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Wholly Obsolete or Always a Possibility?

Past and Present Trajectories of a 'Dematerialization' of Art

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In February 1968, when the critics Lucy R. Lippard (b. 1937) and John Chandler (b. 1932) published their essay 'The Dematerialization of Art' in the magazine *Art International*, they introduced a term that has shaped debates on Conceptual art ever since. Having noticed a shift away from the artwork as an object crafted by the artist her- or himself, they identified two key tendencies in the art of their time: One towards 'art as idea', the other towards 'art as action'. Both are described in terms of a departure from materiality, because, **'**[i]n the first case, matter is denied, as sensation has been converted into concept; in the second case, matter has been transformed into energy and time-motion.'[1] They assert that this trend could lead to a 'profound dematerialization of art, especially of art as object, and if it continues to prevail, it may result in the object's becoming wholly obsolete.'[2]

This essay addresses the traditions, challenges and potentials of this hugely influential, yet highly controversial concept of 'dematerialization'. First, by analyzing Lippard and Chandler's pivotal text as well as its immediate critical reception and corresponding statements by key figures such as Terry Atkinson (b. 1938) of the Conceptual art group Art & Language, founded in Coventry, England in 1968, and the New York-based artists Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945) and Mel Bochner (b. 1940), it identifies the continuities that link dematerialization and the related notion of 'art as idea' to classical aesthetics as well as traditional models of intentionality and authorship. Bochner's criticism, together with his colleague Sol LeWitt's (1928-2007) 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' (1967), will serve as entry points for an alternate understanding of Anglo-American Conceptual art that is not so rigidly

[1] Lippard & Chandler 1968, 31.
[2] Lippard & Chandler 1968, 31.

'anti-materialist'. This revised approach will not only encompass key Conceptual artists such as Robert Barry (b. 1936), Douglas Huebler (1924-1997), and Lawrence Weiner (b. 1942), whose work does not fit squarely within Lippard and Chandler's framework, but also support a more holistic view on the wider phenomenon of a 'global conceptualism' in other parts of the world.

Second, by shedding light on earlier conceptions of 'dematerialization' in Lippard and Chandler's writings and elsewhere, this essay will arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of this important yet problematic term, its surprisingly heterogeneous traditions, its heuristic potentials and its limits. It will identify a precursor to Lippard and Chandler's use of the term 'dematerialization' and introduce more formalist and reception-based models of what artists and scholars referred to as 'dematerialization' in the beginnings of abstraction. These findings will demonstrate that the Argentine art theorist and psychoanalyst Oscar Masotta's (1930-1979) roughly concurrent considerations around dematerialization were by no means the only model that Lippard could have turned to when she postulated 'the dematerialization of art'.

At the same time, Masotta's and other Latin American proponents' media-oriented, politicized version of dematerialization resonates with Lippard's revised account of the political and communicative value of so-called dematerialized art practices since about 1969. For Lippard and other critics, the new conception of art as information that Conceptual art allowed for, and which she tried to capture with the notion of 'dematerialization', held a critical potential towards the economic and political power structures in an age of social unrest and increasingly heated political protests. However, some of the leading historians of Conceptual art have denied this assumption. Instead they described Conceptual art as a mere reflection of the postwar postindustrial consumer society and have also contested its significance more broadly. Thus, given these questions and their fundamental importance for the assessment of Conceptual art and its legacy, the third part of this essay will identify some of the agendas that guided these critical accounts and, as a counterpoint, will uphold the socio-political potential of a 'dematerialized' Conceptual art in its historical moment.

