's praise for Lyon's 'superlative' body as 'small, supple, svelte, without an ounce of surplus fat' (12), for Lynda Nead believes that what Chatwin admires is precisely the 'transformation of the female body into a symbol of containment' (Nead, 10).

⁴⁵Linda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 9.

⁴⁶Christine Battersby. "Her Body/Her Boundaries: Gender and the Metaphysics of Containment" in *Journal of Philosophy and the Visual Arts: The Body*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London: Academy Editions, 1993), p. 31.



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

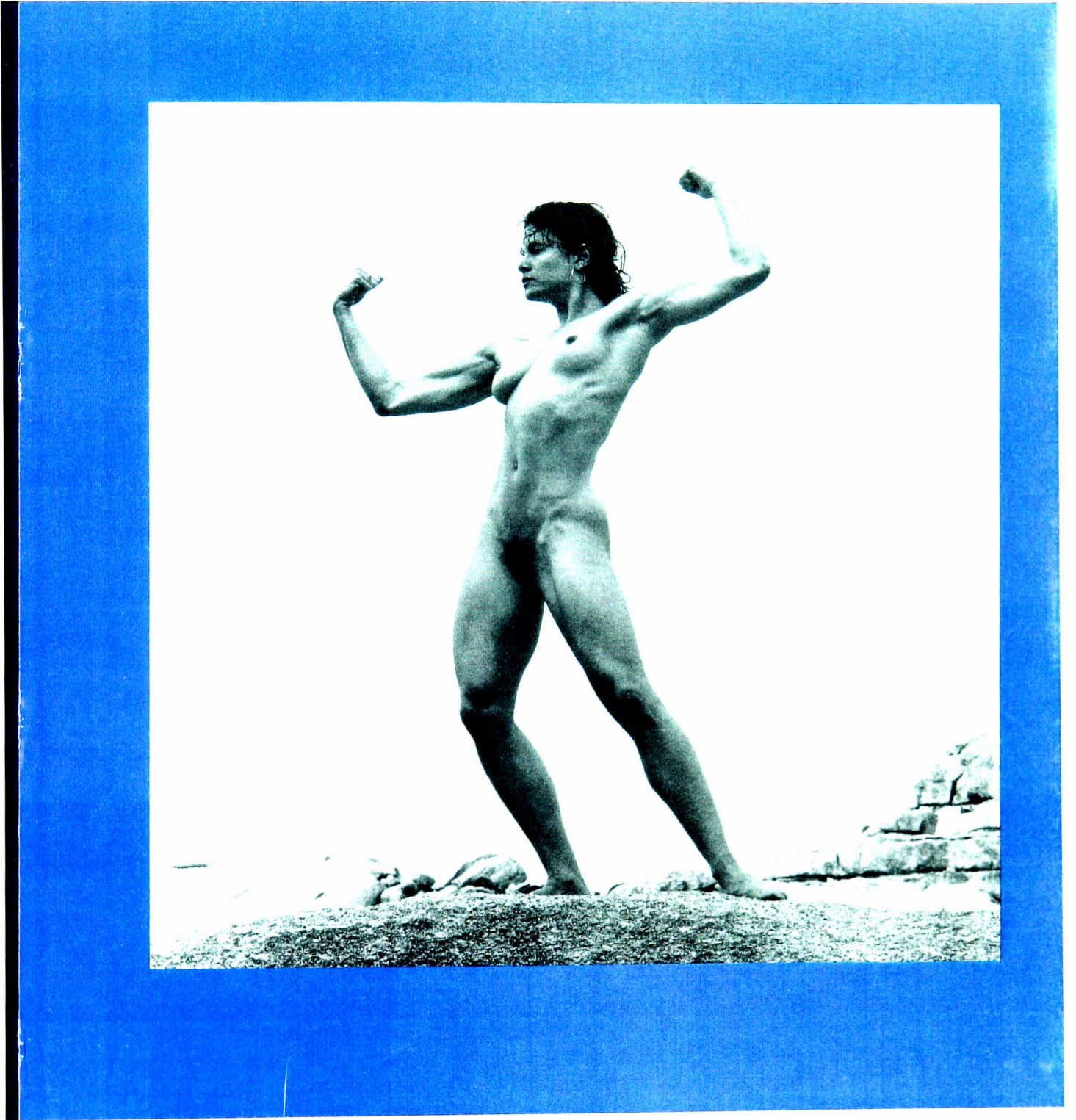


Fig. 11

Following Battersby, I would go a step further and propose that what Chatwin actually admires in Mapplethorpe's photographs is his transformation of Lyon into a symbol based on, and understood through, a *male* experience of the body.

Along with maintaining the producer/product distinction, Mapplethorpe's photographs further secure *Artforum's* tacit acceptance by continually reaffirming Lyon's femininity, and thus failing to challenge both gender categories and the conventions which render women passive/image. As Lynda Nead remarks,

This revised femininity seems simply to exchange one stereotype for another – one body beautiful for another, possibly racier, image of woman which can be easily absorbed within the patriarchal repertoire of feminine stereotypes (8).

Going a step further than Nead, I would argue that it is precisely because the Mapplethorpe/Lyon photographs offer the *illusion* of a new female prototype and *represent* a challenge to the ways in which women are represented within patriarchy, whilst actually preserving them, that the photos ensure their media acceptance.

Significantly, both the art media and the popular press went beyond merely accepting Lyon and Mapplethorpe's 'challenge,' they collaborated with it. Features extolling the virtues of Lyon's illusory new woman cropped up in *Artforum* and *The Sunday Times* and inspired 'a *Sun* special' on the woman it headlined 'MISS MUSCLES:'

[Mapplethorpe's] pictures of her are a far cry from the usual pin-ups in pornographic magazines. Lisa may appear nude – but her poses are not those of a girlie magazine centrefold. Instead, she adopts the stance of the professional bodybuilder, muscles rippling beneath her velvety skin. Even when she is pictured as Eve, or as a virginal bride, a hint of strength and power lurks behind the beauty.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Lee Rodwell, "Miss Muscles!" *The Sun*, 2 May 1983, 9. Unsurprisingly, Rodwell too identifies Mapplethorpe as the photographs' author: 'Photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, well-known for his images of celebrities and of erotic art... chose 30-year old Lisa as the inspiration for his latest collection of photographs' (my italics). Of Lyon's contribution, Rodwell writes, 'She is the model for a new book of artistic photographs.'

Media endorsements of Lyon's power and beauty such as *The Sun's* - which notably denies in Lyon's images the allusions to pornography and its own 'page 3'-type pin-ups that *Artforum* discerned and found so offensive in the Lynda Benglis advert - mirror her poses by appearing to threaten, but then reasserting, notions of femininity. Indeed, notes Susan Butler,

the cataloguing of Lyon in an exhaustive variety of glamorous guises seems to add a corollary message to women, 'You can only have permission to be this strong if you can also look this beautiful' (122).

Accordingly, *The Sun's* observations are repeated to a certain extent by Bruce Chatwin, and again by Edmund White:

Once he brought Lisa Lyon to dinner. We were astonished how graceful her body looked clothed and how powerful when she pushed up her sleeves and bared her massive shoulders. She was very knowing and very droll, which tickled Robert (White, 19).

By depicting Lyon as an attractive amusement for Mapplethorpe, White inadvertently proves Laura Mulvey's theory that

in their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness* (19).

Significantly, the media's constant reiteration of Lyon's 'visual impact' undermines her ability to overcome her 'exhibitionist role.' And Mapplethorpe's media-granted authority destroys her potential to actually subvert the convention which posits women as spectacle, because it prevents her from successfully realizing what Lisa Tickner has described as the second of two courses of action open to the female artist:

Given, as it were, this double alienation - the body as occupied territory in both culture and nature - women artists have only two consistent courses of action. One is to ignore the whole area as too muddled and dangerous for the production of clear statements; the other is to take the heritage and work with it - attack it, reverse it, expose and *use* it for their own purpose. The colonized body must be reclaimed from masculine fantasy, the 'lost' aspects of the female body experience authenticated and reintegrated in opposition to its more familiar and seductive artistic role as raw material for the men.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Lisa Tickner, "The Body Politic: Female Sexuality and Women Artists since 1970," (1978) rpt. in Betterton, p. 239.

As both *Artforum* and *Lady...* ultimately deny Lyon her artistry, her implicit authority is subsumed by that of Mapplethorpe. Furthermore, any attempt on Lyon's part to attack, reverse, or expose the female body's heritage through her self-transformation is immediately deflated by her transformation at the art media and popular press's hands into Mapplethorpe's raw material. They therefore mitigate her ability to pose a true challenge to 'the patriarchal repertoire of feminine stereotypes.' As Lynda Nead observes, Lyon's work with Mapplethorpe 'simply re-fixes the boundaries of femininity' (9).

Indeed, the first image in the *Artforum* series, a side view of Lyon, demonstrates the degree to which the photographs insist upon her femininity and thus her visual impact to the male viewer (fig. 2). The shirt sleeve of Lyon's dark top rises high on her well-lit arm, revealing her musculature. Her left hand grips her right wrist, conveying 'the hint of strength and power' glimpsed by *The Sun*. From the neck down, the gender of the photograph's subject is ambiguous. The tightly rolled shirt sleeve, muscular arm, and strong hands articulate the power and strength that connote masculinity; yet the large feathered, bowed, and netted hat which overshadows the face proclaims the subject's femininity. Admittedly, Lyon's obscured face shields her from the male gaze and thus momentarily thwarts her erotic impact. However, the ornate hat which counterbalances her physical potency reassures us of Lyon's femininity and thus reasserts her primary role as displayed object.

The four nude photos which follow recover Lyon's erotic impact. Though the first two images again protect Lyon's face from the active male gaze, Mapplethorpe declares her role as erotic object by offering her body for display against a rock embankment.

Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen (Mulvey, 19).

Mapplethorpe reenacts the tension found within narrative cinema; his look presents Lyon as erotic object for the photographs' viewer. Stretched out atop

one of the rocks, her nude body plays to male desire (figs. 8, 9). But there is something else as well: Lyon's contours blend with those of the boulder and thus reanimate the trope which conflates the female body with nature. The curvilinear forms and natural setting work together to construct a scene of seductive serenity; however, the scene masks an implicit violence. For in order to merge Lyon's body with its natural setting, Mapplethorpe severs it, removing the one feature which identifies the body as Lisa Lyon's: her head. He literally decapitates her, presenting her, in the first instance, only from the breast down, a foreground boulder hiding her head, shoulders, and arms from view and, in the second instance, severed at the waist, with only the bottom half of her body visible within the photographic frame. Mapplethorpe's process of photographic mutilation projects violence onto Lyon's body in more ways than one. By removing her head, it seems to me, he not only decapitates her photographically, but also eliminates that which signifies intellect and the 'arresting personality' required of his 'ideal model,' de-personalising and thus reducing her to nothing more than a body displayed for male pleasure.

As we shall see, Lyon's 'mutilation' and subsequent reduction in these images to displayed object can be regarded as a denial of the threat of castration as propounded by Freud. I want to pursue this possible reading of Mapplethorpe's photographs, as well as the further possibility that Mapplethorpe achieves this denial by placing the viewer in what shall be explained as the position of the fetishistic scopophilic. In order to determine whether or not *Artforum* then reinforced this position through its own presentation of the photos, I now briefly divert my attention away from *Artforum* and concentrate on the various issues raised by the photographs themselves.

Writing of Alfred Hitchcock's 1929 film *Blackmail*, Tania Modleski observes,

If castration is, as Laura Mulvey has persuasively argued, always at stake for the male in classical narrative cinema, then decapitation is at

stake for the female – in cinema as elsewhere.⁴⁹

Here, decapitation acts as a metaphor for silence, and alludes to Hélène Cixous' belief that

women have no choice other than to be decapitated, and in any case, the moral is that if they don't actually lose their heads by the sword, *they keep them on condition that they lose them...* to complete silence... (Cixous quoted in Modleski, 20)

Against these thoughts, Modleski recounts a scene from *Blackmail* which eerily presages Lyon's work with Mapplethorpe:

In the scene in the studio, Alice tries to paint a picture on the artist's canvas, and she draws the head of a woman. The artist takes her hand, guiding it to 'complete the masterpiece,' and draws a nude female body, which Alice then signs, authorizing, as it were, man's view of woman and thereby consenting to the silencing of her own possibly different ideas about herself (20).

Like the artist in Hitchcock's film, Mapplethorpe delineates a nude female body, although the art media-generated cession of Lyon's authority to him means that he does not need her to authorize his vision. Nevertheless, during their collaboration, Lyon, like Hitchcock's Alice, at times yielded to Mapplethorpe's views and silenced 'her own possibly different ideas about herself.' Bruce Chatwin recalls,

She and Robert laughed, juggled with ideas, agreed on some, and squabbled over others. They squabbled, for example, over whether she should wear a set of fake scarlet fingernails which, *Robert insisted*, were essential for a fashion shot. 'I hate these nails,' she said, rattling them against the gray fiberglass pectoral of an Issey Miyake outfit. 'Makes my hands look like spiders. Arachnid, you know...?' (14, my italics).

Chatwin's account thus reveals the double decapitation Lyon suffers in her collaboration with Mapplethorpe. Having decapitated the artist visually in the images taken against the rock embankment, Mapplethorpe repeats the action metaphorically through his authoritative insistence, which overrides and silences Lyon's protests.

Further violence resides within the two above-mentioned images of Lyon

⁴⁹Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much* (New York: Methuen, 1988), p. 20.

through their unmistakable references to castration. For Freud, the castration complex emerges when the child discovers the anatomical difference between the sexes, a moment when vision confirms what had heretofore been denied:

The observation that finally breaks down the child's unbelief is the sight of the female genitalia...The loss of his own penis becomes imaginable, and the threat of castration achieves its delayed effect.⁵⁰

But as Laura Mulvey has argued, fetishistic scopophilia offers a means of evading the female figure's continual evocation of castration anxiety in the male unconscious by 'build[ing] the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself' (21). Hence *The Sun* and *Lady...*'s insistence upon, and perpetual re-avowal of, Lisa Lyon's beauty.

Robert Mapplethorpe himself valued beauty:

People say he was a dandy, I suppose, because he appeared to put beauty before goodness...The dandy levels all other distinctions in order to plant above them the single flag of beauty (White, 19).

Crucially, however, he demanded it of Lyon:

Robert thought she seemed anxious to hide her face, and, while shooting the first roll, saw what he mistook for a large birthmark beside her nose. How terrible! he thought when she went to the bathroom. All that beauty flawed! At the same moment a shriek tore across the studio as Lisa looked in the mirror and saw the black thing. In the taxi, maneuvering a cigarette between her mouth and the veil, she had accidentally smudged her upper lip with ash. Both photographer and model collapsed in a conspiracy of giggles (Chatwin in Mapplethorpe, 12)

Fortunately for Mapplethorpe, Lyon's 'flaw' was superficial and easily corrected. By removing it, she restored the physical beauty so satisfying to the scopophiliac. Similarly, she conceals her genitalia behind her bent left leg (fig. 8), thus allowing Mapplethorpe to photographically restore the illusion of female 'wholeness' and disavow her apparent lack. His camera, which casts Lyon as bearer of the photographer's look, works in tandem with his esteem for her beauty to refute her lack and render her a fetish.

The third photograph in *Artforum's* series continues Mapplethorpe's

⁵⁰Sigmund Freud, "The Passing of the Oedipus Complex" (1924), Sexuality and the Psychology of Love (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 178.

disavowal of Lyon's 'castration' yet conversely invokes its threat (fig. 9). Lyon raises her right leg in the air and keeps her left leg slightly bent on the rock. The upraised leg exposes her pubic hair whilst the resting leg hides her genitalia, thereby hiding her presumed lack and prolonging the illusion of her completeness. Within the castration theory posited by Freud, Lyon's leg movement might be seen by the male viewer as resembling that of a scissor and thus connotes, for those who hold to Freud's theory, the alarming possibility of dismemberment. Mulvey has analyzed how 'the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified' (21). Similarly, Mapplethorpe's image of Lyon's displayed body momentarily conceals her lack but inevitably re-invests her with the castration threat implicit in the female figure.

To evade the threat posed by Lyon's body, Mapplethorpe presents her as an ideal, photographing her in a style which eliminates flaws by 'deliberately framing everything and everyone in the same straitjacket style - the world reinvented as logic, precision, sculpture in obvious light and shadow' (Wagstaff in Mapplethorpe, 8). Susan Butler observes,

An idealising force can be felt as well in the strict absence of any very personal or individualised approach to the body as a nude image...Occasionally, stretch marks are remotely visible on Lyon's body, but this kind of feature is never discovered or explored in a positive way (Butler, 123).

Similarly, in their contributions to *Lady...*, Samuel Wagstaff and Bruce Chatwin both highlight Mapplethorpe's insistence upon perfection in his photographs of the human figure:

I don't suppose he would ever have taken a second exposure of Lisa if her classicism and ideals of order had not been a match for his (Wagstaff, 8).

...his eye for a body [is] that of a classical sculptor in search of an 'ideal' (Chatwin, 9).

Except for a few close friends, Robert rarely takes pictures of the same sitter twice - an hour or two of intimacy, an inimitable image, and that is all. Yet, like any artist whose business is a celebration of the

human figure, he keeps a weather eye open for an 'ideal' model... (11).
 ...it was obvious that her body was superlative - small, supple, svelte,
 without an ounce of surplus fat... (12).

Mapplethorpe's search for perfection culminates in Lisa Lyon, whose body corresponds to his own ideals and exempts her from his reluctance to photograph his 'sitters' more than once. More importantly, her ideal proportions render her body a 'perfect product' (Mulvey, 22), one Mapplethorpe films for male pleasure. Kay Larson believes that 'the camera is a stand-in, a third eye through which Mapplethorpe pursues a state of ferociously aestheticized desire.'⁵¹ As such, the camera itself enjoys the privileged male position; moreover, it acts as the intermediary by which the photographer achieves the distance necessary to gain control over the image. Also, Mapplethorpe's camera acts as the agent through which he emphasises Lyon's beauty and so disavows her 'lack.' Laura Mulvey explains,

The beauty of the woman as object and the screen space coalesce; she is no longer bearer of guilt but a perfect product whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator's look (22).

Mapplethorpe's disjunction of Lyon's body in the afore-cited rock embankment photographs offers her perfect, to-be-looked-at-image in its fragmented parts, rendering them fetish objects for the spectator. Through the use of the close-up (fig. 9), the body need no longer be 'whole' to be perfect; the fetishised fragment metonymically reinstates the body's wholeness and overcomes the threat of castration. Mapplethorpe's photographic style, which renders his product flawless and thus heightens the fragments' perfection, further wards off this threat, and *Artforum* completes the process by preserving that flawlessness in its meticulous reproduction of the images.

Significantly, it is the image of Lyon which forces the spectator to confront her 'lack' that best exemplifies why the popular press and, specifically,

⁵¹Kay Larson, "Getting Graphic," New York Magazine, 15 Aug. 1988, p. 66.

Artforum's reaction to her work with Mapplethorpe differed so wildly from that of Lynda Benglis' 1974 advert (fig. 11). Adopting a classic body-building pose, Lyon unarguably expresses vigour and vitality. Her upraised arms and clenched fists even suggest an audacity reminiscent of Benglis' posture, leading Susan Butler, for one, to perceive in this and another image (fig. 10) the same refusal to cater to notions of male spectatorship present in Benglis' ad:

These images have both humour and daring in their unabashed declaration of one woman's (and therefore every woman's) right to develop her body as she is pleased to do so, for whatever reasons - and to display it in postures that make none of the usual concessions to a presumed male viewer (125).