Idea and Intention

In their article, which was published in the magazine *Art International* (fig. 1), Lippard and Chandler do not deliver a consistent framework or theoretical explanation for what they referred to as 'the dematerialization of art'. Instead, they first situate their observations on the art object's imminent obsoleteness in an evolutionary model drawn from the composer and music theorist Joseph Schillinger's (1895-1943) *Mathematical Basis of the Arts* (1943), then argue for the importance of Dada and the work of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) as precedents, and close by claiming an 'ultimate zero point' of art that would always be pushed further.[3] In addition to these historical contexts and questionable teleologies, the most consistent thread in their argument is the prioritization of idea over object and thinking above making. Their assertion that '[t]he studio is again becoming a study'[4] suggests not only the Latin roots of the term 'studio' (where *studere* means 'to learn' or 'to study'), but also the early modern revaluation of the visual arts. The elevation of painting and sculpture to the rank of liberal arts was accompanied by a terminological shift from workshop to studio. Closely associated with this historical transformation, the privileging of form over matter, thinking over making, idea over execution, and intellect over sensuality are rooted in a longstanding tradition of Western metaphysics that leads back to the classical Greek philosophy of Plato and Aristotle as well as the seventeenth century rationalist philosophy of René Descartes (1596-1650) and John Locke (1632-1704). The juxtapositions of art as object versus art as idea and of the 'artist as thinker, subjected to none of the limitations of the artist as maker', explicitly refer to this tradition.[5]

While it would be inaccurate to describe this rationalist-idealist framework as the foundation of Conceptual art, it can be identified as an important element in some of the contemporary rhetoric. Joseph Kosuth, one of the four artists whom the pioneering exhibition organizer Seth Siegelaub (1941-2013) presented in his landmark *January 5-31, 1969* exhibition, provides one of the best examples thereof. As part of his promotional activities around the exhibition, which is often simply referred to as the *January Show*, Siegelaub published a page-spread with clandestine self-interviews by the

[3] Lippard & Chandler 1968, 36.
[4] Lippard & Chandler 1968, 31.
[5] Lippard & Chandler 1968, 34.

participating artists in *Arts Magazine* (fig. 2). Asked by the fictitious 'Arthur R. Rose' — Kosuth himself had reportedly come up with this rather Duchampian pseudonym — about the meaning of the label 'Art as Idea as Idea' for his work, the artist elaborated on the separation between idea and material.[6] Furthermore, he explained his interest in abstraction and immateriality:

> I became increasingly aware of the fact that the separation between one's ideas and one's use of material, if not wide at the inception of the work, becomes almost uncommunicatively wide when confronted by a viewer. I wanted to eliminate that gap. I also began to realize that there is nothing abstract about a specific material. There is always something hopelessly real about materials, be they ordered or unordered.[7]

Privileging intention over material concretization and abstraction over reality, Kosuth played down any importance that materials could have for his work, apart from their roles as pure carriers of ideas. In his 1968 review of the *Language II* exhibition at Dwan Gallery in New York, John Chandler recounted Kosuth's statement that the role of the object for him was similar to 'a truck which carries a work of art from a studio to the gallery'.[8] Chandler developed Kosuth's metaphor, drawing connections to Cartesian rationalism and seventeenth-century classical aesthetics with its idealist underpinnings.

When Kosuth presented his position in more detail in 'Art after Philosophy' (fig. 3), an essay that appeared over three consecutive issues of the British contemporary art magazine *Studio International* in late 1969, he based his elaborations less on rationalism than on analytic philosophy, especially the early work of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) and the British philosopher A.J. Ayer's (1910-1989) logical positivism. Briefly summarized, he described Conceptual art, and more generally the value of art after Duchamp, as an inquiry into the very nature of art itself. Objects and materials may be a necessary part of this investigation, but according to Kosuth they are 'conceptually

[6] See e.g. Morgan 1989, 43 n. 5.
[7] Rose 1969, 23.
[8] Chandler 1968, 26.

irrelevant'.[9] Drawing a strong distinction between art and aesthetics, the second part of 'Art after Philosophy' opens with a fierce critique of formalism and its restriction to morphological considerations. At the same time, however, Kosuth was highly conscious of the presence of materials in his work, even as he deemed them conceptually irrelevant. In his second letter to Lippard following the publication of the 'dematerialization' article, he described the use of materials as inevitable, even in the case of oral communication:

> Even if I just said my ideas I would be using materials — 1. my throat 2. air….and if you would stop right now and wave your arm through the air you will realize that the air is made of something and is a material. And the reason you may not have considered those things materials is because they are irrelevent [*sic*] to the ideas….[10]