Yet Butler's analysis, which notably concedes Lyon's display, fails to consider her presentation as exhibited and fetishized object. Whether photographed in close-up or long-shot, she specifically plays to male desire. In neither of the images Butler cites does Lyon deflect the male gaze; rather, it is precisely because she styles herself for the presumed male view that the photographs avoid the extreme responses provoked by Benglis' similarly unabashed pose. In contrast, as I argued earlier, I believe that Lynda Benglis' appropriation of the dildo/phallus prevents her from being constituted as spectacle by the male look. Moreover, Benglis' sunglasses block the voyeuristic gaze which would demystify her and lead to her devaluation:

The woman who wears glasses constitutes one of the most intense visual clichés of the cinema. The image is a heavily marked condensation of motifs concerned with repressed sexuality, knowledge, visibility and vision, intellectuality, and desire. The woman with glasses signifies simultaneously intellectuality and undesirability; but the moment she removes her glasses...she is transformed into spectacle, the very picture of desire.⁵²

By insisting upon sunglasses in both her advert and the later *New York*

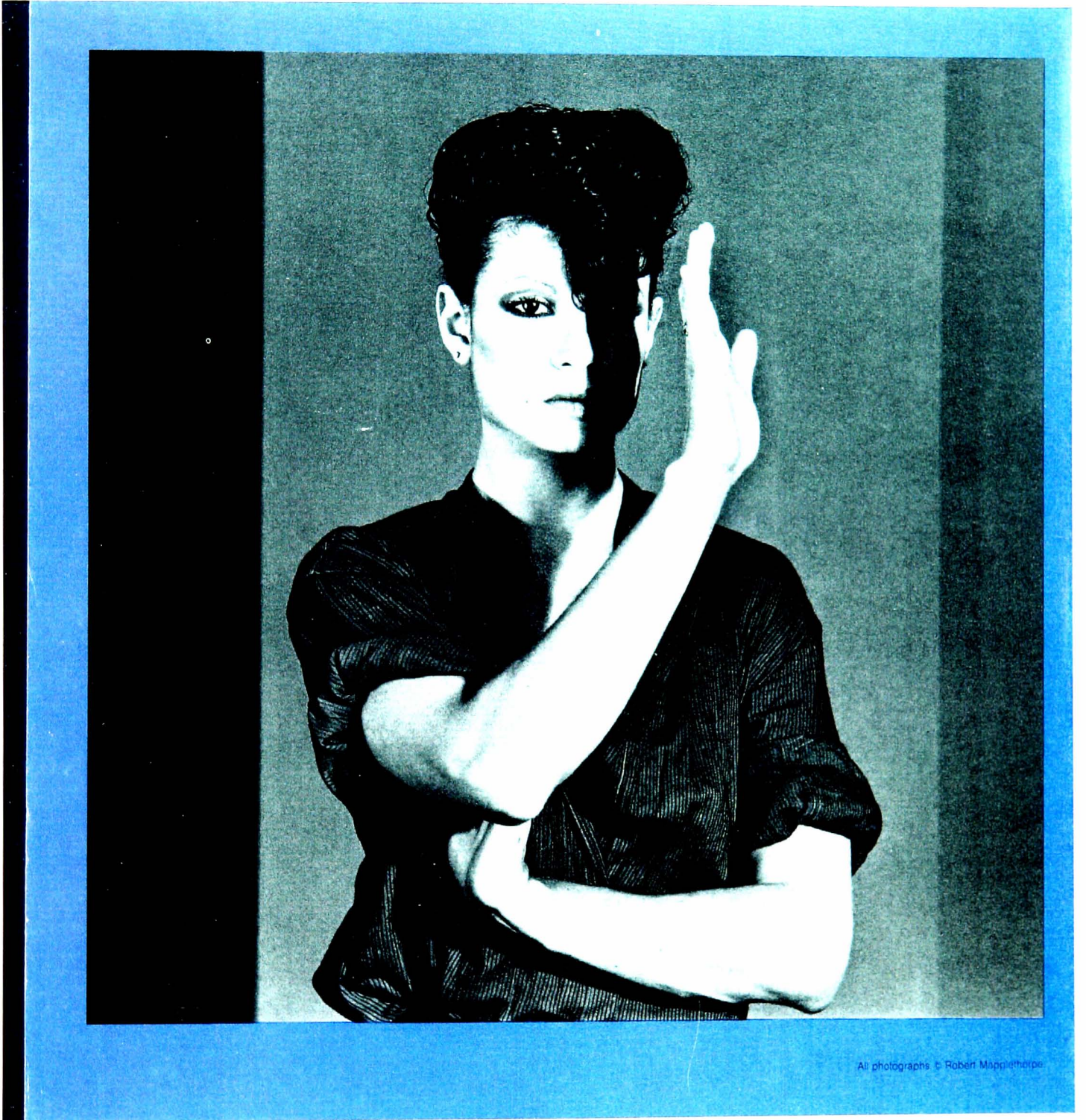
⁵²Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorising the Female Spectator," *Screen*, 23, no. 3-4, 1982, 82-83. Although sunglasses sometimes feature in soft-porn magazine images, they generally appear pushed down the bridge of the nose, à la Sue Lyon's *Lolita*, with the woman peering seductively over their rim. This, I would argue, is quite different from the direct look discernable from behind Benglis' shaded lenses which, along with the glasses themselves, disallow a voyeuristic gaze.

Magazine photograph, Benglis prevents her transformation into icon, whereas Lisa Lyon ensures her iconic status by posing frontally, exposing that which previously she had been at pains to conceal: her genitalia, and thus her 'lack.' Lyon therefore reinscribes sexual difference by making manifest the castration threat Freudian psychoanalysis claims she represents, and reminds us why Mapplethorpe and the art media and the popular press demand beauty and perfection of her in the first place.

The final photograph in *Artforum's* series completes Mapplethorpe's disavowal of the castration threat Lyon presumably invokes by transforming her into a transvestite version of herself (woman becomes man) or, more precisely, a transvestite version of Mapplethorpe himself (woman becomes man becomes woman - fig. 12). Mary Ann Doane contends that the former scenario is more accurate than the latter, because of 'the ease with which women can slip into male clothing:'

Thus, while the male is locked into sexual identity, the female can at least pretend that she is other - in fact, sexual mobility would seem to be a distinguishing feature of femininity in its cultural construction. Hence, transvestism would be fully recuperable. The idea seems to be this: it is understandable that women would want to be men, for everyone wants to be elsewhere than in the feminine position (81).

In other words, female reversal is acceptable, even expected, within a cultural construction of femininity, for it results in 'only another occasion for desire' (Doane, 81). And indeed, the photograph of Lyon in a loose collarless shirt that hides her breasts and rolled-up sleeves which again reveal muscular arms at first seems to depict merely a case of female reversal. It even appears to resist the reinscription of femininity so evident in the other *Artforum* images by accentuating its superficial signs - diamond earrings, heavy make-up, visible beauty mark - and so exposing its artificiality. However, Lyon's exaggerated quiff mirrors Mapplethorpe's own in his 1980 *Self-Portrait in Leather with Cigarette*, thereby implicitly juxtaposing the two figures, impelling the viewer to distinguish and so reassert sexual difference (fig. 13). The juxtaposition also instigates Lyon's transformation into a transvestite version of the photographer,



All photographs © Robert Mapplethorpe

Fig. 12



Fig.13

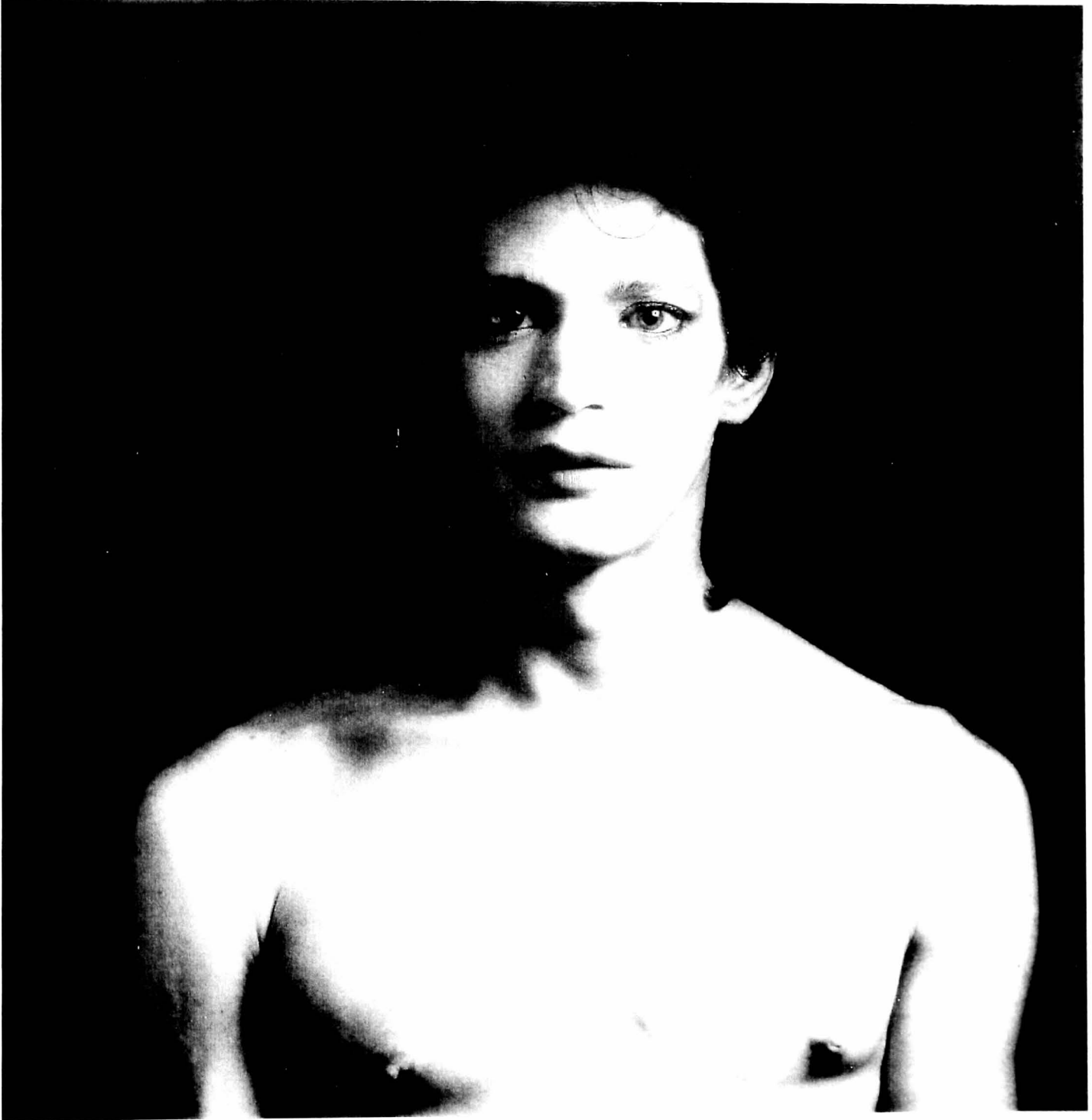


Fig. 14

for the artists' corresponding mouths, eyes, and bone structure suggest a fusion into a single personality, one which inevitably causes Lyon's subsumption by the media-designated author. Mapplethorpe's appearance in full make-up in another 1980 *Self-Portrait* finishes the process, explicitly combining the other two portraits to produce one that affirms his transvestism, and thus his narcissistic desire (fig. 14).⁵³ Woman becomes man, removing the spectre of 'lack' that represents sexual difference, who then becomes woman, thereby restoring to her an imagined original 'wholeness' and completing Mapplethorpe's disavowal of the castration threat.

Like the Grace Kelly character in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), who is also called Lisa, Lisa Lyon begins her double role reversal by first becoming 'the mirror image of the man - dressed in masculine clothes...' (Modleski, 84). Tania Modleski's analysis of *Rear Window* in her book The Women Who Knew Too Much provides a useful reading for the Lyon/Mapplethorpe collaboration, for as we have seen, the film's central themes of dismemberment, scopophilia, and narcissism recur in the artists' photographs. Hitchcock's persistent evocation of dismembered female bodies, most strikingly through Mrs. Thorwald's cut-up body and the neighbour referred to as Miss Torso, parallels Mapplethorpe's own photographic decapitation and dismemberment of Lisa Lyon's body on the rock embankment. As Modleski observes, Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror phase comes into play:

...the phase at which the child first 'anticipates...the apprehension and mastery of its bodily unity,' evokes retroactively in the child a phantasy of '*the-body-in-pieces*'...On the one hand, then, there is the anticipation of bodily 'perfection' and unity which is, importantly, first promised by the body of the woman; on the other hand, the fantasy of dismemberment, a fantasy that gets disavowed by projecting onto the body of the woman, who, *in an interpretation which reverses the state of affairs the male child most fears*, eventually comes to be perceived

⁵³Kay Larson, too, rather graphically notes Mapplethorpe's narcissism: 'His pictures seem to take off only when he has reached a climax of rapport, a state of emotional exhaustion, with his subject' (Larson, 66).

as castrated, mutilated, 'imperfect' (80, my italics).

Modleski contends that L.B. Jeffries, the photographer played by James Stewart, assures his dominance within patriarchy by constructing an interpretation of woman (here, Lisa Freemont, the model played by Grace Kelly) which requires her assent: 'man's conviction must become woman's conviction' (80). Correlatively, Bruce Chatwin's assertion within Lady... that 'the photographer and the model have conspired to tell a story of their overlapping obsessions' (14) ensures Mapplethorpe's patriarchal authority by implying that Lisa Lyon consented and even 'conspired' to promote his photographic interpretation of her as alternately 'imperfect' - dismembered, castrated - and, through fetishistic scopophilia, perfected.

Mapplethorpe and Hitchcock avoid the castration anxiety implicit in the bodies of Lisa Lyon and Lisa Freemont through different means, for whereas Mapplethorpe fetishises Lyon's body, Hitchcock readily admits his voyeurism:

François Truffaut: Would you say that Stewart was merely curious?
Alfred Hitchcock: He's a real Peeping Tom. In fact, Miss Lejeune, the critic of the London *Observer*, complained about that. She made some comment to the effect that *Rear Window* was a horrible film because the hero spent all of his time peeping out of the window. What's so horrible about that? Sure, he's a snooper, but aren't we all?⁵⁴

Yet Hitchcock's response points up his and Mapplethorpe's shared imperative to force the viewer to adopt the strategies they themselves employ to escape what Laura Mulvey calls the 'unpleasure' inherent in the castration threat (21). The director's rhetorical 'but aren't we all?' universalizes his voyeurism, placing his audience in his own position as male spectator and active viewer. Mapplethorpe corresponds by universalizing his idealization of Lyon through *Artforum*, whose reproduction of the photographs fortifies his validation of her perfection, compelling its readership to take up the photographer's position of fetishistic

⁵⁴François Truffaut, Hitchcock (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967), pp. 159-160.

scopophilic.⁵⁵

Both *Rear Window* and *Artforum*, it seems to me, place their audiences in the position of the person behind the camera in order to reaffirm the conventions of spectatorship in which the woman-as-icon can be manipulated to deny the very threat she evokes. *Artforum's* insistence upon Mapplethorpe's artistic authority, which automatically privileges his view of Lyon over the possibility of her own views of herself, strives to maintain those conventions by ensuring that Lyon cannot 'reclaim her body from masculine fantasy' (Tickner, 239) within its pages. *Artforum*, like *Rear Window*, keeps 'masculine fantasy,' and so the notion of sexual difference, in play by impelling its audience to confront the threat of castration and search for a means of escape. Unsurprisingly, then, both the journal's selection of photographs and the film conclude with the woman's look: 'If the woman looks, the spectacle provokes, castration is in the air.'⁵⁶ Modleski notes that *Rear Window* gives Lisa Freemont the last look; Jeffries, asleep and thus impotent, cannot see that Freemont, now dressed in masculine clothes, is looking at him, thereby extricating herself from his view of her (84). Similarly, *Artforum* gives Lisa Lyon the last look by ending its photographic series with the only image in which she gazes directly at the camera. Like Lisa Freemont, she sports masculine clothing, but unlike the film's heroine, Lyon's final look reifies rather than subverts Mapplethorpe's gaze, since her double role reversal at least

⁵⁵Mapplethorpe's own sexuality does not alter the possibility that he is denying the threat of castration implicit in Lyon's body. The self-described 'critical dictionary' *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* points out that in Freud's case studies of Little Hans (1909), Leonardo da Vinci (1910), and the Wolf-man (1918), Freud explained their homosexuality in terms of their realization of the castration threat. For Freud, each subject disavowed their discovery of the 'castrated mother' by either seeking 'compromise figures' in 'feminized' males or, as with the Wolf-man, identifying with the father. Elizabeth Wright, ed., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 158.

⁵⁶Stephen Heath, "Difference," *Screen*, 19, no. 3, Autumn 1978, 92.

briefly posits her in the male position, *encouraging* her to look.

Mapplethorpe's view of Lyon therefore stands within *Artforum*, reinforced and completed by the blue borders the journal placed around the photos. As Walter Robinson remarked,

One must remember, that unlike mass media, the art media doesn't exactly sell readers to an advertiser as much as it sells a fantasy to its subscribers.⁵⁷

It is at this point in *Artforum's* November, 1980 issue, *after* Moira Roth's promotion of feminist art, criticism, and theory, *after* Roth's conversation with performance and feminist artist Suzanne Lacy, and even *after* its publication of the Lyon/Mapplethorpe photographs, that Ingrid Sischy inserts her editorial, whose placement matters as much as its argument:

The work that is included was selected first because it counts, second because it represents conviction, and third because it raises questions whose answers are signposts that at least begin to locate a rudimentary ideological structure for the figure in art in our time...It is a highly edited view aimed primarily at presenting significant developments of the last decade (61).

In my view, Sischy's words pull the rug out from under everything that preceded them. In effect, she implies, perhaps unwittingly but nevertheless strongly, that the works preceding her editorial neither count, represent conviction, raise challenging questions, nor contribute 'significantly' to visual art, whereas the works which follow her editorial will fulfill all of these criteria. Moreover, she casts doubt on the female figure's capability to put them into practice:

Here the contemporary figure has been interpreted as body - single and collective. In fact, during the last two decades it has been the breathing sweating body that has so magnificently thrust itself upon and into art, raising crucial questions (61).

The 'breathing,' 'sweating,' 'magnificently thrusting' body which Sischy invokes and thus privileges is undeniably male. As if following a precedent set by the

⁵⁷Walter Robinson, "Role, Style, Media," *Art-Rite*, Fall 1975, part 10, n. pag.

preceeding Lyon/Mapplethorpe image, Sischy renders the female body subsumed by that of the male. Her editorial, which appears only **after** a full twenty-five pages devoted to images of and by women, therefore decreases their importance, diminishes their impact, and depreciates them as a whole.

Ted Castle's seven-page consideration of performance and body artist Carolee Schneemann appears *after* Sischy's piece, however, suggesting that perhaps *Artforum* regarded her female body as one that 'counts...and represents conviction.' Yet, as we shall see, Castle's essay undermines the artist at every turn, confirming *Artforum's* apprehension of female body artists like Schneemann and Lynda Benglis who erase the line between producer and product and refuse to allow male authorship of their image. Schneemann declared,

I establish my body as visual territory. *Not only am I image maker,* but I explore the image values of flesh as material I choose to work with. The body may remain erotic, sexual, desired, desiring but it is as well votive, marked, written over in a text of stroke and gesture discovered by *my creative female will* (my italics).⁵⁸

Schneemann's affirmation of authority places her in opposition to Castle, whose own bid for authorship is immediately evinced by the essay's title, "Carolee Schneemann: The Woman Who Uses Her Body As Her Art. Castle assumes authority by naming the artist, characterizing her twice within his text in reified terms as '*the woman who uses her own body as her art*' (66). Furthermore, he emphasises her gender three times, establishing sexual difference and thus invoking Schneemann's exhibitionist role (already made explicit by the assertion that her body forms her artwork) in order to confirm his own perceived power within patriarchy. Finally, in marked contrast to the amount of space Germano Celant yields to Vito Acconci's voice a few pages later in his essay "Dirty Acconci," Castle's highly biographical essay seldom admits Schneemann's voice into its text and so restricts her from regaining authorship of her own story.

⁵⁸Ted Castle, "Carolee Schneemann: The Woman Who Uses Her Body As Her Art," *Artforum*, Nov. 1980, pp. 65-6.

Castle's version of Schneemann's story therefore centres around his own inability, which I believe *Artforum* shares, to concede authority to the artist herself. A struggle unfolds within his text between the wish to construct Schneemann as feminist and thus resistant to male appropriation – 'She worked hard on feminism almost as soon as she heard of it and long before it became the radically chic thing to do' (68) – and the wish to obstruct her feminist subversion of patriarchy, which he achieves by describing her body in terms of spectacle whenever possible. Citing a piece on which Schneemann collaborated with Robert Morris in 1964, for instance, Castle writes, 'attached to the plywood as if glued, was a naked, very beautiful Carolee designed like a statue' (66). In a single stroke, Castle underlines her eroticism, beauty (so important for a fetishistic disavowal of castration anxiety), and passivity. Like Robert Mapplethorpe, Castle employs fetishistic scopophilia to obtain pleasure from Schneemann's body; however, unlike the photographer, he also uses voyeurism, in which the man sadistically obtains pleasure by asserting control and 'punishing' the guilty (i.e. 'castrated') female (Mulvey, 21–22). Thus, when Castle, referring to Schneemann's 1963 performance *Eye Body*, remarks that it was 'far from being Schneemann's most famous work, or one that *many people invaded and pursued*' (66–my italics), he voyeuristically transforms the performance itself into a displayed, eroticized female body that potentially invites/'deserves' pursuit and even invasion.

Mary Kelly believes that the feminist performance artist's investigation into constructions of sexuality within patriarchy rescues her image and body from precisely the visual, and in this case textual, control Castle exerts:

...the specific contribution of feminists in the field of performance has been to pose the question of sexual difference across the discourse of the body in a way which focuses on the construction not of the individual, but of the sexed subject...The so-called 'enigma of femininity' is formulated as the problem of representation...and then resolved by the discovery of a true identity behind the patriarchal facade (Kelly, 97).

Schneemann's work indeed questions the female body's representation as

constructed through the desiring male gaze; she regards its recovery from patriarchy as part of her project: 'the primary category of what gives us pleasure and information has been distorted. It has been my role in a way to struggle with those distortions' (Castle, 69). Crucially, then, Castle's bid for control over her image depends upon a patriarchal representation of sexual difference that posits him in the authoritative position of active viewer. His essay therefore ultimately undermines its initial construction of Schneemann as 'feminist,' and thus attempts to disempower the subversive potential of her work, by depicting feminists in general as puritanical and proscriptive:

For 25 years, on a more or less regular basis, things have been coming through for Carolee Schneemann, the artist. Accustomed to difficult positions - her interests crossed with *the prudery of many feminists* - and always going in her own direction... (70; my italics).

I think it's a great idea...even though *I have been disbarred by most feminists about having valid thoughts about things...* (70; my italics).

According to performance artist Ulrike Rosenbach, feminist art is 'the elucidation of the woman-artist's identity: *of her body*, of her psyche, her feelings, her position in society' (quoted in Kelly, 97; my italics). Yet if Schneemann's work fits Rosenbach's conception, it also broadens it, for she extends the self-discovery and recovery of her own body to other women: 'In some sense I made a gift of my body to other women: *giving our bodies back to ourselves*' (quoted in Tickner, 247). Schneemann therefore brings to mind Hélène Cixous' correlative contention that if women write, they will return to the body which patriarchal culture has 'more than confiscated'⁵⁹ from them: 'Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it' (246). Cixous' belief that 'woman gives woman to the other woman' (252) through writing parallels Schneemann's view that her retrieval of her own body from patriarchal representation through artistic practice ostensibly retrieves

⁵⁹Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" in *New French Feminisms*, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. 250.

other women's bodies as well. Both women promote a notion of the body's generosity. Castle then confirms this idea by introducing his text with two New Testament quotations which themselves emphasize bodily sacrifice:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

- Saint Matthew

And he took bread, and gave thanks and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

- Saint Luke (64).

These biblical quotations record an event in which the body is symbolically sacrificed and consumed, thus denoting a giving of the body to others. Yet, crucially, they also attest to man's ability to *choose* to represent himself as body, a notion Germano Celant reinforces in his *Artforum* discussion of Vito Acconci:

Eroticism is first of all a primary cultural necessity, through which the person/artist unveils a concern for pleasure (for Acconci, the period 1969-72, in which *he declares himself as 'body'*⁶⁰ (my italics).

In contrast, the controlling male gaze unremittingly renders woman eroticized body, disallowing her any choice in her own representation: 'More so than men who are coaxed toward social success, toward sublimation, *women are body*' (Cixous, 257; my italics). As such, she appears castrated, lacking; moreover, she signifies formlessness and must therefore be regulated:

The characteristically female body is paradoxically subject to a masculinization in order to make it conform to an ideal of the male body that precisely depends upon a dread that the male body might itself revert to what it is feared may secretly be its own 'female' formlessness.⁶¹

⁶⁰Germano Celant, "Dirty Acconci," *Artforum*, Nov. 1980, 80.

⁶¹Nead, 18. Whilst Ted Castle refrains from implementing the process Nead describes, he subjects Schneemann to a process of 'masculinization' nonetheless, referring to her in 'masculine' terms: 'She was, to use a masculine analogy, Dionysius among the Apollonians' (Castle, 68).

Thus, Schneemann and Cixous' very notion of 'giving' the body from one woman to another implicitly releases it from its patriarchal constraints, unbinds it, and returns it to the amorphism Nead describes.

Artforum attempts to maintain the female body's representation as castrated, however, by reproducing within Castle's essay a photograph taken at a 1963 performance of Schneemann's Eye Body (fig. 15). Significantly, the journal selects an image in which only the artist's head and right hand are visible; as with Lisa Lyon, Schneemann is decapitated. In Freudian terms, she is also castrated, her decapitation recalling the mythological figure Medusa: 'To decapitate = to castrate. The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something.'⁶² For Freud, vision prevails in both cases; the sight of Medusa turns the viewer to stone, whilst the sight of the female genitals confirms women's 'castration.' However, Hélène Cixous has shown the true myth of Medusa, that only male spectatorship renders her castrated, whereas the female viewer rescues her from her psychoanalytic construction:

Wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated...? You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing (Cixous, 255).

Hence Cixous and Schneemann's efforts to give women back their bodies, forcing them to realize the myth of castration. Unsurprisingly, then, Ted Castle does not repeat Schneemann's declaration - 'In some sense I made a gift of my body to other women: *giving our bodies back to ourselves*' - within his essay, for to do so would be to admit the fallacy on which the symbolic order, and thus his own authority, is founded. Instead, he and *Artforum* neutralize the subversive potential of Schneemann's performance by taking from it an image which renders her decapitated, reaffirms her 'lack,' and perpetuates the

⁶²Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head" (1940), Standard Edition 18 (London: Hogarth Press), p 273.



Fig. 15

myth.

Castle's bid for authority relies upon a representation of Schneemann that further encases her within stereotypical female roles. He first casts her as wife and lover and, in fact, discusses the artist's life and work solely in terms of her relationships with men:

Carolee Schneemann came to New York in 1962 with James Tenney (originally they had been married because of the requirement of the progressive women's college Bennington which would not permit their first male student, Tenney, to live unmarried with a woman while he held their scholarship (67).

She identifies so strongly with her lovers, their lives while she is living with them are so completely bound up together that they become almost indistinguishable from herself. For 20 years, until 1976, she also lived with a beloved cat called Kitch...In a way, Kitch was her most important friend...In any case, it was not your usual woman-cat relationship. It was much more like a sort of mediumistic relationship that takes place in the discredited occult arts. Likewise with her men (68).

She was going through a difficult time...She and Kitch lived in London for three or four years...there she met Anthony McCall who worked with film and in 1974, she and Anthony and the cat returned to New York where Carolee made a long film about their life together (69).

I think she is near another turning point in her life, not like the one in 1976 when Kitch died and Bruce McPherson began living with her (70).

Castle's comments reinforce woman's perceived role as an object to be possessed/controlled/displayed by men. Correlatively, they conjure up man's perceived role as subject, thereby emphasising male authority and minimizing that of Schneemann. Most importantly, Castle's claim that the artist 'identifies so strongly with her lovers...that they become almost indistinguishable from herself' effectively forces her to share if not cede her role as artist/author to the men in her life. Therefore, his displacement of her authority to them distorts her project; within Castle's text, they, along with Schneemann, govern the giving of her body to others. He thus counteracts Schneemann's assertions that *she* 'establishes her body as visual territory' and that *she* is 'image maker' by virtually returning the artist's representation to male hands and so reverting control of the female body's depiction back to patriarchy.

Castle's construction of Schneemann contains other female stereotypes, including surrogate mother ('Instead of children, she had ideas;' 67), earth mother ('Although her mentality is not at all "primitive" she behaves as if it were...there is something distinctly primordial about her;' 68), muse ('Carolee represented the Muse of Painting in the home of the Genius of Chaos;' 68), and villainess ('"Unsex me here" roars Lady Macbeth with the damned indelible spot of blood on her hand, and Carolee Schneemann seems to me to be taking this ancient challenge to the fates...;' 70). Moreover, his reference to the 'mediumistic relationship' with her cat Kitch 'that takes place in the discredited occult arts' renders her witch, but then immediately 'discredits' the occult and so, by association, Schneemann herself. Finally, he attempts to solidify his authoritative position by condescendingly 'validating' Schneemann, concluding, 'At the age of 40, she knows herself and she knows how to be herself' (68).

Yet perhaps the most disturbing aspect of Castle's essay is that despite a brief reference to Schneemann's newest works, it conveys the impression that the artist has retired, or worse, died. The author slides frequently between present and past tense, as with the unfortunate statement, 'Instead of children, she had ideas' - implying, among other things, that she is past having either - and his liberal use of biography suggests an overview of a life gone by.

Artforum itself contributes to this impression, for its still photograph from *Eye Body* not only renders a segment of her performance motionless and thus eternal, but its photographic decapitation of Schneemann (which is further suggested by a bar against the back of her neck) accentuates apparently unseeing eyes and gaping mouth, transforming her into a corpse. As Elisabeth Bronfen demonstrates, Castle's above-mentioned invocation of Schneemann as muse ('Carolee represented the Muse of Painting'), coupled with the image of her 'death,' thus implies the presence of a (male) poet who assumes her role of creator:

Death transforms the body of a woman into the source of poetic inspiration precisely because it creates and gives corporality to a loss

or absence...The poet must choose between a corporally present woman and the muse...What must occur is the transformation of a direct erotic investment of the beloved woman into a mitigated one (of the same woman who is now absent, or of another woman who never was present). The distance created by loss, the shift from presence to absence, opens up the space for poetic creation.⁶³

In staging Schneemann's 'death,' *Artforum* creates a 'loss' which gives her body the distance necessary for its preservation as spectacle, ever available to the desiring male gaze.⁶⁴ Moreover, her 'corpse' serves as a 'double fetish,' for as Bronfen remarks,

...the feminine corpse can serve as a double fetish, for insensible and impenetrable, the body becomes 'phallic'...By turning the feminine into a dead body, phallic idealisation places itself on a pedestal (98-99).

The journal therefore suggests that it is only in her fetishized, 'to-be-looked-at' state that Schneemann's body 'counts' and 'represents conviction.' Despite Johannes Birringer's assertion that Schneemann 'regains control of her female sexuality and spirituality as the subject of her own desires and visions, and not as the fetishized object of others,'⁶⁵ Ted Castle's essay demonstrates how easily *Artforum* recuperates the representation of that sexuality and transforms it into precisely 'the fetishized object of others.'

Of these three case-study representations of the female body in the *Artforum* archive, only Lynda Benglis' advertisement of November, 1974 avoids appropriation by the journal, in spite of its efforts to the contrary. Lisa Tickner declared,

The depiction of women *by* women (sometimes themselves) in this quasi-sexist manner as a political statement grows potentially more powerful as it approaches actual exploitation but then, within an ace of it, collapses into ambiguity and confusion. The more attractive the

⁶³Elisabeth Bronfen, Over Her Dead Body (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 362.

⁶⁴Bronfen identifies an identical scenario within Samuel Richardson's Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady. See pp. 97-9.

⁶⁵Johannes Birringer, "Imprints and Re-Visions: Carolee Schneemann's Visual Archeology," Performing Arts Journal, no. 44, May 1993, p. 34.

woman, the higher the risk, since the more closely they approach conventional stereotypes in the first place (248).

In the cases of Lisa Lyon and, especially, Carolee Schneemann, *Artforum* nullifies their potential political power by preventing from the outset their bodies' final collapse into ambiguous representation. With Lyon, the journal insists upon her subsumption by Robert Mapplethorpe's authority, thereby positing her as object to his subject. Furthermore, it presents her body as a *fetishized* object and thus maintains its status within the symbolic order as signifier of sexual difference. Similarly, *Artforum* invents for Schneemann an author in the form of Ted Castle, distancing artist from body, and barring her exploitation of her image through his own. Ironically, then, the magazine itself protects the potency and even the authority of Benglis' advert, for its alleged refusal to include it within its editorial pages precludes its appropriation by Robert Pincus-Witten and so prohibits him from creating a distance between the artist and her body. By paying for, designing, and in fact authorizing the image herself, Benglis obstructed *Artforum* from fixing her body's representation and thus ensured its ultimate collapse into unsettling, challenging ambiguity and confusion.

Chapter Three:

Autocritique

'Every time someone says post-Modernism I stop to listen to the good part of the sentence...'¹

- Edit deAk

Introduction

Anthony Korner and Amy Baker Sandback purchased *Artforum* from Charles Cowles in 1979. By that time, the 'old *Artforum*' had dispersed. In the belief that John Coplans was 'selling out to advertisers by turning down articles on (unmarketable) film and performance and conceptual art in favor of articles on (marketable) painting and sculpture,'² Annette Michelson and Rosalind Krauss left the magazine at the end of 1975 to found the journal *October*, which they described almost in terms that could have been applied to the inaugural programme of *Artforum* itself: 'a forum for the presentation and theoretical elaboration of cultural work...'³ (my emphasis). Barbara Rose, Michael Fried, Robert Pincus-Witten, Peter Plagens, Max Kozloff, Joseph Mascheck, and Lawrence Alloway had all departed *Artforum* by 1976. Coplans himself was forced to leave the journal in early 1977 after spectacularly reversing his cultivation of *Artforum's* advertisers. According to Rosalind Krauss,

...John's policies in the last years of his editorship alienated every advertiser. He accepted Max's position and carried on in a way that had to do with becoming this - I don't know - this *Novy*-left type, dumping on the art market, and writing all kinds of attacks on it, and running the magazine absolutely contrary to the interests of the dealers and the advertisers, to the point that the owner, Charles Cowles, simply sacked him (Malcolm, 50).

Coplans and Kozloff were left off *Artforum's* February, 1977 editorial roster, the only clue to their dismissal. The following month, *Artforum* conceded their departure by publishing a denunciatory letter to the editor:

Sirs: the removal of the editor of *Artforum* is of great concern to

¹Edit deAk, "The Critic Sees Through the Cabbage Patch, *Artforum*, April 1984, pp. 54-55.

²Janet Malcolm, "The Girl of the Zeitgeist - I," *The New Yorker*, 20 Oct., 1986, p. 50.

³Annette Michelson et al, eds. *October: The First Decade, 1976-1986*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. ix.

the art community. The dismissal and/or provoked resignation of John Coplans and Max Kozloff is a clear case of the creative autonomy of editors being abrogated by an owner-publisher acting under the influence of political and commercial pressures.

As artists and writers on art we consider a serious art magazine a cultural forum. We feel that *Artforum* has attempted to play such a role, although we the undersigned do not necessarily support all the policies of the magazine. It would appear that the striving by the displaced editors to make *Artforum* a clearer voice for social analysis in the arts has displeased those who wish an art magazine to be a servicer rather than an analyzer.

Editorial autonomy in serious publishing is equivalent to academic freedom in education and creative freedom in the arts. We object to any act which infringes on this freedom.

Vito Acconci, Dore Ashton, Helen Aylon, Rudolf Baranik, Donna Bartell, Lee Baxandall, Jane Bell, Lizzie Borden, Louise Bourgeois, Paul Brach, Milton Brown, Ian Burn, Nicolas Calas, Sarah Charlesworth, Suzanne Cohn, Douglas Davis, Phyllis Derfner, Carol Duncan, Mary Beth Edelson, Mel Edwards, Sharon Avery Fahlstrom, Laurence Fink, Audrey Flack, Andrew Forge, Peter Frank, Tina Girouard, Amy Goldin, Hans Haacke, Ira Joel Haber, Ann Sutherland Harris, Harmony Hammond, Walter Hopps, Phoebe Helman, Jon Hendricks, Hayden Herrera, Patricia Hills, Manuela Hoelterhoff, Ida Horowitz, Robert Huot, Robert Hughes, Richard Hunt, Buffie Johnson, Cliff Joseph, April Kingsley, RB Kitaj, Joseph Kosuth, David Kunzle, Robert Kushner, Richard Landry, Ellen Lanyon, Norman Lewis, Sol LeWitt, Richard Link, Kate Linker, Lucy Lippard, Fred Lonier, Eunice Lipton, Anthony McCall, Joel Meyerowitz, Kate Millett, Weston Naef, Cynthia Navaretta, Linda Nochlin, Gloria Orenstein, Herb Perr, John Perrault, Irving Petlin, Howardina Pindell, Richard Pommer, Carter Ratcliff, Murray Reich, Jaap Reitman, Seymore Rosofsky, Martha Rosler, Moira Roth, Miriam Schapiro, Ann Leda Schapiro, Judy Seigel, George Segal, Alan Sekula, John Semmel, Charles Simonds, Joan Snyder, Judith Solodkin, Jack Sonenberg, Keith Sonnier, Clare Spark, Joanne Stamen, Phil Steinmetz, Pat Steir, May Stevens, Michelle Stuart, David Sylvester, Athena Tacha, Jean Toche, Marcia Tucker, Jose Urbach, Marina Urbach, Alan Wallach, William Wegman, Tom Wesselman, Colin Westerbeck, Jr., Hannah Wilke, Jackie Winsor, Tim Yohn, Adja Yunkers, Sol Yurick, Barbara Zucker (8-9).

Joseph Masheck returned to *Artforum* that same month to take over as editor.

In an unsigned response to the art community's letter, he and, presumably, publisher Charles Cowles, asserted,

The critical integrity of *Artforum* has always depended upon its editorial independence. We trust time will show that these apprehensions, even where they are due to misunderstanding, were at least earnest expressions of concern for the magazine's future (9).

Both the art community and *Artforum* itself were correct to be concerned about the magazine's future for, under Masheck, it neither recovered its former critical sway nor exhibited its former dynamism. As Janet Malcolm rightly noted, 'under his editorship the magazine entered a period of calm enervation

and dry academicism...it was as if all the air had slowly leaked out of it' (73). Therefore, when Korner and Baker Sandback took over the journal, they fired Masheck and hired twenty-seven-year-old Ingrid Sischy as *Artforum's* new editor. Sischy's experience in the art world at the time was limited to having directed an organization devoted to the publication and distribution of artists' books, Printed Matter, where she had first met Baker Sandback. She had also spent 15 months as an intern curator in the Museum of Modern Art's Photography Department. When she assumed the editorship of *Artforum*, she had had no editorial experience and little experience of the magazine itself:

'...the truth is I've never in my life been a reader.' Among the things she had not read, she astonishingly confessed, was the old *Artforum* itself. Until she became editor...she would buy the magazine but not read it. 'Even now, if I wasn't forced to edit them I probably wouldn't read some of the things we publish,' she said.⁴

Sischy's editorship spanned exactly eight years, from February 1980 to February 1988.⁵ Under her editorship, as under that of Philip Leider, *Artforum* moved to distinguish itself from its American counterparts by emphasising a notion of novelty. Unlike the *Artforum* of Leider's tenure, however, Sischy's *Artforum* did not promote *itself* as novel; rather, it promoted itself as a forum *for* the new, the immediate, in the art world. Carter Ratcliff, who in the '80s wrote for both *Artforum* and its rival, *Art in America*, said of Sischy,

I think she feels that *Artforum's* function is to be on the spot when something pertinent pops up...The sorts of things that she's interested in are not yet subjects for the responsible treatment they will eventually get in other magazines. She feels that *Art in America* is the magazine that stands a little to the side and tries to get a rational view of things, while *Artforum* is more on the spot. She feels that it's not

⁴Janet Malcolm, "The Girl of the Zeitgeist - II," The New Yorker, 27 Oct. 1986, p. 51.

⁵Sischy currently edits the journal founded by Andy Warhol, *Interview*, but retains a hand in *Artforum's* development, as evinced by the journal's acknowledgement in its 30th-anniversary issue that Sischy had 'recently rehashed issues and goals with the magazine's current editor, Jack Bankowsky.' "*Artforum* '80-'93," Artforum, Sept. 1993, p. 171.

a problem if something sounds silly – that *Artforum* is a place where this kind of risk can be taken, where this kind of irresponsibility is possible. When everything is new and in flux, the writing should reflect that...she tries to deal with things very intensely and fully, still leaving them in their immediate state (Malcolm, '...II,' 52).

Sischy herself has confirmed her bias towards the new, telling Jack Bankowsky that 'the best way you can serve a magazine of the moment is to try and sort out the stuff that seems in some essential way to be significant and to represent the present.'⁶ Accordingly, when Bankowsky asked her how she began her editorship of *Artforum*, she replied, 'I sat down with [Associate Publisher] Amy Baker, [Publisher] Anthony Korner, and [Contributing Editor] Germano Celant, who we'd just appointed, and we said, "Okay, what represents this moment?"' (Bankowsky, 173). Deciding that what represented the moment was not the *Artforum* that had been produced under Joseph Masheck, she rejected the articles that he had already approved for the February 1980 issue, telling Korner and Baker Sandback, 'I don't think I can publish these things' (Malcolm, "...I," 74). She elaborated,

I didn't know how to deal with eighty manuscripts by art historians, but I did know contemporary art, and I knew artists. So I said, 'Why don't we make a whole issue of new art? And let's not get famous artists, who will do a little doodle – let's get people who have a real commitment to the printed page' (Malcolm, "...I," 76).

I shall discuss Ingrid Sischy's first issue of *Artforum* in greater detail shortly. For the moment, I want to consider Sischy's *Artforum* in relation to the journal of the '60s and '70s in order to demonstrate that her installation as editor has been seen to mark a break from the editorships of *Artforum* of the previous two decades. Comments from *The New Yorker* and *New York* magazines provoked by Sischy's debut issue in the first instance, and her *Artforum* in the second, indeed suggest that *Artforum* under her editorship appeared to have altered completely. *The New Yorker* reported, 'When the [first] issue...arrived on the newsstands, it caused a great stir. It was utterly

⁶Jack Bankowsky, "Ingrid Sischy," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 173.

unlike any previous issue of *Artforum*' (Malcolm, "...I," 76). And *New York* wrote, 'She proceeded to revolutionize the idea of what an art magazine could be.'⁷ Moreover, in *Artforum*'s own 30th-anniversary issue, Jack Bankowsky declared to Sischy, 'You...initiated the columns section, which had a sociological slant. In the '60s the magazine was all about art criticism. There would never have been an article on break dancing in the old *Artforum*' (178). All three magazines thus distinguish Sischy's *Artforum* from that of her predecessors; all three highlight a complete change. More crucially, *The New Yorker* and *New York* intimate that Sischy's assumption of *Artforum*'s editorship coincided with, or was contingent upon, upheavals within the art world. They thus imply a correlation between *Artforum*'s internal 'break' and that which we shall see has been posited as a break between Modernism and 'post-Modernism.' As Janet Malcolm pointed out in *The New Yorker*,

Sischy had happened to take over the editorship of *Artforum* at exactly the start of the new decade, and the appearance of an untried, unbookish, unknown, very young woman at the helm of a magazine whose three previous editors had been older men of parts...was a kind of portent of the astonishing developments in art that the eighties were to witness. In the abrupt transformation of *Artforum*'s format from a predictable high-art austerity to an unpredictable sort of underground-press grunginess/flashiness may be read the changes that were to transform the quiet and stable New York art world of the seventies...into today's unsettling, incoherent postmodern art universe (Malcolm, "...I," 76-77).

Similarly, *New York* remarked,

In a way, Sischy had appeared at the right time and the right place. There was a revolution going on in the art world. The boundaries between high and low culture were breaking down (Smith, 49).