Kosuth thereby identified the imprecision of the term 'dematerialization', yet at the same time embraced the underlying dualism of idea and matter. Terry Atkinson of Art & Language provides another important example of such implicit idealism. In a letter to Lippard and Chandler dated 23 March 1968 and signed in the names of his colleagues David Bainbridge (b. 1941), Michael Baldwin (b. 1945), and Harold Hurrell (b. 1940) as well, Atkinson criticized dematerialization as a category. However, he did not assert the corollary, which would be that material aspects remain important. Insisting that all but a few of the examples cited in Lippard and Chandler's text were 'art-objects', he contended that conceiving of 'dematerialization' as the 'depriv[al] of material qualities' alone was simply inadequate.[11] At the same time, he considered the material manifestation of idea-based works to be even less important than did Lippard and Chandler.[12] Atkinson devoted a long section of his

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[9] Kosuth 1969b, 160. For the other two parts, see Kosuth 1969a; Kosuth 1969c; for the full text, see Kosuth 1991, 13-32.

[10] Joseph Kosuth, letter to Lucy R. Lippard, 13 May 1968, Lucy R. Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[11] Terry Atkinson, 'Concerning the Article "The Dematerialization of Art." Art International. February 1968', 23 March 1968. Lucy R. Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. For a shortened version, see Atkinson 1999, with the quote on p. 53.

[12] They had at least acknowledged that conceptual works still remain rooted in the domain of visual art, when they wrote: 'As visual art, a highly conceptual work still stands or falls by what it looks like (…).' See Lippard & Chandler 1968, 36. In her answer to Kosuth's first letter concerning the 'Dematerialization' article, dated 10 May 1968, Lippard wrote: 'Yes, ideas are what make great arrt [*sic*] great but so far the idea has been *fused with*

letter to an attack on traditional philosophical aesthetics' fixation on 'matter-state entities', which he considered 'as being not applicable to an art procedure that records its information in words'. He stated further that 'the consequent material qualities of the entity produced (i.e. typewritten sheet, etc.)' would count 'only as a necessary by-product of the need to record the idea'.[13] In this, he shared Kosuth's critical stance towards philosophical aesthetics and embraced the same dualism between idea and material at work in both Kosuth's texts as well as in Lippard and Chandler's article.

These arguments are problematic for both Kosuth as well as for Art & Language, because they are in close ideological proximity to the model they had originally set out to criticize. Significantly, the 1960s were a time when artists and critics questioned the dominant framework of formalist Modernism, as it was advocated by the influential critic Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) parallel to the rise of Abstract Expressionism in the 1940s and continued to be put forward by Greenberg and his followers in the 1960s. The most prominent example is Michael Fried's (b. 1939) controversial essay 'Art and Objecthood' (1967). The art historian and critic delivered a fierce attack on the 'theatricality' of Minimal art (or 'literalist art' as he called it), because these objects had to be experienced as 'in a situation' rather than as autonomous objects. Although Fried parted ways with Greenberg's insistence on the primacy of pure opticality, he nonetheless would uphold Greenberg's championing of medium specificity declaring: '*The concepts of quality and value* (...) are meaningful, or wholly meaningful, only within the *individual arts*. *What lies* between *the arts is theater*' (in which 'theater' is the 'negation of art', in Fried's words).[14] As the art historian Hope Mauzerall has shown, Greenberg's model of Modernism describes an art that transcends the everyday by means of abstraction and purity.[15] She is therefore right in pointing out that Greenberg's definition of art is essentializing. Thus, despite Greenberg's emphasis on medium, which is especially prominent in his early writings, he did not value materiality.

In their later writings, Conceptual artists themselves acknowledged in part the continuities between their thought and Greenbergian Modernism. Kosuth admitted the affinity between Modernist

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not separated from the object. I don't share your lack of interest in esthetic objects as I trust you know.' Lucy R. Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[13] Atkinson 1999, 54.

[14] Fried 1967, 21; 15 (italics original). See also Greenberg 1995.