The New Yorker and *New York* thus advanced two important notions about *Artforum* during Sischy's tenure. First, along with *Artforum* itself, they established that to all appearances, Sischy's *Artforum* represented a break from the *Artforum* of the previous 18 years. Second, *The New Yorker* explicitly, and *New York* implicitly, advised that within *Artforum*'s presumed internal

⁷Dinitia Smith, "After Andy," *New York*, 29 Jan. 1990, p. 49.

break one could read what has been posited as 'post-Modernism's' presumed break with Modernism.⁸ Leaving aside for the moment discussions of 'post-Modernism' and the possibilities of its conception as either a break with Modernism or else its reformulation, all of which will be attended to shortly, I want to extend the journals' suggestion that *Artforum's* 'break' paralleled post-Modernism's supposed 'break' with Modernism. I propose to show that *Artforum* itself has read Sischy's *Artforum* - which, as we shall see, was characterized by an emphasis on immediacy, controversial cover images, unusual graphics and layouts, a renewed interest in painting, and an attention to issues in advertising, rock music, fashion, television, and film that was unmatched by either *Art News* or *Art in America* - as not only incorporating the pastiche and pluralism often associated with post-Modernism, but as itself 'post-Modernist.'

We never championed any one thing. We championed paying attention to all these multiperspectives and multithings that were happening, because in some way they all seemed to represent what was unfolding as post-Modernism (Sischy quoted in Bankowsky, 174).

It would seem that Sischy adopted a particularly liberal notion of post-Modernism, in the sense that it excluded any critical functionality that might inhere in the three broad themes that can be identified within it: 'Postmodernism as a critique of historical narratives; Postmodernism as a critique of the myth of originality; and Postmodernism as a critique of the grounds of difference.'⁹ Rather, her recourse to the umbrella term 'multithings' alludes to a hodgepodge, evoking one of the denotations of the word 'pastiche.' She therefore implies that her understanding of post-Modernism parallels that articulated by Abigail Solomon-Godeau: 'Seriality and repetition, appropriation, intertextuality, simulation or pastiche: these are the

⁸Although 'post-Modernism' is often written as 'postmodernism,' I shall use the former spelling, which for me specifically denotes a split from the notions propounded by Greenbergian Modernism but does not necessarily exclude the broader concerns connoted by the alternative spelling.

⁹Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, *Art in Theory 1900-1990*, eds. Charles Harrison & Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 989.

primary devices employed by postmodernist artists.¹⁰ Furthermore, Sischy's references to '*multithings*' and '*multiperspectives*' invoke through their prefix a commitment to a kind of pluralism that 'has been associated with a loosening of the authority of Modernist judgements' (7). Douglas Crimp more particularly viewed pluralism as a concept often conflated with post-Modernism itself:

There is a danger in the notion of postmodernism which we begin to see articulated, that which sees postmodernism as pluralism, and which wishes to deny the possibility that art can any longer achieve a radicalism or avant-gardism. Such an argument speaks of the 'failure of modernism' in an attempt to institute a new humanism.¹¹

Hal Foster, too, noted a tendency toward their conflation and warned, 'Postmodernism is not pluralism.'¹² Although Sischy's above-cited comment betrays this fusion of pluralism and postmodernism, I would argue that her actions as *Artforum's* editor do not support Douglas Crimp's conclusion that such a conflation necessarily seeks to deny the possibility of *avant-gardism*, especially given Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock's contention that *avant-gardism* involves, among other things, the illusion of constant change and innovation in order to disguise a profound level of consistency.¹³ For whilst *Artforum* certainly *appeared* to change under Sischy in terms of its look and the more general cultural topics it featured, it maintained not only its afore-mentioned interest in the new, but also what will be seen as a marked self-referentiality which arguably began with the self-awareness discernable within its 1962 introductory statement and which has continued through and beyond the

¹⁰Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Photography after Art Photography," in Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), p. 80.

¹¹Douglas Crimp, "Pictures," in Wallis, p. 186, n. 14.

¹²Hal Foster, "Postmodernism: A Preface," The Anti-Aesthetic, ed. Hal Foster 1983; rpt. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), p. xi.

¹³Fred Orton & Griselda Pollock, "*Avant-Gardes* and Partisans Reviewed," Pollock and After, ed. Francis Frascina (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 167.

years of Sischy's editorship, perhaps most obviously in its 30th-anniversary issue. Moreover, in her first issue as *Artforum's* editor, Sischy reproduced Max Ernst's cover image and André Breton's declarative statement from the 1942 debut issue of *VVV* on the cover of *Artforum* (fig. 16) and within her own editorial statement respectively, both of which I shall discuss shortly. By invoking the figure of the 1920s-30s *avant-garde* leader Breton, Sischy's debut issue appropriated to its project a particular sign of *avant-gardism*. Which is not to say that *Artforum* appropriated *avant-garde* politics. It didn't. It forged a link between itself and *VVV* as a sign to stand for its own project – a project with an art historical and cultural specificity. I shall consider this aspect of the inauguration of her editorship later. All that needs to be said about it here is that given the evidence that Sischy's general conception of post-Modernism upholds a notion of pluralism but rejects a notion of critique, her debut issue might therefore be seen as *reaffirming* the potential for an *avant-garde* within a post-Modernism as broadly-conceived as the 'affirmative postmodernism' posited by Andreas Huyssen:

What was new in the 1970s was, on the one hand, the emergence of a culture of eclecticism, a largely affirmative postmodernism which had abandoned any claim to critique, transgression, or negation; and, on the other hand, an alternative postmodernism in which resistance, critique, and negation of the status quo were redefined in non-modernist and non-avantgardist terms....¹⁴

My purpose here, however, is not simply to propose that Sischy possibly recuperated *avant-gardism* within a notion of post-Modernism, nor to demonstrate that she conceived of and/or promoted the journal as itself post-Modernist. Instead, I want to look at *Artforum's* relationship to what will be defined as post-Modernism through the afore-mentioned idea of self-referentiality, or even self-referential criticality. Angela McRobbie, for one, connected post-Modernism to self-referentiality in her essay "Postmodernism

¹⁴Andreas Huyssen, "Mapping the Postmodern," in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 241.

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Fig. 16

and Popular Culture." She cites, in particular, Umberto Eco's claim for self-referentiality within television:

...Eco recently contrasted what TV was (paleo-TV), with what it now is, (neo-TV). 'It's prime characteristic is that it talks less and less about the external world. Whereas paleo-television talked about the external world, or pretended to, neo-television talks about itself and about the contacts it establishes with its own public' (170).

Notably, McRobbie believed that such self-referentiality also 'occurs within and across different media forms.'¹⁵ Correlatively, *Artforum* will be seen to refer consistently to itself under Ingrid Sischy's editorship, as well as those of her predecessors and successors. More than Sischy's efforts to reflect cultural pluralism in *Artforum*, more than her rejection of a Greenbergian Modernist insistence upon a division between 'high art' and 'low' mass culture by placing such non-'high-art' images on the magazine's covers as coffee-shop paper cups (Summer 1981 - fig. 17), a New York City subway token (Dec. 1981 - fig. 18), and a dress by Japanese designer Issey Miyake from his Spring-Summer collection (Feb. 1982 - fig. 19), it is this self-referentiality that would provide the basis upon which *Artforum* could claim the post-Modernist status it seems to want for itself. At the same time, however, we shall see that *Artforum* seldom 'problematize(s) the activity of reference'¹⁶ which, as far as Craig Owens is concerned, forms the 'deconstructive impulse' crucial to post-Modernism and marks its break from the Kantian self-criticism intrinsic to Modernist theory (235). Hal Foster, following Owens, unpacked their differences:

...no doubt the two operations are different: self-criticism, centered on a medium, does tend (at least under the aegis of formalism) to the essential or 'pure,' whereas deconstruction, on the contrary, decenters, and exposes the 'impurity' of meaning. And yet unlike self-reflexivity (with which it is often conflated), self-criticism does not enforce a

¹⁵Angela McRobbie, "Postmodernism and Popular Culture," in Postmodernism: ICA Documents 4, 1989; rpt. (London: Free Association Books, 1993), p. 170.

¹⁶Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward A Theory of Postmodernism" in Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986), p. 235.

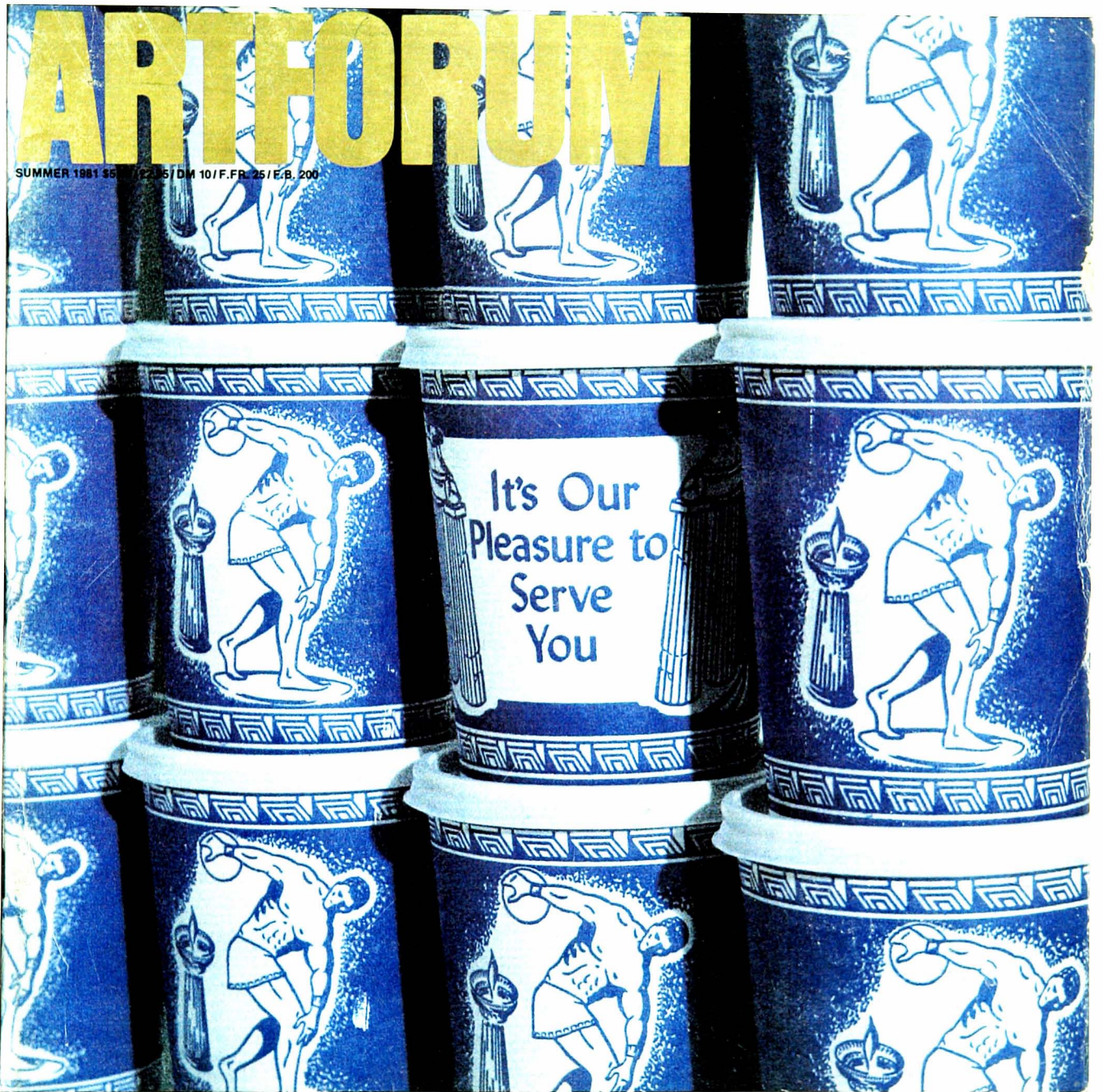


Fig. 17



Fig. 18

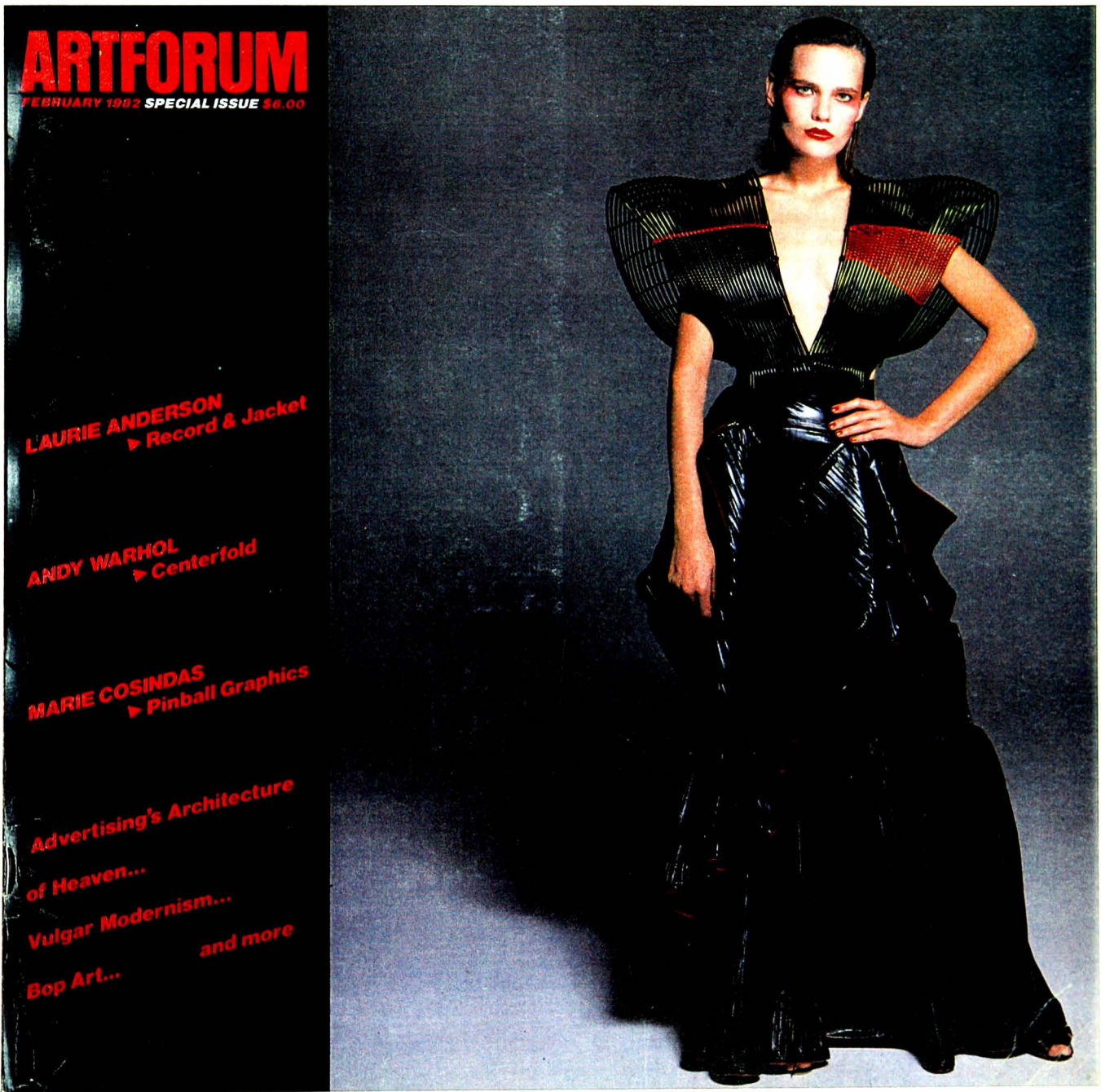


Fig. 19

closure. It may, in fact, issue in deconstruction...so that if postmodernism is truly deconstructive of modernism, it would seem to be a discursivity within it.¹⁷

In my view, *Artforum's* self-referentiality oscillates between what can be read as Modernism's self-critical tendency and an attempt to internalize post-Modernism's 'deconstructive impulse.' The contentions of *The New Yorker* and *New York's* to the contrary, Sischy's *Artforum* would appear only to deflectively represent the alleged break between Modernism and post-Modernism. The journal's oscillation between self-criticism and a potentially decentering self-referentiality prevents the *Artforum* of the '80s from substantiating that break in the way that Philip Leider's '60s version of *Artforum* had been seen earlier as substantiating the fall of Greenbergian Modernism. (Modernism's decline and its rupture are not, of course, the same thing).

Importantly, some writers have expressed doubt over a decisive Modernism/post-Modernism split. Hal Foster recognized that post-Modernism 'may be less a break with modernism than an advance in a dialectic in which modernism is re-formed' (200). Andreas Huyssen, unable to determine the split between the two, seemingly concurred:

...even in the more politically conscious and self-conscious writing in France, the tradition of modernist aestheticism - mediated through an extremely selective reading of Nietzsche - is so powerful a presence that the notion of a radical rupture between the modern and the postmodern cannot possibly make much sense (260).

And Jean-François Lyotard proposed that post-Modernism was not distinct from Modernism, but always *fundamental* to it:

A work can only become modern if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant.¹⁸

¹⁷Hal Foster, "Re: Post," in Art after Modernism..., p. 189.

¹⁸Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, 1979; rpt. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 79.

In the light of these notions of post-Modernism as either a reformulation or a constituent of, rather than a break with, Modernism, I would propose that *Artforum's* inability to itself rupture Modernism's self-critical imperative, its continual oscillation between that imperative and Owens' post-Modernist 'deconstructive impulse,' underscores the dubiousness of the claim for such a break in the first place. More to the point, *Artforum's* fluctuations in the light of these hypotheses encourage me to pursue the possibility that *Artforum* is neither a post-Modernist journal, as Sischy would have it, nor a Modernist journal, as others have claimed it once was, but both: a magazine in which the concept of post-Modernism as fundamental to Modernism is embedded.

February 1980

As mentioned above, Ingrid Sischy recycled for the cover of her first issue of *Artforum* a cover image from the 1942 debut issue of the American surrealist journal *VVV*. Edited by David Hare, along with editorial advisors André Breton and Max Ernst, *VVV* produced three issues between 1942 and 1944 before ceasing publication. Breton, leader of the left-wing of the *avant-garde* in 1920s Europe, wrote a text which appeared on the title page of each of the three issues, and which Sischy reprinted within her own introductory 'Letter from the Editor.' His text is marked by singular and multiple 'V's which precede six of its seven paragraphs in an 'abc' rhythm: V; VV; VVV; V; VV; VVV. The first 'V, VV, VVV' section of the text devotes itself to notions of liberation clearly inspired by the ongoing World War but, significantly for our purposes, the second 'V, VV, VVV' section turns to the issue of seeing:

V which signifies the View around us, the eye turned towards the external world, the conscious surface,

some of us have not ceased to oppose

VV the View inside us, the eye turned towards the interior world and the depths of the unconscious,

whence

VVV towards a synthesis, in a third term, of these two Views, the first V with its axis on the Ego and the reality principle, the second VV in the Id and the pleasure principle – the resolution of their contradiction tending only to the continual, systematic enlargement of the field of consciousness

toward a total view,
VVV

which translates all the reactions of the eternal upon the actual, of the psychic upon the physical, and takes account of the myth in process of formation beneath the Veil of happenings.¹⁹

Breton's invocation of vision turned inwards and outwards gives rise to the notions of sight, interiority, and exteriority, ideas that I shall show are essential to both Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and implicit within self-referentiality, Modernism, and post-Modernism. Additionally, by putting the cover image from VVV on her first *Artforum* cover, and Breton's text within her own "Letter from the Editor," Ingrid Sischy also conjures up the concepts of appropriation and the *avant-garde* featured within post-Modernism and Modernism respectively. What her appropriation need **not** invoke, however, is the Surrealist attempt to elide the distinction between the dream state and the waking state, nor its efforts to express 'the actual functioning of thought.'²⁰ Nor, given that she brings Lacan's re-working of Freudian theory into play, can one maintain that Sischy's appropriation makes use of what Greenberg denounced as Surrealism's (Freudian) concern to represent the processes of consciousness instead of those of the artist's medium.²¹ We can instead read Sischy's act as one that omitted Surrealism from its invocations of Modernism and *avant-gardism* in the same way that Greenberg omitted Surrealism from his conception of a Modernist *avant-garde*. What follows, then, is an attempt both

¹⁹André Breton, "Declaration VVV," 1942; rpt. in Ingrid Sischy, "Letter from the Editor," *Artforum*, Feb., 1980, p. 26.

²⁰André Breton, from the "First Manifesto of Surrealism," 1924; rpt. in *Art in Theory...*, p. 438.

²¹Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde & Kitsch," 1939; rpt. in *Pollock and After*, p. 32, n. 2.

to unravel the implications of Sischy's choice for her first *Artforum* cover image, as well as those of her reproduction of Breton's text, and to determine how and where her negotiation of the various issues she raises through these actions situates *Artforum* vis-à-vis Modernism and post-Modernism.

In the statements that follow 'V' and 'VV,' Breton differentiates between an external view and an internal view before arguing for a synthesis of the two. He specifies that the eye turned outwards is turned toward consciousness and the ego, whilst the eye turned inward is turned toward the unconscious and the id. Breton then argues for 'a total view' wherein the internal and external views merge together to enlarge the field of vision and 'take account of the myth in process of formation beneath the Veil of happenings.' Clearly, his references to consciousness and unconsciousness, the ego and the id, derive from Freudian psychoanalysis. Yet his reference to the Veil complicates a contemporary reading of his text in only Freudian terms, for in the years which intervened between the original publication of Breton's text and Ingrid Sischy's reproduction of it within *Artforum*, Jacques Lacan ventured a now-influential, self-described 'return to Freud' which we shall see featured the notion of the veil amongst its formulations. I will therefore argue that Lacan's expansion upon Freudian psychoanalysis retroactively informs a reading of Breton's words. Moreover, I will submit that his text's reproduction within *Artforum* effects more than an evocation of the figures of Freud *and* Lacan. Given Andreas Huyssen and Henry Sussman's separate depictions of Lacanian psychoanalysis as tantamount to a 'post-modern updating'²² of Freudian psychoanalysis, Sischy's contemporary reproduction of the VVV declaration raises the possibility that it marks within the journal the interrelationship between Modernism and post-Modernism. For just as Foster and Lyotard contended that 'modernism' was

²²Henry Sussman, "Psychoanalysis Modern and Post-Modern" in Psychoanalysis and..., eds. Richard Feldstein and Henry Sussman (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 130.

fundamental to 'post-modernism,' so Huyssen has maintained the primacy of 'modernist' (here Freudian) thought to that of supposedly 'post-modernist' (Lacanian) theory:

There is no doubt that centre stage in critical theory is held by the classical modernists: Flaubert, Proust and Bataille in Barthes; Nietzsche and Heidegger, Mallarmé and Artaud in Derrida; Nietzsche, Magritte and Bataille in Foucault; Mallarmé and Lautréamont, Joyce and Artaud in Kristeva; *Freud in Lacan*; Brecht in Althusser and Machery, and so on *ad infinitum*. The enemies are still realism and representation, mass culture and standardization, grammar, communication and the presumably all-powerful homogenizing pressures of the modern State (Huyssen, 260 - my italics).

And Sussman has proposed that

one way of characterizing the compendium of approaches and interventions known as "Lacan" would be to say that one decisive effect, if not aim, of this body of work has been to bring the discourse of psychoanalysis out of its modernist and into its post-Modern phase (142).

Huyssen and Sussman's remarks show how the figures of Freud and Lacan can embody certain concepts of Modernism and post-Modernism. Their assertions of Freud's intrinsicity to Lacanian thought reaffirm a correlative idea of Modernism's inherence to post-Modernism, thereby underscoring the uncertainty of a split between the two. Similarly, I shall show that *Artforum's* 1980 reproduction of Breton's text simultaneously evokes both Freud and Lacan, and through them Modernism and post-Modernism, thus rendering ambiguous notions of their split by recording the complexities of their interconnection.

As mentioned above, it is Breton's allusion to the 'Veil' that first invokes Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, in this case Lacan's now-familiar principle of the phallus as signifier of desire. For Lacan, the phallus can only play its role as *veiled*.²³ Lacan borrowed this image of the veiled phallus from frescoes at the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii (1958:82), in which the east wall features

²³Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," 1958; rpt. in *Feminine Sexuality*, eds. Juliet Mitchell & Jacqueline Rose (London: WW Norton & Co., 1982), p. 82. Parveen Adams takes Lacan a step further, declaring 'The phallus is in fact a veil.' "Waiving the Phallus," *Differences*, 4, no. 1, Spring 1992, 77.

a woman who, kneeling at the feet of the enthroned Ariadne, unveils a large phallus, while the south wall contains the image of the same kneeling woman, 'presumably an initiate in the Dionysiac mystery, at the center of which is to be found the veiled phallus.'²⁴

The phallus is the signifier of this *Aufhebung* itself which it inaugurates (initiates) by its own disappearance. This is why the demon of...shame in the ancient mysteries is unveiled (cf. the famous painting of the Villa of Pompeii) (1958:82).

A symbol of power in antiquity, the phallus becomes for Lacan symbolic of the mother's object of desire. In Lacanian theory, the castration complex marks the moment when the child recognizes the mother's desire, impelling it to move to *have* the phallus, if the child is a boy, or to *be* the phallus for someone else, if the child is a girl, by entering the Symbolic order and acquiring a place as masculine or feminine.²⁵ Crucially, however, the child also recognizes that the phallus' status is false.

The mother is taken to desire the phallus not because she contains it (Klein), but precisely because she does not. The phallus therefore belongs somewhere else; it breaks the two-term relation and initiates the order of exchange. For Lacan, it takes on this value as a function of the androcentric nature of the symbolic order itself. *But its status is itself false*, and must be recognized by the child as such²⁶ (my italics).

The point here is that it is not simply Lacan's notion of the veiled phallus that a contemporary reading of Breton's declaration - 'the total view...takes account of the myth in process of formation beneath the Veil of happenings' - invokes, it is also, most specifically, Lacan's correlative emphasis upon the veiled phallus' status as *mythical*. His postulations can therefore be seen to retroactively enforce Breton's assurance that a 'total view' would reveal the formulation of a myth beneath the veil.

²⁴Theodor Kraus quoted in Kaja Silverman, "The Lacanian Phallus," *Differences*, 4, no. 1, Spring 1992, pp. 85-86.

²⁵Elizabeth Wright, ed., *Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 321.

²⁶Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1988), 62.

Importantly, however, Lacan problematized the very notion of a 'total view' by rendering it dependent upon a fiction: the fictional point of truth allegedly embodied by the Other. Jacqueline Rose explains the Other's position:

Subjects in language persist in their belief that somewhere there is a point of certainty, of knowledge and of truth. When the subject addresses its demand outside itself to another, this other becomes the fantasised place of just such a knowledge or certainty. Lacan calls this the Other - the site of language to which the speaking subject necessarily refers. The Other appears to hold the 'truth' of the subject and the power to make good its loss. But this is the ultimate fantasy (55-56).

Yet in order to better understand how the Other's inherent fiction impacts upon vision, or in Lacanian terms the gaze, one must first examine the interrelation of perception, the ego, and (un)consciousness as discussed in Lacan's essay "Of the Gaze As *Objet Petit a*". At the essay's beginning, Lacan establishes two of his psychoanalytic theory's most important points: the *de*-emphasis of the ego and the correlation between chance and the unconscious. Referring to Freud's ideas of psychical resistance, Lacan writes, 'the expression *resistance of the subject* too much implies the existence of a supposed ego and it is not certain whether...it is something we can justifiably call an ego.'²⁷ He then cites a dream discussed within Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams, in which a father dreamt that his dead son, now alive, came to him whilst he slept and awakened him with the words 'Father, can't you see that I'm burning?' The father rushed to the room where the dead boy's body was laid out, only to find that a lit candle had indeed fallen on him, burning his arm.²⁸ Freud did not analyze the dream, but introduced it to support his belief that dreams contain the fulfilment of a wish (in this case, the father wanted the boy alive again).

²⁷Jacques Lacan, "Of the Gaze As *Objet Petit a*," in his The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, 1973; rpt. (New York: WW Norton & Co., 1981), p. 68. Jacqueline Rose declares, 'For Lacan, psychoanalysis does not offer an account of a developing ego which is "not necessarily coherent," but of an ego which is "necessarily not coherent," that is, which is always and persistently divided against itself' (93-94).

²⁸Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams 1905; rpt. (New York: Avon Books, 1965), pp. 547-548.

Lacan, on the other hand, brings up the dream in order to show that the overturning of the candle, which 'occurs as if by chance' (1973:69), is important precisely *because* it was a chance occurrence; that is, outside of conscious intention. Lacan therefore stresses what he calls *tuché*, happenstance, but refutes Aristotle's belief that the *tuché* occurs through personal choice. Instead, he argues, the occurrence of chance cannot be a matter of choice because chance is itself unconscious, and the unconscious is something we can never know (1973:69).

Lacan's thoughts on the ego and chance are bringing us towards understanding Sischy's appropriations for *Artforum*, and a bit more discussion of his theories of vision and their relationship to Breton's text will get us there. It is because things erupt outside of conscious intention that Lacan denies the possibility of visual self-reflexivity – i.e., Breton's eye turned inwards toward the unconscious. This is in contrast to Freud who, in distinguishing between external and internal perception, believed that an awareness of the division between the two contributed to an awareness of self, and thus the development of the concept of the ego.²⁹ Although Lacan brings up the notion of self-reflexivity, he does so only to assert its impossibility: 'That in which the consciousness may turn back upon itself – grasp itself...as *seeing oneself seeing oneself* – represents mere sleight of hand' (1973:74). Thus, for Lacan, the idea that we can see ourselves seeing ourselves is itself an illusion: '...consciousness, in its illusion of *seeing itself seeing itself*, finds its basis in the inside-out structure of the gaze' (1973:82). The process of looking cannot be obvious because the unknowability of the unconscious negates the concept of vision as a simple act.

²⁹Richard Wollheim, *Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 214–215. Wollheim claims that 'Freud had in mind ...that some perceptions can be made to disappear by means of bodily activity on our part, whereas other are resistant. The former we come to classify as external, the latter as internal' (214).

Crucially, Lacan differentiates between the eye and the process of looking - the gaze. For him, the eye is the biological organ which sees, whilst 'the gaze is presented to us only in the form of...the lack that constitutes castration anxiety' (1973:72-73).

The subject has to recognize that there is desire, or lack in the place of the Other, that there is no ultimate certainty or truth, and that the status of the phallus is a fraud (this is, for Lacan, the meaning of castration) (Rose, 64).

Lacan contends that through vision, 'something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it - that is what we call the gaze' (1973:73). What is eluded in the dialectic between the eye, which sees, and the gaze, which for Lacan comprehends that 'I see only from one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides' (1973:72), is, in fact, castration. Yet, importantly, Lacan allows that what is eluded in consciousness - castration anxiety and the recognition of desire - reappears within the unconscious:

...in the so-called waking state, there is an elision of the gaze, and an elision of the fact that not only does it look, *it also shows*. In the field of the dream, on the other hand, what characterizes the images is that *it shows* (1973:75).

Whereas Freud emphasised the ego and contended that perception and self-awareness were necessary in order for the ego to emerge from the id (Wollheim, 215), Lacan de-emphasizes the ego and argues the hopelessness of self-perception. Yet he retains Freud's notions of the id as instinctual and as including most of the properties of the unconscious,³⁰ for his above remarks illustrate that what the gaze shows is in fact the id. '*It shows:*' the id shows. That which is elided in everyday life - unconscious desire - shows itself in dreams. Here, then, is where the Other's inherent fiction and its relationship to vision comes back into play. Juliet Flower MacCannell explains:

³⁰J. Laplanche & J.B. Pontalis, The Language of Psychoanalysis, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: WW Norton & Co., 1973, pp. 197-199). It must be noted that in 1920, Freud also attributed to the *ego* an *unconscious* aspect which played a defensive role similar to that of repression (138-139).

In Lacan there is no escape from the process of symbolisation, which is essentially the process of alienation, in the relationship of self to other, and self to self. In the glance, he writes, we see the other. But because we can see him or her, we also know the other can see us: we can take the point of view of the other, in a transitive relationship. This is the moment, in Hegelian terms, of 'recognition.' And it is this moment that falls to the power of the Other, who enters the scene immediately to disrupt this transitivity: a *third* point of view, that which is constitutive of the Lacanian *regard*, arises. We see ourselves being seen and seeing. It is this third dimension which creates the specifically human (alienated) condition.³¹

The Other's intervention in the process of seeing disrupts from the outset the possibility of 'seeing oneself seeing oneself.' When coupled with Lacan's premise that the unconscious is unknowable, the Other's oppositional position to the phallus' pretence to meaning and false consistency (Rose, 75) asserts the impossibility of Breton's claims for self-reflexivity, a 'total view,' and the access to knowledge the two terms imply.

With the foregoing psychoanalytic discourse in mind, what are we to make of *Artforum's* February, 1980 reproductions of Breton's declaration within Ingrid Sischy's editorial statement and Max Ernst's cover image on the journal's own cover? Sischy's quotation of another magazine cover on her own magazine's 'inaugural' cover could itself be considered an act of seeing oneself seeing oneself inasmuch as it evinces *Artforum's* heightened self-perception of itself as a journal, although a self-perception achieved here only through an(O)ther - VVV. Notably, Janet Bergstrom once described Lacan's image of 'seeing oneself seeing oneself' as 'the quintessential definition of Modernism'³² because of the self-reflexivity it connoted. Therefore, one might view Sischy's referral to *Artforum's* intrinsic magazine-ness through VVV as not only an attempt at seeing oneself seeing oneself, but also as an invocation of one of Modernism's basic tenets. Especially since Clement Greenberg confirmed in his 1961 essay

³¹Juliet Flower MacCannell, Figuring Lacan: Criticism and the Cultural Unconscious (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), pp. 135-136.

³²Janet Bergstrom, "Psychoanalysis and Cinema," UCLA, Los Angeles, 8 June 1989.

"Modernist Painting" that the view turned inward indeed features within

Modernist practices:

The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself – not in order to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence...

The self-criticism of Modernism grows out of but is not the same thing as the criticism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment criticized from the outside, the way criticism in its more accepted sense does; Modernism criticizes from the inside, through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticized.³³

Greenberg's account of Modernist criticism as operating internally describes a practice that continually refers back to itself. Thus, despite Hal Foster's suggestion that a conflation of self-criticism and self-reflexivity was erroneous (1982:200), Greenberg himself clearly stimulated the conflation between the two. Stating, 'the enterprise of self-criticism in the arts became one of self-definition with a vengeance' (1961:755), he compounded the conflation, fusing the act of self-criticism with self-referentiality. Sischy's reproduction of *VVV* for *Artforum* similarly uses its own medium to define itself as a journal. Since her action offers no indication of being subversive, but in fact employs an art journal in order to define itself as an art journal and thus to 'entrench itself more firmly in its area of competence,' and since a Lacanian reading of her action virtually invalidates *VVV*'s Surrealist concerns, her appropriation could arguably be read as a Modernist gesture.

At the same time, however, Sischy's invocation of self-reflexivity could also be read as a post-Modernist gesture. We have seen how Angela McRobbie assigned Umberto Eco's concepts of paleo-television, which Eco claimed looked at the external world, to the modern, and neo-television, which he believed looked to itself, to a post-Modernist self-referentiality. In addition, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, and Abigail Solomon-Godeau have identified self-referentiality as a feature of the post-Modern, particularly through the artistic

³³Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 1961; rpt. in Art and Theory 1900-1990, 755.

practice of appropriation.³⁴ According to Krauss, appropriation by its very nature challenges both the concept of origin and the notion of originality central to *avant-gardist* discourse (27). She cites the work of Sherrie Levine as paradigmatically appropriative, claiming,

Now, insofar as Levine's work explicitly deconstructs the modernist notion of origin, her effort cannot be seen as an *extension* of modernism. It is, like the discourse of the copy, postmodernist. Which means that it cannot be seen as *avant-garde* either (29).

With these words, Krauss sets out three points relevant to a consideration of Ingrid Sischy's own appropriation of *VVV*'s cover image and Breton's declaration. First, she attributes to the artistic practice of appropriation the deconstructive impulse Craig Owens situated within post-Modernism. Second, she marks a break between Modernism and post-Modernism by asserting that appropriation is an exclusively post-Modernist act. Third, she avers that a notion of the *avant-garde* is untenable within a notion of post-Modernism. Krauss' first point thus begs the question as to whether or not we can read Sischy's appropriation of *VVV*'s cover image for *Artforum* as 'deconstructive,' not in the Derridean sense of undertaking 'a historical or genealogical analysis of the formation and different layers which have built a concept'³⁵ but in Craig Owens' sense of deconstruction as participation in an activity that is being denounced precisely in order to denounce that activity (235). The question is not easily answered, partially because of the difficulty in determining whether or not Sischy is in fact denouncing that in which she participates, and partially because of the inner conflict which, as Barbara Kruger accurately noted, besets the appropriative act and problematicizes its presumed critiques:

³⁴See Foster's "Re: Post," p. 197; Rosalind Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition," in *Art after Modernism...*, pp. 27-29; and Solomon-Godeau's "Photography after Art Photography," pp. 80-81.

³⁵*Talking Liberties*, Jacques Derrida interviewed by Alan Montefiore, prod. Patricia Llewellyn/Wall to Wall, Channel 4, 1992.

...the implicit critique within the [appropriated] work might easily be subsumed by the power granted its 'original,' thus serving to further elevate cliché. This might prove interesting in the use of repetition as a deconstructive device, but this elevation of cliché might merely shift the ornamental to the religious...Perhaps the problem is one of implicitness, that what is needed is, again, an alternation, not only called 'from primary to secondary,' but from implicit to explicit, from inference to declaration.³⁶

Sischy's appropriation appears to veer from explicit critique to implicit critique, an inference which becomes more apparent when her act is compared to those of Sherrie Levine. Levine's appropriative acts play with the concept of authorship; her assumption of the 'original' artist's position, which her own critical acceptance as an artist reinforces, demonstrates the ease with which the attribution of authorship to an artwork may be transferred. Moreover, as unmediated reproductions of 'original' photographs, her appropriations mock the concept of originality by underlining reproduction's inherence to the enterprise of photography in the first place. In contrast to Levine's unmediated approach, Sischy intercedes in her appropriation of Ernst's image for *VVV* by adding to *VVV*'s first cover image a grey frame. She also places *Artforum*'s logo, issue date, and cost alongside the image itself, thereby truly taking possession of it. As with Levine's transference of artistic authority from an image's acknowledged photographer to herself, *Artforum*'s declaration of its name next to its reproduction explicitly transfers authorship of the image from *VVV* to itself and seemingly upholds appropriation's implicit critique of authorship.

Yet unlike Levine's reproductions, Sischy's appropriation both asserts and critiques the notion of originality and thus complicates a perception of her act as 'deconstructive.' On the one hand, she *critiques* the concept of originality by re-doubling the image's status as a magazine cover: a magazine cover which, reproduced as a magazine cover, intrinsically bespeaks mass reproduction not once but twice, thus deriding any claim to originality. On the other hand, her reproduction of the obvious damage - a cigarette burn, stains, discolorations -

³⁶Barbara Kruger, "'Taking' Pictures," 1982; rpt. in *Art in Theory...*, p. 1070.

that the image incurred in the years that had intervened between its first appearance in 1942 and its reappearance in 1980 *attests* to its status as the Max Ernst 'original' from which *VVV* editor David Hare produced *VVV*'s first cover. Sischy borrowed the image from Hare; her decision not to retouch it, nor to seek an unblemished copy of it, reinforces its status as *the* Ernst original. She implies through her insistence upon reproducing the original image Craig Owens' 'deconstructive impulse' insofar as she arguably participates in an affirmation of originality precisely in order to denounce it, but equally implicit within her insistence upon the 'original' is an ascription of power to that image which potentially subsumes her appropriation's potential critique. Sischy's appropriation thus oscillates from explicit critique to implicit reinscription of the notion of the unique/original object, a reinscription that her own "Letter from the Editor" can be seen to aggravate:

This issue is extremely atypical of my plans in that it is thematic. I decided that, to begin, it was necessary to think about and to acknowledge an elementary but fundamental question/problem - the page. During the last decade the value which artists placed on work and ideas that could reasonably (economically and physically) be distributed to larger audiences than is possible with, say, a unique object, caused a major and far reaching concept to flourish - multiplicity - multiples, prints, photographs, video and artists' books. Since publishing is intrinsic to all of these forms it, too, needed to broaden both its technological and conceptual self-definitions. The very possibility of the page as a direct and primary arena, as an alternative to the wall, was once again recognized and declared as fact: as ground.³⁷

It is within Sischy's notion of the page as alternative to the museum or gallery wall that she potentially reinscribes the notion of the unique object, despite her recognition of the multiplicity inherent in the magazine reproduction. Hal Foster has claimed that 'postmodernist' art often occurs outside the museum or gallery space, thereby opening up the cultural field (1982:191). One might therefore regard *Artforum* as such an alternative space, and claim for its multiple reproductions of its appropriation the critique of originality

³⁷Ingrid Sischy, "Letter from the Editor," *Artforum*, Feb. 1980, p. 26.

that, for Owens and Krauss, characterizes that act within post-Modernism. However, I would argue that it is possible to see in Sischy's reproduction of the damaged Ernst 'original' an attempt to recover the image's 'aura' – its authority – which, as Walter Benjamin demonstrated in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," is lost in the process of reproduction. Benjamin wrote,

The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.³⁸

Given Benjamin's contentions, one could regard the cigarette burn, the stains, and the discolorations which subsequently marred the VVV 'original' cover image as testimony to the ravages of time, and thus to the history which the image experienced. In this reading, Sischy's determination to reproduce faithfully such evidence of the image's deterioration effects a literal interpretation of her stated efforts to posit *Artforum* as an alternative space to the museum wall: an alternative wherein the museum's and, crucially, Modernism's imperative to historicize and proclaim authenticity is upheld rather than subverted. In spite of its intrinsic multiplicity, then, *Artforum's* February, 1980 cover becomes a surrogate gallery space within which both the 'aura' of, and the very notion of, the unique object is recovered and reinscribed.

By demonstrating that appropriation need not necessarily imply critique, and that it can in fact be employed to reinforce Modernist beliefs, Sischy refutes Rosalind Krauss' suggestion that appropriation is an exclusively post-Modernist act. Moreover, if one accepts Hal Foster's declaration that 'historicism (the

³⁸Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 221.

New as its own Tradition) is both an origin and an end for the avant-garde; and one aim of postmodernism is to retain its radicality but be rid of its historicism' (1982:190), then Sischy also challenges Krauss' refusal to admit *avant-gardism* into post-Modernism by articulating *avant-garde* radicality through the revolutionary act of appropriation. That her act potentially supports the originality, and thus the *avant-gardism*, of the Ernst image further links the *avant-garde* to post-Modernism, albeit to a post-Modernism as liberally conceived and uncritical as the one she entertains. Her confusion of Krauss' claims therefore demonstrates the complexities inherent within the appropriative act and the precariousness of a position which attributes it solely to post-Modernism. As Douglas Crimp was to later observe,

Postmodernism will perhaps begin to acquire meaning beyond the simple naming of a *Zeitgeist* when we are able to employ it to make distinctions within all the various practices of appropriation.³⁹

As its cover indicates, the issues of appropriation, self-referentiality, and self-reflexivity's relationship to Modernism and post-Modernism reverberate throughout the entire February, 1980 issue of *Artforum*. And like that February cover, Sischy's appropriation of *VVV*'s first table of contents within her own "Letter from the Editor" invokes all three issues at once. Yet unlike her debut cover image, her reproduction of *VVV*'s contents page, within which Breton's declaration appears, refrains from challenging notions of originality or authorship. Instead, Sischy's appropriation of that page and, with it, Breton's notion of the eye turned inward, combines with what we shall see is the self-referentiality of her own text to heighten the self-reflexivity of the issue as a whole.