[15] See Mauzerall 1998.

formalism and Conceptual art's analytic tendency, with its self-imposed limitation to a questioning of the nature of art itself.[16] Art & Language's position shifted considerably when they began to engage with Marxist thought.[17] In an article published in 1972 in the group's journal *Art-Language*, Atkinson and Baldwin still based their critique of the 'material-character/physical-object paradigm of art' in part on rationalist philosophy, but importantly also framed it as a critique of consumerism and the notion of autonomy.[18] However, the revaluation of materiality was not at the center of Conceptual art's self-critique, and the continuity between Modernist and conceptualist anti-materialism has received considerably less attention.

The position shared by Kosuth and Art & Language has been seen as representative for Conceptual art as a whole. Seen in this light, it is significant that Kosuth considered, in the second part of 'Art after Philosophy', only Atkinson and Baldwin's work as '*[p]urely* conceptual art'.[19] Indeed, this notion resonates with Lippard and Chandler's category of 'an ultra-conceptual art that emphasizes the thinking process almost exclusively'.[20] To that end, art historical accounts of Conceptual art have emphasized the analytic conceptualism epitomized by Kosuth and Art & Language over the wider range of practices associated with the term. As an example, the art historian Benjamin Buchloh, who published his influential critical reading of Conceptual art in a catalog essay for *L'art conceptuel, une perspective*, one of the first historical survey exhibitions on the movement, wrote that 'the proposal inherent in Conceptual Art was to replace the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone (the work as analytic proposition)'.[21]

However, a more comprehensive look at the movement, and even exclusively at the work of the artists based in New York, exposes important differences in the artists' thinking about both authorship and materiality. One such case in point is Mel Bochner, who taught at the School of Visual

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[16] See Kosuth 1975 (also in Kosuth 1991, 129-143), 90, where he acknowledged that Conceptual art 'might be described as a formalism of another sort'. See also Colpitt 2004.
[17] See Harrison 2001; Bailey 2016.
[18] Atkinson & Baldwin 1972.
[19] See Kosuth 1969b, 161.
[20] Lippard & Chandler 1968, 31. In Lippard's correspondence with James Fitzsimmons, the editor of *Art International*, Fitzsimmons refers to the subject several times as 'Ultra-conceptualism', indicating what he perceived as the focus of the essay. See letters from Fitzsimmons to Lippard, 10 November 1967 ('Ultra-conceptualism etc. etc.'); 1 January 1968 ('Ultra-Conceptualism'); 4 March 1968 ('your ultra-conceptualists'), Lucy R. Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Unfortunately, copies of Lippard's side of the correspondence concerning this article are not part of these papers.
[21] Buchloh 1990, 107. See Osborne 1999, 64; Roberts 1997, 45, for this criticism, here primarily directed at art historian and Art & Language member Charles Harrison (1942-2009). See Harrison 2001.

Arts in New York while Kosuth was a student there.[22] In his 'Excerpts from Speculation (1967-1970)' that were published in *Artforum* in 1970 (fig. 4, Bochner stated: 'Works of art are not illustrations of ideas' and argued that the use of language implied 'nothing inherently anti-visual'.[23] On a more fundamental level, he contested the assumption that getting away from materials was a vital concern for artists at the time.[24] Furthermore, he observed 'a confusion of idealism and intention'.[25] In line with this criticism, later authors have described Conceptual art, and especially Kosuth's version of it, as a 'totalization of the intention'.[26] Others have called it 'a smartened up version of modernist autonomy'.[27] Such evaluations highlight the problematic persistence of a cerebral male creator-subject in some Conceptual art.

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Remarkably, the text said to have established Conceptual art as a category put forward a different notion of the artist as an authorial figure. Sol LeWitt's 'Paragraphs on Conceptual Art' were published in the summer 1967 special issue of *Artforum* (fig. 5), the same volume that included Fried's 'Art and Objecthood'. In his influential text, LeWitt referred to 'the kind of art in which I am involved' as 'conceptual art' (with a small 'c') and gave the following definition:

> When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art. This kind of art is not theoretical or illustrative of theories; it is intuitive, it

[22] Kosuth has always contested the notion that he was Bochner's 'student'. Consider the following passage from his draft for a letter to Lippard, spring 1968, which he sent to Lippard after the original was lost: 'The placement of Mel before me, however, (…) fit in to the story that I am some kind of protégé and ex-student of Mel's. If anything it's the reverse. Draft problems forced me to become a student again so I enrolled at SVA….' Draft of a Letter from Joseph Kosuth to Lucy R. Lippard, spring 1968, Lucy R. Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
[23] Bochner 1970, 71.
[24] See Bochner 1970, 73.
[25] Bochner 1970, 70.
[26] Daniels 2003, 39.
[27] Roberts 2007, 169. He draws a clear distinction between Kosuth's mere 'formal critique of authorship' and Art & Language's 'general commitment to a notion of expanded authorship'. Roberts 2007, 168. See also Lee 1996, 127.