Sischy's "Letter from the Editor" opens with an announcement that,

Allegiance to one kind of thinking about art is inappropriate, at this time, for a serious art magazine. (At other times this has not been

³⁹Douglas Crimp, "Appropriating Appropriation," 1983; rpt. in *Theories of Contemporary Art*, ed. Richard Hertz (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), p. 157.

the case; blinders were absolutely necessary for ideas and actions to evolve and, further, for them to exist with the justice their time demanded.) Blinders would be fatal now. A magazine must learn from art if it is to be about art, and it must cross the same boundaries that modern artists worked so hard to break down. This is not to say that it is right to ignore that which existed within the old boundaries - only that it is imperative to explore and include further frontiers. Therefore, I have no choice but to commit myself to editing a magazine which includes and considers all the best ideas, challenges, work and questions put forth by modern contemporary artists and writers on art (26).

Sischy's remarks evince self-referentiality through their stated self-awareness of both her own position as editor and *Artforum's* as a 'serious art journal.' Her comments further connote self-reflexivity for *Artforum* in their exhortation to 'explore and include further frontiers,' a phrase that invokes the frontier spirit implicit in *Artforum* founder John Irwin's introductory statement from the journal's first issue, discussed in Chapter One. Above all, Sischy's decision to reproduce *VVV's* table of contents, a list of articles which in and of themselves bear little relation to the articles and artworks featured within *Artforum's* February 1980 issue, nevertheless hints strongly of the self-criticism Greenberg claimed for Modernism through Sischy's use of another journal both to entrench *Artforum* in its area of competence and to effect its self-definition. (This is not to say that Greenberg would have endorsed the magazine's 'self-criticism,' however).

Through her appropriation of *VVV's* contents page, Sischy allusively reproduces her opening paragraph's promise to 'include and consider all the best ideas, challenges, work and questions put forth by modern contemporary artists and writers on art.' For beneath the *VVV* logo stands a list of the diverse fields from which the magazine culled its contributors, 'Poetry, plastic arts, anthropology, sociology, psychology;' underneath her own reproduction of the contents page, Sischy reiterates, 'This illustration is of the table of contents of *VVV*, Number 1, June 1942. See our cover for its cover. *VVV* was an American art magazine with contributors from the fields of poetry, plastic arts, anthropology, sociology and psychology.' She thus renders explicit her

Modernist use of *VVV* as a tool to define *Artforum* by highlighting their identical roles as American art magazines. She also implies a correlative commitment on *Artforum's* part to consider contributions from the literary arts and the sciences, although this would not prove to be the case. More importantly, her reproduction of *VVV's* table of contents, which listed articles by such well-regarded figures as William Carlos Williams, André Masson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Breton himself, and illustrations by Giorgio de Chirico, Ernst, Irving Penn, Picasso, and Yves Tanguy, among others, sets up the notion that Sischy in fact reproduced *VVV's* contents page twice: once within her "Letter from the Editor," and again within her own table of contents. In other words, Sischy's quotation guides the reader back to *Artforum's* own table of contents and intimates that the writers and artists commissioned for her first issue's articles and special projects enjoyed and/or deserved an equivalent contemporary status to their *VVV* counterparts.

More implicitly, Sischy's appropriations from *VVV's* first issue slyly suggest that her own first issue as *Artforum's* editor ought to be seen as not simply a new beginning for the journal but as a symbolic first issue. Stating, 'This magazine is a forum,' and 'This magazine is only alive if its readers consider it so - if they participate in the forum' (26), her words not only refer back to the similar sentiments expressed within John Irwin's introductory statement, they essentially supplant them and so, by extension, *Artforum's* actual debut issue. Furthermore, her "Letter"'s immediate distinction between 'this time' and 'other times,' and her totalizing claims for those times, asserts an internal break for the journal. The appearance of new publishers, a new editor, and new writers within the February issue superficially substantiates this notion, despite Sischy's reluctance to specifically identify the break as one between 'the old *Artforum*,' frequently misread as Modernist, and the 1980s *Artforum*, evidently promoted here as post-Modernist. Her reference to *Artforum's* need to 'cross the same boundaries that modern artists have worked so hard to break down'

does the job well enough, for we can identify within her words the idea of Modernism's decline and the breaking down of its hierarchy of values. One could thus infer Sischy's wish to forge in the minds of *Artforum's* readership both a notion of a break in art practice and art criticism, and a linkage between that 'break' and a 'break' within *Artforum* itself. If so, then her appropriations of *VVV* belie her wishes by articulating the difficulty in extracting Modernism from post-Modernism and thus 'the old *Artforum*' from Sischy's 'new' *Artforum*.

Interestingly, Sischy also recants the notion of an internal break through her acknowledgement that she had 'no choice' but to commit herself to 'editing a magazine which includes and considers all the best ideas, challenges, work and questions put forth by modern contemporary artists and writers on art.' Her description of the magazine cannot help but invoke *Artforum's* reputation for fulfilling precisely those criteria from the mid-'60s to the mid-'70s. Through that invocation, Sischy insinuates another commitment: to renew, indeed to *reproduce*, the critical status that *Artforum* enjoyed before the various members who comprised 'the old *Artforum*' departed the journal and Joseph Masheck ushered in its period of 'calm enervation and dry academicism' (Malcolm, "...I," 73). In fact, Sischy retroactively reinforced this insinuation in the journal's 30th-anniversary issue by 'reproducing' a moment from *Artforum's* past and so demonstrating self-reflexivity on journal's behalf:

Jack Bankowsky: I was going to ask you if you could think of articles from your tenure that might, like "Art and Objecthood" from Phil Leider's period, become part of the art historical canon. I was thinking of a pair of pieces by Thierry de Duve.

Ingrid Sischy: Sure, "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue?" was one of them.

...I'm not an art historian, but I've always believed that each present decides for itself what matters about the past - and we returned to the past by bringing up stuff that seemed very relevant to us (1993:177).

Sischy and Bankowsky suggest through their exchange *Artforum's* self-awareness of the materialness of both Fried's essay and Phil Leider's editorship to the journal's early reputation. Unsurprisingly, given her apparent wish to

repeat *Artforum's* critical sway of the 1960s and early '70s, Sischy claims (mistakenly, at this point in time) for her editorship a reproduction of "Art and Objecthood"'s critical effect in the form of Thierry de Duve's "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue?", an essay from 1983 which detects within post-Modernism a fear of painting. In so doing, she invokes that essay's refutation of notions of breakages, and thus implicitly redoubles her recantation of *Artforum's* presumed internal break:

What makes us so anxious not to be Modern anymore?
What pushes us to repeat the tradition of a break just when we are beginning to understand that Modernist ideology erred in its image of a break with tradition?⁴⁰

It might also be noted that Sischy's conversation with Bankowsky evinces Greenbergian self-criticism through the latter editor's use of *Artforum* itself to critique Sischy's editorship and effect its self-definition. Bankowsky repeats his act, more overtly this time, in his next question to Sischy:

JB: When people look back to those influential years of the '60s, they seem to remember the magazine as the undisputed primary organ of art criticism at the time. It's easy to define what the role of *Artforum* was at that juncture. When you think of your tenure, how would you characterize the role *Artforum* was playing in terms of the discussion around contemporary art and culture?⁴¹

It would seem that for Bankowsky, the *Artforum* of the 1960s had achieved the 'purity' of its discipline that Greenberg believed would emerge through self-criticism. Greenberg maintained that

Each art had to determine, through the operations peculiar to itself, the effects peculiar and exclusive to itself. By doing this each art would, to be sure, narrow its area of competence, but at the same time it would make its possession of this area all the more secure (1961:755).

Bankowsky's query reveals its underlying assumption that the *Artforum* of Leider's editorship had indeed both narrowed its area of competence - art

⁴⁰Thierry de Duve, "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue?", *Artforum*, Sept. 1983, p. 32.

⁴¹Sischy evades Bankowsky's query, demurring, 'First of all, I think it's more appropriate for others to answer that question. Besides, it's too soon for me to look back at my time there, because what we were talking about then is still what you're talking about now. There isn't that kind of distance yet' (177).

criticism - and secured its possession of that area as its 'undisputed primary organ.' In fact, he unwittingly exaggerates its possession of that area as virtually absolute through the phallogocentrism of his description. By calling *Artforum* art criticism's 'undisputed primary organ,' he conjures up the notion of the Lacanian phallus and its privileged position within the symbolic order: the patriarchal structure of language. To paraphrase Terry Eagleton, Bankowsky's linkage of the journal to phallogocentrism's connotations of patriarchal power, the prestige of the word, and the word as truth puts into play its effect of ensuring for those who wield (critical) power a way of maintaining their grip,⁴² thereby not only making more secure *Artforum's* onetime 'possession' of art criticism, but in fact re-assuring it. Bankowsky's query's combination of phallogocentrism with the journal's self-critical impulse toward self-definition associatively extends, and thus attempts to re-possess, *Artforum's* former power within the field of art criticism.

Artforum's self-defining ambitions further reveal themselves within three of the articles that Ingrid Sischy commissioned for her first issue of *Artforum*. All three articles interrogate the notion of the magazine in general; two of them focus on the art magazine in particular. First of the three is Ronny Cohen's "Seeing Between the Pages," an essay which argues that contemporary magazine layouts as exemplified by America's *People*, a weekly journal similar to Britain's *Hello*, take as their source the typography and layout of Futurist art and literature.⁴³ Second is Clive Phillpot's "Art Magazines and Magazine Art,"⁴⁴ an essay whose title could reflexively allude to *Artforum's* dual roles as art magazine and alternative art space, one which 'exhibited' 16 projects in this

⁴²Terry Eagleton quoted in Wright, p. 316.

⁴³Ronny Cohen, "Seeing Between the Pages," *Artforum*, Feb. 1980, pp. 50-52.

⁴⁴Clive Phillpot, "Art Magazines and Magazine Art," *Artforum*, Feb. 1980, pp. 52-54.

issue alone.⁴⁵

Indeed, Phillipot's theme refers back to the February, 1980 issue in two ways: first, it connotes the issue's own commission of 'magazine art' and, second, it alludes to Ingrid Sischy's revelation of her instructions to the commissioned artists in her preceding "Letter from the Editor:"

As with any other contributors, all the artists and magazines were paid for their work. Artists and editors received the same instructions: 'Your project may run two, three, or four pages. A side of one page counts as one page. If you work in color please remember that we cannot run color on consecutive spreads. The trim size of our page is 10½ (width) x 10⅝ (height). Our standard body text typeface is 9-pt. Helvetica Light. Our headings are usually 18-pt. Eurostyle Bold.

'This is not a contract which guarantees final inclusion in *Artforum*. As editor I will be making final decisions as to the project's inclusion. I cannot send proofs for your approval. The work will be returned to you after it has been run but it will be marked up as is necessary for production...' (26).

Besides apprising her readers of the constraints intrinsic to creating 'magazine art' for *Artforum*, Sischy explicitly asserts her editorial authority. In so doing, she renders *Artforum* more than an alternative space to the museum and gallery wall, she makes herself and the magazine the artwork's ultimate producers. She thus refutes Phillipot's contention that 'visual images in magazines (have) now been disseminated in the form of primary artworks, thereby ousting reproductions' (53) by reasserting that magazine art is in fact art specifically created *for* reproduction. As Edit deAk states in the issue's third article, "Copy," 'With Periodical art the idea is to move the product in large numbers.'⁴⁶ By accentuating this fundamental principle of magazine art, Sischy underscores the artists' tacit acceptance of the journal's prominent role in the

⁴⁵By William Wegman, Jenny Holzer & Peter Nadin, Art & Language, Gilbert & George, Judy Rifka, Ed Ruscha, Kim MacConnel, Heresies, Victor Burgin, Laurie Anderson, Michelle Stuart, Anne & Patrick Poirier, Just Another Asshole, Richard Long, Joseph Beuys, and Dan Graham.

⁴⁶Edit deAk, "Copy," *Artforum*, Feb. 1980, p. 92.

artwork's (re)production. Implicitly, at least, Sischy and the journal therefore compete with the artists for final authority over the artworks. Yet by invoking her and the magazine's own contribution to the artworks' realization, Sischy clearly distinguishes the works' originators – the artists – from their producers – *Artforum* –, thereby attaching significance to the origin and originality of the works themselves. Of course, *Artforum* also published the names of the artists before or behind each of their projects, thus explicitly attributing authorship to the artworks' creators. Hence, Sischy's commission of magazine art, which continued throughout and beyond her editorship, simultaneously takes up post-Modernism's challenge to the notion of authorship *and* reaffirms Modernism's *avant-gardist* emphasis upon the artwork's point of origin.

Finally, it is worth noting that one of *Artforum's* specially-commissioned projects brings the notion of the journal's self-referentiality overtly to the fore. The Heresies Collective, comprised of Ida Applebroog, Sue Heinemann, Elizabeth Hess, Alesia Kunz, Arlene Ladden, Lucy Lippard, Melissa Meyer, Carrie Rickey, Elizabeth Sacre, and Elke Solomon, created for Sischy's debut issue *ARTRACE*, a four-page board game or, as they put it, 'an heretical bored game' (p. 59) which sardonically offered the 'player' advice on getting ahead in the American art scene. They introduced the game with a list of 13 instructions for play, including, 'Remember your priorities – fame first, fortune second, art third, tap dancing fourth, socio-concern last;' 'Raise your consciousness to high art (but not over your buyer's head);' and, in rule number 5, 'Subscribe to *Artforum*; read only your own reviews. Don't join a Marxist or a feminist study group; you won't get points' (p. 59 – fig. 20). This last instruction implied that a subscription to *Artforum* was *de rigeur* for artists keen to achieve celebrity status within the art world and further suggested that an artist could reliably measure his or her progress through its review section. Significantly, though, Heresies posited *two* recommendations within the one rule: subscribe to *Artforum* and shun apparently disadvantageous Marxist and feminist study

ARTRACE™

AN HERETICAL BORED GAME

by The Heresies Collective

Up to six players can compete. First, throw the dice to decide if you are:

- a) Female or Male
- b) Person of Color or Colorless Person
- c) Gay or Straight
- d) Visual or Verbal

Proceed according to instructions on the bored. Follow the rules below:

- 1) Remember your priorities—fame first, fortune second, art third, tap dancing fourth, socio-concern last.
- 2) Raise your consciousness to high art (but not over your buyer's head).
- 3) Become a feminist because, what the hell, you aren't making it as a male-identified woman anyway. But don't let politics interfere with your personality.
- 4) Cultivate your avant-garden. If you have no plot, resort to modernism.
- 5) Subscribe to Artforum; read only your own reviews. Don't join a Marxist or a feminist study group; you won't get points.
- 6) Stand up for individualism against creeping collectivism. Only Individuals are In. Only creeps collect.
- 7) Dress for excess. Don't underdress in overalls.
- 8) Move downtown, no matter where you live; lift your profits to the lofts. Don't feel guilty about the South Bronx.
- 9) Remember when dining, if you haven't made a deal, you haven't had a meal.
- 10) When you've reached the top, don't leave the house. You're judged by the company that keeps you.
- 11) Invest in the right shock. Purism, puerilism and pluralism all pay. If your art has a message, muffle it.
- 12) Sleep with the Right people. Don't sleep with the Leftovers.
- 13) Don't mix your art and your politics. You might get indigestion.

Roll the dice again and find your place in the Pecking Order:



Male University
New Maven, Con.



The Art Institute of Chic



Lo-Cal Arts



Whole-Wheat State



Kunthalle



Universal Everyperson's
Art School Equivalency
(UNEASE)

Warning: The NEA Has Determined That This Game Is Dangerous to Your Wealth.

groups. Therefore, they not only drew a link between the two, they also intimated, quite accurately, that the journal itself avoided presumably inexpedient discussions of issues related to Marxism or feminism. Why then did Sischy, who unequivocally asserted her authority to exclude submitted projects in the contract she sent to each artist and re-printed in her "Letter," nevertheless decide to include the Heresies submission and its unflattering insinuations about *Artforum*?

Perhaps a response lies in determining the means by which the journal and the Heresies Collective manipulated each other to effect a self-criticism, albeit one which in the latter case varied somewhat from the self-criticism that Greenberg promoted. Heresies employed *Artforum*'s space to launch an attack against what they perceived to be the inequality and superficiality of the art world, reproaching artists, dealers, art schools, collectors, museums, curators, critics, academics, and *Artforum* alike. Their *ARTRACE*, whose logo cleverly adopts lettering that bears more than a passing resemblance to that of *Artforum* itself, thus assailed the community of which they were part from within one of its most visible and far-reaching institutions. In a reversal of Greenberg's notion of self-criticism, Heresies used the art media to criticize the art media and other art world constituents not to entrench them more firmly in their areas of competence, but precisely in order to subvert them. However, their project conflicts with Craig Owens' paradigm of a post-Modernist deconstructive work since the activity in which they participated - magazine art - was neither being denounced nor appeared as a target for their own denunciation. By instead attempting to subvert certain notions about artists and artworks from within an artwork, *ARTRACE* approximates Hal Foster's notion of a self-criticism which declines to enforce a closure and so emits from, but I would argue does not realize, Owens' proposed deconstructive impulse. As a project adopting the strategy of Greenbergian self-criticism in order to produce its opposite effect, *ARTRACE* exemplifies a work which hovers between a

Modernist and a post-Modernist practice without fulfilling the impulses of either one.

Because of its particular inefficacy in fulfilling post-Modernism's supposed deconstructive impulse, Heresies' gibe at *Artforum* stops short of undermining the status it presumes for it. Therefore, their project's allusion to the journal's critical import from within the journal effectively reinforces that status, preserves a notion of its critical weight and, incidentally, repudiates suggestions of the magazine's internal break. Sischy's inclusion of the project plays up these implications by extending *ARTRACE*'s self-critical tendencies to *Artforum* itself. However, she returns the strategy to its Greenbergian formulation, for *ARTRACE*'s allusion to the journal now becomes *Artforum*'s self-referral, resulting in a self-criticism which substantiates the journal's status and enforces a closure on the notion of its critical power. Hence, perhaps, her decision to include an artwork which at first glance seems derisory toward the journal.

The Heresies project's recourse to, but failure to fulfil, Modernist *and* post-Modernist self-critical impulses parallels the February, 1980 issue's own perpetual oscillation between the two strategies. The issue's explicit self-referentiality, evinced by its three articles on art magazines, the Heresies project, and Ingrid Sischy's appropriations from *VVV*, alternates between Modernist closure and a post-Modernist dictate to de-centre. Rather than asserting post-Modernism's alleged break from Modernism, Sischy's debut issue textually and visually records their overlap.

February, 1980 - February, 1988

Ingrid Sischy's editorship lasted exactly eight years, terminating with the February, 1988 issue of *Artforum*. Publisher Anthony Korner claimed that under her editorship, the journal's readership increased by one third, to approximately 27,000 (Smith, 50). In fact, only a year and a half after Sischy took over the editor's chair, the journal doubled its staff, moved to larger

offices, and pushed its newsstand sales up by one third.⁴⁷ During her editorship, Sischy revived *Artforum's* FORUM section, re-titled "Columns," publishing on a monthly basis articles on issues in architecture, 'modern life,' advertising, rock music, television, the news media, fashion, and film by Herbert Muschamp, Carter Ratcliff, Glenn O'Brien, Greil Marcus, Barbara Kruger, Carol Squiers, Lisa Liebmann, and Wolfram Schutte respectively. She also published articles in support of painting, such as Thomas Lawson's "Last Exit: Painting"⁴⁸ and de Duve's afore-mentioned "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, and Blue?", turning the journal's attention to Julian Schnabel, Anselm Keifer, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Ralph Humphrey, and Francis Bacon, to name but a few. So intense was the magazine's interest in painting during the '80s that former *Artforum* staffer Lisa Liebmann boasted in the journal's 30th-anniversary issue,

Between them, Edit [deAk] and Rene [Ricard] practically invented the first half of the decade and for all practical purposes put Julian Schnabel, Francesco Clemente, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Keith Haring on the official map.⁴⁹

Sischy thus renewed an interest in painting on behalf of the journal that John Coplans' editorship had all but killed off. Indeed, the magazine had prematurely buried painting in a questionnaire that it sent out to various artists in 1975:

ARTFORUM wishes to ask you, as a painter, what you consider to be the prospects of painting in this decade. It appears that painting has ceased to be the dominant artistic medium at the moment. And we assume that the debates between its two major ideologies, abstract and representational, have outlived their usefulness to the current scene. Our thinking here refers to the fact that neither side has triumphed over the other in a historical verdict to which both had appealed. On the contrary, those understood to be making 'the next inevitable step' now work with any material but paint.

1. How do you think this has affected the need to do painting today and the general morale in the field?

⁴⁷Announcement, *Artforum*, September 1981, p. 87.

⁴⁸Thomas Lawson, "Last Exit: Painting," *Artforum*, Oct. 1981, pp. 40-47.

⁴⁹Lisa Liebmann, "Hip to Be Square," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 176.

2. What possibilities, not found elsewhere, does this medium offer you as an artist?
3. What energies and ideas in painting strike you as worth attention, and why?⁵⁰

Artforum printed responses from 23 artists, nearly all of whom disagreed with both the questionnaire's basic assumption about painting's obsolescence and the journal's insistence upon opposing abstract and representational painting.

Several of the respondents took the magazine to task for what they perceived as *Artforum's* declaration of war against painting itself. Here are just a few such admonitory reactions:

Rudolf Baranik: ...You must not parcel out 'fields' in such a seignorial way, *Artforum*... (26).

Wolf Kahn: The discussion which *Artforum* wishes to initiate is framed in terribly warlike terms (27).

Dona Nelson: *Artforum's* statement concerning painting makes the making of art sound alot like the making of war (30).

Sidney Tillim: In answer to your questionnaire, I simply don't think about art the way *Artforum* now does. For me, both the assumptions and questions raised in the questionnaire have mostly to do with fashion... Thus, while the politics of your document is 'antiformalist,' the reasoning behind it is ultraformalist... No medium is dead, but maybe modernism - or your brand of it - is, or nearly (36)

Mario Yrizarry: It's hard getting past the cynical tone of your letter but I'll answer your annual painting-killing inclination (36).

It may seem at this point that by citing a 1975 questionnaire, we have backtracked a long way from February, 1988, but it is through a discussion of *Artforum's* varied relationships to painting, particularly what I perceive to be an implicit self-referentiality in *Artforum's* return to painting under Sischy, that we shall reach the explicit self-referentiality of her last issue. For the moment, it is worth noting that Coplans' questionnaire supports Rosalind Krauss' assertion, discussed earlier, that the editor had turned against 'marketable' arts such as painting and sculpture in his final years at *Artforum*. According to Coplans himself, his abandonment of painting partially resulted from unwelcome

⁵⁰"Painters Reply...", *Artforum*, Sept. 1975, p. 26.

pressure from artists, dealers, and galleries to grant them coverage within the magazine:

PP: Didn't the artists themselves start pounding on your desk, asking when were they going to get their covers?

JC: Yes, and a number of dealers began to pressure the magazine, saying they wouldn't advertise if we didn't do thus and so. Galleries began to send for me, to take me to lunch, and tell me I wasn't covering them adequately. Several of the contributing editors also felt money was beginning to matter too much in the art scene. Michelson, in fact, wanted to turn *Artforum* into a performance-art magazine to get away from it.⁵¹

Looking back at the years preceding Sischy's takeover as editor, *New York* wrote that *Artforum* had developed a reputation for being 'filled with angular shapes and black paintings; paintings with human figures in them - or with *any* image in them at all, for that matter - were rare' (Smith, 48). Although Joseph Masheck reintroduced painting to the journal during his few years as editor, the articles he published tended to reconsider painting by Surrealist, Abstract Expressionist, and Pop artists. Alternatively, as with October, 1977's "Reaffirming Painting: A Critique of Structuralist Criticism,"⁵² he presented last-ditch pleas for the continuation of Greenbergian artistic and critical practices, even though Masheck himself later admitted that 'by 1977 that discourse was not merely out of steam, it was bankrupt....'⁵³ In contrast, the journal's attention to painting under Sischy attempted to situate it within an artistic and critical environment that could no longer sustain Modernism's emphases upon quality and materiality, much less its insistence upon valorizing 'high art' over mass culture. "Last Exit: Painting," for example, argued that, after Modernism's decline, painting remained the artist's most radical choice:

Radical artists now are faced with a choice - despair, or the last exit: painting. The discursive nature of painting is persuasively useful, due

⁵¹Peter Plagens, "John Coplans," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 190.

⁵²Geoffrey & David Dorfman, "Reaffirming Painting: A Critique of Structuralist Criticism," *Artforum*, Oct. 1977, pp. 59-65.

⁵³Joseph Masheck, "Yours Faithfully," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 124.

to its characteristic of being a never-ending web of representations... The following page...reproduces the work of several such artists who have decided to present work that can be classified as painting, or as related to painting, but that must be seen as something other: a desperate gesture, an uneasy attempt to address the many contradictions of current art production by focusing on the hear of the problem - that continuing debate between the 'moderns' and the 'postmoderns' - that is so often couched in terms of the life and death of painting (45).

By reviving *Artforum's* interest in painting after years of only desultory attention, Sischy in a way achieved for the journal the internal break *New York* and *The New Yorker* assumed for it. However, I would propose that the magazine's consideration of painting under her editorship, coupled with what seemed to be a new interest in broader cultural issues, in fact self-critically referred back to the journal's considerable attention to painting, as well as its consistent devotion to film and photography, under Philip Leider. Throughout Leider's editorship, *Artforum* each month (save for special themed issues) gave over the majority of its feature space to writing on painters and/or issues in painting, and it placed paintings on roughly half of the covers produced in his nine years at the magazine. The remaining covers contained images of sculpture, architecture, lithographs, drawings, posters, photographs, and film stills. In particular, Leider's reproduction of photographs (three times) and film stills (twice)⁵⁴ on the cover of *Artforum*, perhaps the most visible index of its interest, reveals the journal's early regard for them as art forms worthy of the kind of critical consideration for which the magazine was becoming/had become well known. Moreover, from Summer, 1963 until Summer, 1968, Leider published a regular photography column written by Margery Mann. And from November, 1967 to June, 1970, Manny Farber wrote a monthly film column for *Artforum*. The journal itself devoted its entire September, 1971 issue to film, which was specially edited by Annette Michelson. Writing in this

⁵⁴Dennis Hopper photographs appeared on the Dec. 1964 and Sept. 1965 covers; the May, 1971 issue featured a cover photo by Diane Arbus. Film stills comprise the cover images for June 1971 and Sept. 1971.

issue, Michelson spelled out *Artforum's* esteem for film, comparing it to, and so reaffirming, the journal's belief in painting's prominence at the time:

This present issue of *Artforum* is...designed to evoke...the urgency of recognition for an achievement whose importance will eventually be seen as comparable to that of American painting of the 1950s and onwards.⁵⁵

Significantly, Michelson's comment betrays a Greenbergian influence in its underlying faith in a Modernist notion of continuity: her implication that film followed from, and did not represent a break from, painting. Later, after Leider had departed the journal and *Artforum* had more or less put the nails in Modernism's coffin, she reversed her implied position. Replying to Emile de Antonio's complaint in the journal that 'people like Hollis Frampton and the people who seem to amuse Annette Michelson...are essentially failed painters'⁵⁶ and that 'the idea of literally transposing exhausted painting ideas into film is a boring idea and most of the people doing this are painters manqués' (80),

Michelson declared,

Artforum's increased concern with film-making and film criticism in its most advanced aspects quite naturally elicits pained reactions for those with vested interests in the art of the recent past... the recent attempt to examine through a comparative study of Eisenstein and Brakhage the montage tradition...was designed to call into question a number of historical, formal, theoretical conventions. We shall continue in this direction, directing our attention to areas of film still waiting their inscription into critical discourse - and to those ill-served by a rhetoric now outworn (83).

Here, Michelson refutes de Antonio's linkage of film to painting by positing film as painting's rupture. In so doing, she underscores film's exclusion from Modernist discourse, a point her colleague Rosalind Krauss had made several months earlier in her essay "A View of Modernism," thereby implying its potential inclusion in a *post*-Modernist discourse. She also implicitly situates painting firmly within Modernism. In the two years between Michelson's first

⁵⁵Annette Michelson, Response to a letter, *Artforum*, Sept. 1971, p. 9.

⁵⁶Tanya Neufeld, "An Interview with Emile de Antonio," *Artforum*, March, 1973, p.80.

statement and her second, then, she slid from a Greenberg-inspired perception of film's position within the arts to a view which sited it outside Modernist discourse. Her movement from one position to the other seemingly precurses similar critical shifts in *Artforum* under Ingrid Sischy with regard to both painting and film. In fact, I would suggest that all of the above-mentioned factors - *Artforum's* strong interest in painting during the '60s, its critical consideration of film and photography under Leider, Michelson's claims for film's exclusion from Modernism, her implicit view of painting as a Modernist practice, and the early evidence of her Modernist conception of film's relationship to painting, presumably shared to a degree by Leider himself - reproduce themselves within Ingrid Sischy's editorial policies regarding painting and the popular arts. Concomitantly, Sischy's policies self-reflexively invoke these characteristics of the 'old *Artforum's* negotiation of painting, film, and photography in a move which though perhaps inadvertent, can be seen as Greenbergian self-criticism.

Consider first Michelson's insinuation that film could only find discussion within a non-Modernist discourse. Michelson lays the foundation for a notion that would render *Artforum's* very interest in film under Sischy as post-Modernist in that term's broadest sense: that which, as Hal Foster noted, stands as 'a mere sign for not-modernism or a synonym for pluralism' (1982:189). Moreover, Modernism's depreciation within artistic and critical practices gives rise to an idea of the 1980s *Artforum* as post-Modernist in its apparent dissolution of the Modernist division between 'high art' and mass culture. Certainly there is evidence that the journal's current editor has inferred from Modernism's decline this purported aspect of post-Modernism within Sischy's *Artforum*, just as there is evidence that Sischy herself was aware of the magazine's previous interest under Philip Leider in art forms outside of painting and sculpture:

Jack Bankowsky: You...initiated the columns section, which had a sociological slant. In the '60s the magazine was all about art criticism.

There would never have been an article on break dancing in the old *Artforum*.

Ingrid Sischy: A significant group of artists, like Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring, came out of '80s pop culture, and obviously felt strong affiliations with its music and its issues...Break dancing, hip-hop, rap - they were vital to cover. But I don't know if you're being fair to the '60s *Artforum*, which would certainly have run an article on Happenings, say.

JB: But the Happenings were initiated somewhat under the sign of art... These other phenomena are different. For me this shift is your signature, so I'm surprised you resist.

IS: I'm not resisting; I want to make it clear that all this had to do with art in some way. And what I would say about this interest in the larger culture is that it wasn't new. I believed it is the job of an art magazine to publish not only serious art criticism but also the art criticism that is most in touch with the moment, not to mention writing and pieces that are about the visual culture at large...

(Bankowsky, 1993:178).

What emerges from this exchange is Bankowsky's patent wish to define Sischy's editorship as a break from that of Leider, and Sischy's contrasting wish to retain a certain connection between the two. Yet despite their different agendas, both editors attempt to self-critically define the *Artforum* of the 1980s through the *Artforum* of the 1960s. Bankowsky in particular seems determined to effect the journal's self-definition, and to establish the idea of the magazine's internal break, in his insistences upon both *Artforum*'s 'shift' in its arts coverage and the existence of Sischy's 'signature:' her testimony to what was unique and irreducible in the magazine's operation of art journalism (Greenberg, 1961:755). His use of the journal to critique the journal ought not be (mis)read as a post-Modernist stab at problematizing the activity in which he is participating, but rather as an attempt to secure *Artforum*'s area of competence under Sischy. Similarly, Sischy's own efforts to critique the journal by correlating elements of her editorship to that of Phil Leider, especially when seen alongside her reintroduction of a Leider-like interest in painting to *Artforum*, enacts the journal's self-definition by invoking those operations that the magazine had made peculiar to itself (1961:755). Once again, both editors imply for the journal's first decade a Greenbergian notion of 'purity' through their recourse to self-criticism. Their recovery of this notion through the self-reflexivity of their self-critical exchange therefore retroactively attributes to the

Artforum of the '80s the standards of quality and independence that such 'purity' guaranteed for it (1961:755).

Consider also Annette Michelson's slide from a view of the relationship between painting and film which was clearly informed by Modernist ideas of development and progress, to one which excluded film from Modernist discourse whilst preserving painting's status within it. As discussed above, Michelson's latter view bespeaks a break between Modernism and post-Modernism, which paves the way for *Artforum's* interest in mass culture under Sischy to be considered post-Modern, and its attention to painting, Modern. However, as Mary Kelly observed, Sischy's renewal of painting within *Artforum* exemplified an early-'80s painting revival which, in Kelly's view, 'reappropriated modernist themes'⁵⁷ in order to interrupt what she considered to be the repetitiveness of Modernist discourse:

...despite incompatible practices or divisions in the discourse, modernism's central themes persist. The current revival of painting (neo-expressionism, New Imagism, Energism) and the coincident dispersal of narrative, conceptual, and social purpose art gives some indication of the political consequences of artistic choices founded on a reappropriation of modernist themes. It also implies that the designations 'avant-garde' and more recently 'post-movement,' post-modernist,' and 'trans-avant-garde' express nothing more than a desire to break through the circuitous logic of a discourse which demands experiment but nevertheless compels repetition (89).

The practice Kelly describes - painting's 'reappropriation' of Modernist themes precisely in order to subvert them - fits Craig Owens' conception of post-Modernism's deconstructive impulse. She thus disputes Michelson's consignment of painting to Modernism by theorizing a painting practice that is itself post-Modernist. At the same time, her remarks refute Michelson's insinuation of a Modernism/post-Modernism split by promoting Modernism as *fundamental* to 'post-modernist' discourses attempting to break through Modernism's inherent repetitiveness. Following Kelly, we might consider Modernist painting practices to be constituent of post-Modernist painting

⁵⁷Mary Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," in Wallis, p. 89.

practices. Or, we could extend the argument and consider other practices that have been regarded as 'post-Modernist' - appropriation, for example - as always founded upon Modernist themes. How, then, are we to read *Artforum's* renewed critical interest in painting in the 1980s and its implicit 'reappropriation' of a practice which dominated the attention of the journal in the 1960s? How, for that matter, are we to read the magazine's interest in painting under Leider?

Perhaps Kelly's use of the term 'reappropriation' provides a clue. Without the prefix 're,' *Artforum's* revival of painting might have been seen as its ultimate self-reflexive gesture, its appropriation of itself at an earlier stage. I would then have argued that Sischy's focus on painting demonstrated yet another self-critical effort, one which attempted to reproduce and thus transfer the magazine's former 'possession' of its critical territory in order to effect the self-definition that had eluded *Artforum* in the latter stages of John Coplans' editorship and under Joseph Masheck. However, the notion of a reappropriation complicates such an argument, for intrinsic to the term is a doubling, or even larger multiplication, of the appropriative act. With regard to *Artforum* under Sischy, Kelly's notion of reappropriation offers up the following scenario: Sischy 'appropriated' for her editorship certain perceptions of the journal under Philip Leider as critically dominant and as an authority on Modernist artistic practices. However, because of its doubling effect, the act rebounds, and the *Artforum* of the '60s retroactively retakes exclusive possession of these notions on behalf of Leider's editorship. Such a recovery may seem paradoxical but, according to Jean-François Lyotard, it is also paradigmatically post-Modern:

The artist and the writer...are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. Hence the fact that work and text have the characters of an *event*, hence also they always come too late for their author, or, what amounts to the same thing, their being put into work...always begin to soon. *Post modern* would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (*post*) anterior (*modo*) (Lyotard, 81).

The future anterior tense fuses the past with what is yet to come. Implicit in the tense is a foreknowledge of what it is that will have been done. In terms of *Artforum*, Leider embodies Lyotard's artist: one who formulated the rules for what will have been done in the future – in this case, by Sischy. Kelly's notion of reappropriation takes Lyotard's view a step further, suggesting that Sischy's appropriation of elements of Leider's *Artforum* could only occur because he had already anticipated her action and so, in a sense, reappropriated those elements from Sischy. Given Lyotard's further conviction that 'postmodernism...is not modernism at its end, but in its nascent state,' Leider's precursory *Artforum*, more so than Sischy's later version, emerges as the journal in its post-Modern condition.

At first glance, it would seem that Sischy articulated in her final issue the contrary concept of the *Artforum* of the 1960s as a Modernist embodiment of a pure, self-definitive journal. For it is within this February, 1988 issue, devoted entirely to the topic of 'age,' that she at last made the ultimate self-referential gesture I alluded to above: *Artforum's* appropriation of *Artforum* itself. Midway through the issue, and without explanation, Sischy reproduced the entire first issue of the magazine. However, since Philip Leider had not yet joined the journal, her act cannot be regarded as a self-critical attempt to appropriate for her editorship the area of competence over which his *Artforum* had held sway. Rather, Sischy provokes a parallel between her final issue's reproduction of the magazine in its incipient form and Lyotard's idea of post-Modernism as Modernism in its nascent state, a state which he argued remains constant. Moreover, she conjures up his conception of the future anterior, for the 1988 issue which brackets the inaugural issue seemingly invests it with the foreknowledge of 'what will have been done.' Crucially, though, Lyotard's notion of the tense renders its implicit prescience unrealizable:

The future anterior in which Lyotard situates postmodern art indicates that, for him, one of the primary functions of art is to keep the knowledge we have of it from ever being actual – either a present knowledge or one anticipated in a future that will some day constitute

the present. When art is known or knowable, it no longer is art, but has become a category of knowledge.⁵⁸

For Lyotard, the foreknowledge underlying Sischy's reproduction of *Artforum's* first issue is only ever endeavoured, never achieved. And, on a basic level, *Artforum's* continuation prevents such prescience, as its publication on a monthly basis renders it perpetually in process, thereby deferring the closure implicit in the future anterior tense. Though Sischy's reproduction of *Artforum's* first issue within her last issue emphasises a beginning and an ending and so would appear to suggest a closure for the journal, her final statement as its editor affirms its perpetuation and thus keeps in play Lyotard's post-Modernist deferral of knowledge:

I am writing this letter because this is the last issue of *Artforum* that will come out under my editorship...no one owns this seat. It is not a throne, it is a swivel chair - made for more than one view.⁵⁹

In light of its articulation of Lyotard's concepts of post-Modernism, Sischy's appropriation for her final issue both concords and contrasts with that of her first. Unlike that first appropriation, her final act does not insist upon the notion of originality for its appropriated piece. Neither does it effect a self-critique, nor a self-definition, as its invocation of Lyotard's future anterior precludes the achievement of (self-)knowledge fundamental to a Greenbergian self-definition. Yet like her appropriations from *VVV*, Sischy's reproduction of *Artforum's* first issue gives rise to notions that complicate, if not render impossible, attempts to extract Modernism from post-Modernism. Along with its invocation of the future anterior, her appropriation's overt analogy to Lyotard's belief in post-Modernism as Modernism in its nascent state - a state which, remember, is constant - ties Modernism's continual interconnection with post-Modernism to the appropriation itself. By thus manifesting Lyotard's concept of post-Modernism, Sischy's final self-reflexive, appropriative act for

⁵⁸David Carroll, *Paraesthetics* (New York: Methuen, Inc., 1987), p. 156.

⁵⁹Ingrid Sischy, "Ingrid Sischy," *Artforum*, Feb. 1988, p. 2.

Artforum at last assimilates post-Modernism into the journal itself.

September 1993

In what must be its most blatant demonstration of self-referentiality, *Artforum* published a 30th anniversary issue in September, 1993 devoted almost entirely to the journal's retrospection. Published a year and three months after the actual anniversary date (June, 1992), the issue exhibits little of the post-Modernist self-critical deconstructive impulse that often bubbled underneath Sischy's *Artforum*. Instead, it not only reverts to a Greenbergian self-criticism that entrenches and, here, glorifies the journal in its area of competence, but we shall see that it also reintroduces the notions of both *Artforum's* internal split and post-Modernism's supposed rupture of Modernism. Having already liberally cited comments from this anniversary issue to evince the magazine's self-reflexivity, I shall not repeat myself by rehearsing the issue as a whole. Rather, I shall consider certain of its subtler self-referential and self-critical aspects in order to determine the depth of what comes through as a decidedly Modernist impulse to a self-definitive knowledge.

For the cover of the 30th anniversary issue, editor Jack Bankowsky commissioned a project by artist Ed Ruscha entitled "Etc. Etc." (fig. 21). Bankowsky refers to Ruscha's piece in his editor's letter as 'a deadpan charge of redundancy.'⁶⁰ However, there is an alternative way of attending to the term 'etc.' than through the superfluity, repetition, and profusion connoted by 'redundancy;' there is its acknowledgement of that which is additional but unspecified. It is this denotation which inspires what follows here, for in considering features of the September, 1993 issue for discussion, I have selected essays and remarks which tacitly suggest something more about *Artforum's* self-reflexivity than their actual texts specify.

⁶⁰Jack Bankowsky, "Etc. Etc. Editor's Letter," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 3.