> is involved with all types of mental processes and it is purposeless. It is usually free from the dependence on the skill of the artist as a craftsman.[28]

Similar to Lippard and Chandler, LeWitt did not provide an assessment of Conceptual art as a fully defined phenomenon or movement (with a capital C) — a task that would have been impossible at that historical moment.[29] The text was illustrated with one of his own serial objects and with works by several other artists primarily associated with Minimalism. Despite its resonances with Lippard and Chandler's article as well as Atkinson and Kosuth's respective positions, especially regarding the distinction between planning and execution and the de-emphasis on craft, it would be wrong to align LeWitt's position too closely with that of his colleagues. As the art historian Sabeth Buchmann has established, LeWitt's conception of the idea as 'machine' and the intuitive character of the resultant work of art should be read as a criticism of rationalist philosophy and the dualism between mind and body that it entails. Breaking from Kosuth and Art & Language's alignment of art with analytic philosophy, LeWitt's text opens up the possibility of a different notion of conceptualist authorship: one that is less centered around reason and intention, but instead on intuition and different forms of production (as suggested by the term 'machine').[30] Correspondingly, LeWitt's position towards materiality was more ambiguous. For instance, he precisely specified the types of materials that should be used for some of his wall drawings (e.g. the hardness of the pencils) and considered the actual wall surface equally important.[31] Furthermore, he valued the 'drafters' (a term he used instead of the more conventional word 'draftsman') executing the wall drawings as collaborators whose own decisions were important in the execution of the piece.[32]

LeWitt's more flexible stance towards materiality and authorial control was shared by the three artists who exhibited with Kosuth in the *January Show*. None of them shared Kosuth's explicitly

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[28] LeWitt 1967, 80.
[29] According to Lippard, LeWitt also introduced the differentiation between conceptual art 'with a small c' and Conceptual art 'with a capital C' to distinguish narrower and more inclusive understandings of the term. See Lippard 1995, 17. Also included in Lippard 1997, vii-xxii.
[30] Buchmann 2007, 48-64. See also Krauss 1978; cat. Minneapolis 2009; Meltzer 2013; cat. Nuremberg & Vienna 2007.
[31] Lovatt 2010; cat. Metz & Leuven 2012. Michael Newman has described LeWitt's strategy in these and other works as a 'displacement rather than the suppression of materiality', insofar as 'materiality does not precede the act, but results from the elaboration of a rule'. Newman 2000, 74-75.
[32] See Aveilhé 2018.

anti-materialist position. Instead they expressed a more positive attitude towards materials and materiality in their statements for *Arts Magazine*: Robert Barry referred to the electromagnetic waves and other energy forms he was working with at the time as 'material'; Douglas Huebler insisted on the 'material substance' of his documentation-based pieces, and had sawdust scattered on the floor for one of his pieces in the show; Lawrence Weiner described the subject matter of his work in just one word, '[m]aterials', although he added that his primary concern lay not with them, but with art.[33] All three of them also allowed for more open notions of authorship, included aspects of irrationality, or both. Huebler's pieces were often based on chance operations, collective creation, and the playful subversion of the systems that sat them in motion.[34] In his 'Statement of Intent', which was published for the first time in the *January Show* catalog, Weiner entrusted the recipient with the responsibility for whether the piece be built or not.[35] Barry described how he chose his unusual materials for their specific properties and stated: 'I suppose I could be called a materialist, in that I don't impose some process, some alien process, onto the material I've chosen.'[36] Neither of these artists was as concerned with analytic philosophy as were Kosuth and Art & Language. Furthermore, their statements indicate that they were less biased against materiality and simultaneously more interested in expanded notions of authorship that could involve the ascription of a certain degree of agency to the materials they used. Taken together, these observations suggest a correlation between attitudes towards materiality on the one hand and towards authorship and intentionality on the other — a correlation that resonates with the properties ascribed to materials and their potentials especially in more recent theoretical debates on 'new materialisms'.[37]