ARTFORUM

SUMMER 1982 \$7.00 SEP 15 INTERNATIONAL
SPECIAL ISSUE

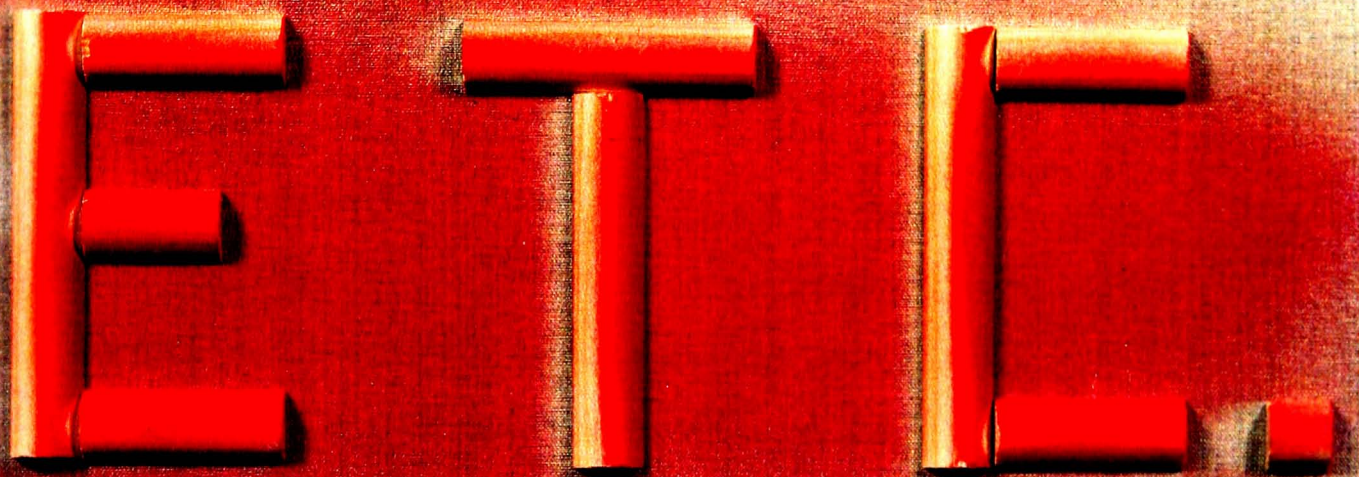


Fig. 21

The notion of self-reflexivity first surfaces within the issue's opening text, Jack Bankowsky's "Etc. Etc. Editor's Letter:"

The material in this issue has all been newly commissioned, and calls not only on eloquent voices from the near and the distant past, but on some edgy new ones we are still getting to know. For *Artforum's* status as a fixture of contemporary culture, earned more than two decades ago, is not at issue here; the question is rather what kind of institution we have become. As the solicited opinions (reminiscences, meditations on the state and fate of the art magazine or on art writing more generally, selections of single works that permanently rearranged 16 writers' personal canons, reflections on the roles and responsibilities of criticism today) came home to roost - from Ruscha's cover commission, to Stuart Morgan's finger-wagging pout, to John Coplans' crotchety paean to the good old days, to Thomas Crow's measured meditation on the art magazine as institution - a conditional answer began to suggest itself: at least on this occasion, it seemed *Artforum* was going to have to be an institution self-reflexive enough to let it all hang out (3).

Within Bankowsky's conception of self-reflexivity lies the promise of eventual self-definition. His claim that the 'answer' to *Artforum's* anniversary issue's inherent 'question' of self-knowledge exists within the self-reflexive act therefore corresponds with Greenberg's beliefs about self-criticism's effect. Yet we shall see that the issue does more than simply articulate these beliefs, it puts them into operation. *Artforum's* recognized self-critical tendencies amplify the self-reflexivity intrinsic to a retrospective and render its 30th anniversary issue the very enactment of Greenberg's 'self-definition with a vengeance' (1961:755).

Bankowsky himself initiates the process of self-definition by demarcating the journal's retrospection into two periods: "'62-'79" and "'80-'93." Not only does he thus mark an internal break for *Artforum*, he reinforces it by inserting between the two sections two other sections - "State of the Art," in which 16 critics each select a personally significant work of art to discuss, and "Critical Reflections," which sees Rosalind Krauss, John Rajchman, and Homi Bhabha recast in the part Sidney Geist had played some 31 years earlier: definers of the roles and responsibilities of contemporary criticism. Forty-five pages separate the first period of the journal from the second, thereby physically attesting to the notion of *Artforum's* internal break. Yet by thus circumscribing the

magazine temporally, Bankowsky also rekindles old perceptions associated with the periods in question. More to the point, despite the fact that his introductory letter warns his readers against accepting 'the familiar stereotype of the magazine as a bastion of high-toned pedagogy,' 'the myth of an Artforum of exclusively austere and hermetic intellection,' and the term 'the "new Artforum" - a designation as conditional as the "old Artforum"' (3), his insistence upon separating 'old' from 'new' reifies the 'myths,' 'stereotypes,' and 'designations' associated with those periods and thus defines the journal accordingly.

The section devoted to the 'old *Artforum*' and its aftermath contains interviews, articles, and reminiscences with, by, and about staff members associated with the journal at various times between 1962 and 1979. Unsurprisingly, nearly all of the contributors explicitly evoke both the figure of Philip Leider and the critical sway his editorship achieved for the magazine, resulting in a self-critical retrospection that by now cements his *Artforum* in its area of competence. One, however, refers back to John Coplans editorship and, specifically, the controversy surrounding Lynda Benglis' advert in the November, 1974 issue of the journal. It is to "Let Slip the Dogs of War: Editing *Artforum*"⁶¹ by former managing editor Angela Westwater (October 1972-June 1975), that I now turn, for her invocations of Coplans' editorship and the Benglis controversy set up a chain of *Artforum* self-references that ultimately begin and end with the 30th anniversary issue itself.

Of her days at *Artforum*, Westwater recalls,

It was that summer [of 1972] that I began working at the magazine on its tenth-anniversary issue. *Artforum's* staff at that time was small - six all told - and its quarters abysmal, but the intellectual climate was highly charged, if not adversarial. This - the artists' activism, the editorial controversies, the confrontations with institutional strictures - was the best part of the job. From 'internationalism' to 'feminism,'

⁶¹Angela Westwater, "Let Slip the Dogs of War: Editing *Artforum*," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 120.

from the 'quality' debate to the 'dildo' debate, from the first piece of copy I produced...to the last..., my *Artforum* experience provided an extraordinary education (120).

Of all of the allusions to the magazine included in Westwater's account, two in particular set in motion a chain of self-reflexive acts. First is an invocation of something already implicit within the very execution of a 30th anniversary issue: the journal's publication of a 10th anniversary issue in September 1972, nine months after Leider had departed the journal. Unavoidably, Westwater invokes the figure of Leider as well, for the 10th anniversary issue was dedicated to the former editor: 'This 10th anniversary issue is dedicated to Philip Leider, long the magazine's principal editor and its most critical reader' (p. 5). More interestingly, Westwater's reference to the 10th anniversary issue encourages the 30th anniversary issue to perform its own reflexive act. For above Westwater's article, the journal reproduces a photograph of Westwater herself, Coplans, and production manager Tanya Neufeld in what is identified as 'Artforum office, July 1972' (fig. 22). The significance of the 30th anniversary issue's reproduction of this image lies in the fact that the cover of the 10th anniversary issue featured a photograph simply described within its table of contents as 'Artforum office' (fig. 23). The more recent anniversary issue therefore appropriates from the earlier issue its evocation of the space in which *Artforum* was once produced, imparting to the office space itself a significance usually reserved for the journal's contents. But why do both anniversary issues - the only such issues that the journal published, by the way - highlight the magazine's former office space in this self-reflexive way?

Let us look at the photographs themselves. Both record from the same vantage point an office wall covered in framed *Artforum* cover images. In the case of the 10th anniversary issue, the placement of a photograph on the cover of the magazine which itself depicts its own magazine covers exhibits a self-referentiality that asserts for *Artforum's* cover a certain power. Although both photographs focus in on the same area of the office, they differ somewhat in its



Fig. 22

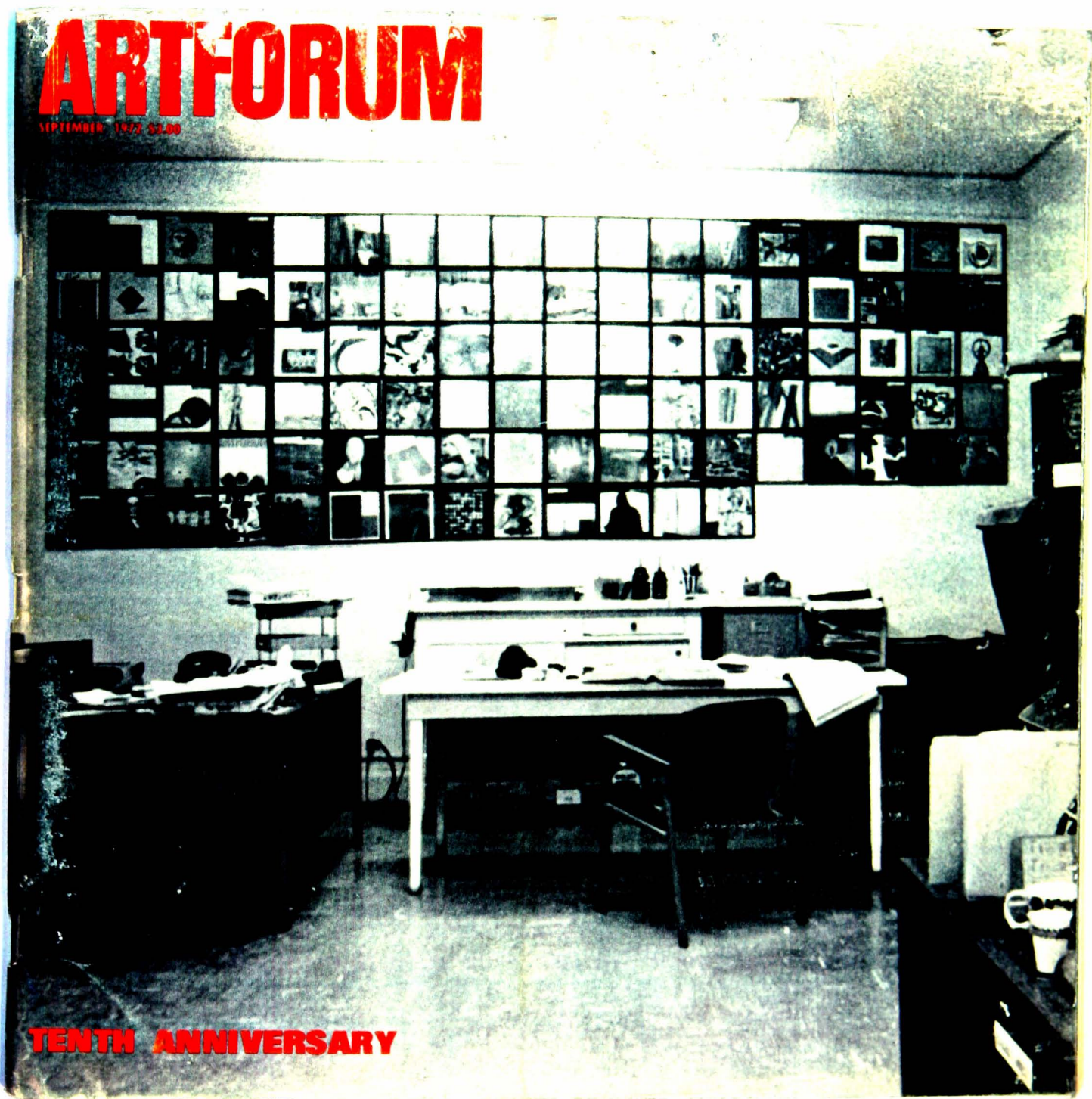


Fig. 23

depiction. The 10th anniversary cover photograph offers a long wide-angled view of an empty office space. Two desks are clearly visible; part of a third peeks out from the cover's lower right-hand corner. Though vacated, the desks express activity through their clutter, by the open books left lying around, by an open magazine hanging off the top of one of the desks, and by a chair pushed aside at an angle that suggests its occupant had just gotten up out of it. In contrast, the photo within the 30th anniversary issue is taken close up, portraying activity through the figures of Westwater, Coplans, and Neufeld in concentrated industry. Yet despite their differences, both photographs connote activity which, according to Henri Lefebvre, forms an essence of the work space itself: 'The *space of work* has two complementary aspects: productive activity and position in the mode of production.'⁶² In this latter aspect of the work space, Lefebvre explains, lies an allusion to power:

The *same* abstract space may serve profit, assign special status to particular places by arranging them in the hierarchy, and stipulate exclusion (for some) and integration (for others)...
Spatial practice thus simultaneously defines: places – the relationship of local to global; the representation of that relationship; actions and signs; the trivialized spaces of everyday life; and, in opposition to these last, spaces made special by symbolic means as desirable or undesirable, benevolent or malevolent, sanctioned or forbidden to particular groups (288).

Looking at the wide view of *Artforum's* office afforded by the 10th anniversary cover image, one can guess but cannot ascertain for certain which desk might belong to the editor and which to a staff member with perhaps less authority. The denotation of the journal's internal hierarchies does not seem to be of great importance here. Instead, *Artforum's* reproduction of its office space on the cover of a special issue commemorating its critical ascendancy over the previous decade seems designed to represent in particular its relationship as a local (New York City) art journal to the international art world, where it had by that time achieved recognition and critical bearing. Hence the expression of authority

⁶²Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, 1974; rpt. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), p. 288.

connoted by the meticulous display of 103 framed cover images proclaiming ARTFORUM, which strive to override the lack of art world status conveyed by the modest desks and their informal arrangement.

The image reproduced within the journal's 30th anniversary issue reinforces the other photograph's purport of authority by eliding the desks altogether from its view, focusing instead on the framed magazine covers and their implicit power within the art world – recall that John Coplans once commented, 'when I'd put an artist on the cover, six museums and collectors would call the gallery, wanting to buy'⁶³ – and on the three managerial figures who personify *Artforum's* authority. The journal thus employs its 30th anniversary issue in a Greenbergian self-critical attempt to reinscribe its early critical sway, supplanting the photograph on the cover of its 10th anniversary issue with one that offers a less ambiguous representation of its status within, and relationship to, the international art world.

Now consider two other references to *Artforum's* 1970s offices. We have already heard Westwater's allusion to the journal's 'abysmal' quarters. But Westwater's remark also invokes a similar reference from Peter Plagens in the magazine's June 1974 issue:

Tried to read three issues of *Artforum* on the plane coming in, got through only part of one article before my head hurt...*Artforum* office – barely more commodious than an elevator shaft. 13,000 subscribers *out there* envision it emerging monthly through the cool glass doors of the World Trade Center because Optima and a square format belie its manger.⁶⁴

Although both Plagens and Westwater emphasize the journal's cramped quarters, only Plagens underscores the difference between a public perception of *Artforum's* space of production and the actual environment in which it was produced. He extends an image of the journal's offices, the interior of which

⁶³Peter Plagens, "John Coplans," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, p. 190.

⁶⁴Peter Plagens, "Peter and the Pressure Cooker," *Artforum*, June 1974, pp. 31–32.

Artforum's readers had seen two years earlier, to the supposed building which would have housed them. The image he describes - 'the cool glass doors of the World Trade Center' - imply for *Artforum* an architectural authority that matched its presumed international critical authority. Indeed, according to Lefebvre,

The arrogant verticality of skyscrapers, and especially of public and state buildings, introduces a phallic or more precisely a phallocratic element into the visual realm; the purpose of this display, of this need to impress, is to convey an impression of authority to each spectator. Verticality and great height have ever been the spatial expression of potentially violent power (98).

After briefly ceding to *Artforum* this spatial display of power, Plagens declares its illusion and withdraws it, subverting the claim to correlative art world power implied by the photos of its former office. By unveiling the myth behind an assumption of spatial authority, he suggests a similar pretence within both internal and popular perceptions of the journal's critical authority. In contrast to the Modernist self-criticality informing *Artforum's* self-reflexive act, Plagens' self-referentiality on the journal's behalf evinces the deconstructive impulse attributed to post-Modernism. His revelations from within the journal retroactively *and* prospectively undermine notions of power expressed within the 10th and the 30th anniversary issues' photographs of the magazine's offices, and thus problematize the metaphorical substitution of the image of *Artforum's* office space for a perception of the magazine itself (Owens, 235).

Angela Westwater's references to *Artforum's* 10th anniversary issue and the journal's cramped offices set up a chain of self-reflexive acts that move us back to September 1972 and that issue's cover image, on to June 1974 and Peter Plagens, and back again to September 1993 and the reproduction of yet another photograph of the magazine's former office. Her evocation of the "'dildo" debate' - the 'thing' Rosalind Krauss refused to name (Malcolm, "...I,' 49) - provokes a reciprocal chain of self-reflexivity, one which of course refers back to the Benglis controversy that began with the journal's publication of her advertisement in November 1974 and exploded with the appearance in December

1974 of the associate editors' dissociative statement. Having probed this controversy at length in chapter 2, I will not rehearse it here. Instead, I want to consider this self-reflexive chain's arrival back at 30th anniversary issue itself; specifically, at an article by Rosalind Krauss, one of the signatories of the 1974 dissociative letter.

Although Krauss' article "Cindy Sherman's Gravity: A Critical Fable"⁶⁵ makes no direct reference to the Benglis advertisement, its argument invokes elements of the image nonetheless. In order to demonstrate how it contributes to the operation of *Artforum's* self-referentiality, I offer a *précis* of her essay's contentions with regard to Sherman's work.

Krauss opens her discussion with an appraisal of the kinds of criticism Sherman's photographs have attracted, none of which, she feels, address the work convincingly. She therefore offers an alternative reading of Sherman's images, particularly her 'Centerfold' series of 1981-1982, in terms of its manipulation of spatial relations. According to Krauss, 'the long narrow strip of the centerfold is a resolutely horizontal format' (164), one which challenges the verticality of the visual field on which visual form coheres. As she explains it,

Form coheres for the human viewer as he or she looks outward from a standing position; it hovers in a plane parallel to the upright body. Form organizes itself, as the Gestalt psychologists would explain, in an alignment that is 'fronto-parallel' to the perceiver. This orientation to the vertical is not, of course, dependent on the viewer's actual uprightness in any given moment of seeing...But for the projection to cohere, for it to organize itself as form, its coherence in the subject's *imaginaire* is *as if* vertical (164).

Krauss takes particular issue with what she considers to be feminist criticism's determination to see Sherman's 'characters' as fetishized by the male gaze. She thus posits the intrinsic horizontality of the centerfold against the verticality of the visual, claiming that it is this horizontality that specifically defies the

⁶⁵Rosalind Krauss, "Cindy Sherman's Gravity: A Critical Fable," *Artforum*, Sept. 1993, pp. 163-164; 206.

operations of the male gaze and exposes the 'mythic effects' of a feminist criticism 'blinding itself to anything outside the vertical register of the image/form...' (206): 'For what does that gaze seek to summon, again and again, if not the completeness, the formal coherence, and the verticality of the visual?' (206).

It is through Krauss' emphasis upon the rebellious capabilities of the centerfold that she inadvertently conjures up the Benglis affair. Arguing that Cindy Sherman's recourse to the format generates 'extraordinary work of imaginative projection' (206), the long-term *Artforum* reader cannot help but recall with more than a touch of irony that Krauss and her colleagues denounced Benglis' own centerfold in December 1974 as 'an object of extreme vulgarity,' and 'a shabby mockery' of the women's liberation movement (9). At that time, she and the other associate editors vilified Benglis as little more than a prostitute, yet her appreciation of Sherman paradoxically hangs upon the artist's manipulation of the centerfold format. What is of interest to me here is the possibility presented by Krauss' central argument that one could substitute the figure of Benglis for the figure of Sherman without oversimplifying or modifying its basic contentions. Her essay would then not only operate as a recantation of her previous position (a recantation that I am not, of course, presuming for Krauss), it would also supersede the associate editors' statement and thus erase from *Artforum's* prestigious critical reputation what remains, even in the eyes of the 30th anniversary issue itself, a blot.⁶⁶ If one accepts this possibility, then Krauss' essay prevents Angela Westwater's evocation of to the journal's 'dildo debate' from referring the reader only to the two 1974 issues of the magazine; it allows *Artforum* to return him or her in a self-reflexive gesture to 1993 and to 'correct' a critique that its audience once publicly condemned as uncharacteristically *in*competent.

⁶⁶See Peter Plagens, "John Coplans," p. 190, wherein Plagens cites the Benglis controversy as an imperfection on the former editor's political record.

Artforum under its various editors shares at least one thing in common: its consistent impulse toward its own self-reflexivity. If I have concentrated on the special issues of February 1980, February 1988, and September 1993 to exemplify this characteristic, it is not because they were exceptional in their display of the magazine's self-reflexivity but, rather, because they typified it to an extreme. I have maintained throughout this discussion that the journal's self-referentiality evinces simultaneously both Modernist self-critical and post-Modernist self-de-centering dictates which prevent it from completely realizing either one. I hold to that thought, but admit that there is one figure who, perhaps more than any other *Artforum* writer or staff member, was the most explicit and, arguably, the most ahead of his time in his peculiarly 'post-Modernist' participation in the journal in order to undermine its own assumptions about itself: Peter Plagens. I want to end with a somewhat lengthy but entertaining excerpt from his "Peter and the Pressure Cooker" for two reasons. One, it conducts a fast and furious self-criticism on behalf of *Artforum* that does everything possible to disrupt the notion of critical 'purity' that the journal had constructed for itself and has tried to preserve ever since. And two, Plagens' final sentences tacitly corroborate my motivating suspicion that an inquiry into *Artforum's* self-reflexive texts and images could articulate aspects of the journal that it may have tried hard to have left unspoken:

Coplans has a Sunday buffet, with the magazine people...An outsider, I get everybody's rap. Coplans: holding the fort against Lilliputians wanting to break into print or revive formalist criticism; Kozloff: the magazine is awash in pseudoscientistic NASAisms, which is nothing more than '60s formalism rehashed and applied to newer, even more inappropriate art; and (indirectly) Michelson: why don't they just bury that tired old 'art' shit and give full attention to the heaviest stuff in the Big Apple, and to hell with the provinces. I find myself at least partially sympathetic to *everybody's* case. Yes, Coplans is harassed by small minds; yes, the magazine has sold out to SoHo; yet (in L.A.), *Artforum* is an elitist New York house organ; yes (in New York), regional art is mostly second-rate; yes, *Artforum* seems to be swallowing its own nose, etc. etc. What I *should* do is stand up on my hind legs and tell each one: John, you're an intellectual might-makes-right'er and you think art is a fight; Max, this ain't the *Hudson Review*. The next day, our last in the office, I'm giving John back his

press cards. John asks if I got along. He says, 'where's the piece on Turrell?' Why don't you, I suggest, have Ed Wortz interview Bob Irwin on Turrell? 'This,' John says, to James Collins, 'is an example of West Coast playfulness.' A conspiracy of silence, even among the staff, about *Artforum*. It scares the shit out of me - a granite wall of heavy typesetting and enigma (32).

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