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[33] Rose 1969, 22-23. See cat. New York 1969 for the artists' contributions. Peter Osborne has made a similar point about how these artists' practices did 'not necessarily involve a retreat from "matter" so much as an expansion of the means through which it may be understood to become artistically significant.' See Osborne 2002, 29.

[34] See Berger 2017.

[35] See Sabeth Buchmann's essay in this volume.

[36] Alberro & Norvell 2001, 99. Among the other artists who were then in Siegelaub's circle, Carl Andre (b. 1935) and Robert Smithson (1938-1973) similarly insisted on the importance and productive potential of materiality for their work. The same applies to many others that have commonly been labeled as Conceptual artists, e.g. the German Hanne Darboven (1941-2009), who stood in close contact with Andre and LeWitt since her two-year stay in New York in 1966-1968. See Rahtz 2012; Rübel & Lange-Berndt 2016.

[37] See e.g. Coole & Frost 2010; see also my introduction to this volume.

'Dematerializations'

As we have seen, Lippard and Chandler's vague definition of dematerialization encompasses a wide range of practices.[38] This makes it, on the one hand, a problematic term, but testifies on the other hand to their less restrictive attitude towards materiality as such. One way to assess the implications of their understanding of dematerialization is to look for the occurrence of the concept in their own writing preceding their famous article — a pre-history that has rarely been acknowledged. In the catalog for *Materializing Six Years*, an exhibition dedicated to Lippard's critical and curatorial practice, co-curator Vincent Bonin mentioned that she and Chandler had used the term earlier, in May 1967, in a review of the designer and theorist György Kepes' (1906-2001) influential *Vision + Value* book series.[39] They had adapted it from a text that John Cage (1912-1992) had written for one of Kepes' volumes, and in which the composer referred to the use of silence within musical compositions. He wrote: 'It must be that eventually we will have a music the relationship of which to what takes place before and after ("no" music) is exact, so that one will have the experience that no experience was had, a dematerialization (not of facts) of intentions.'[40] Chandler and Lippard introduce this quote in their short discussion on the role of modularity in recent science and culture and apply it not only to music, but also to the visual arts, or more precisely the 'illusion of disorder' in the painter Larry Poons' (b. 1937) abstract canvases such as *Out* (fig. 6), dating from 1967, the same year as their article. Poons' work is distinct from the practices discussed in the 'dematerialization' article. However, it is possible that Cage's text informed their choice of this particular category for the article they wrote only a few months after the publication of this review, and which also includes a reference to Cage as a 'prophet of the intermedia revolution'.[41]

But besides this discussion of direct inspirations or models, there is a more important lesson to be drawn here. Cage's use of the term demonstrates that 'dematerialization' was by no means an exclusive label for conceptualism's reconfiguration of art and its objecthood. As we shall see, the

[38] For an account of the connection between dematerialization and the term 'practice' itself, see Boon & Levine 2018.
[39] Chandler & Lippard 1967, 30. See Bonin 2012, 31.
[40] Cage 1966, 200.
[41] Lippard & Chandler 1968, 31.

category had a significant prehistory in relation to late nineteenth-century art and early twentieth-century constructivism, and its definition shifted considerably between its various occurrences.

One example that seems far-fetched but stands in direct context to Lippard's own activities is the Italian sculptor Medardo Rosso (1858-1928). In 1963, the Museum of Modern Art presented Rosso's work in the largest museum exhibition dedicated to the artist in the United States up to that moment. In the catalog, the curator Margaret Scolari Barr (1901-1987) described Rosso's experimental methods of sculptural practice as attempts to allow 'the material of his sculptures to pass unnoticed' or 'to dematerialize tangible forms'.[42] Rosso's unorthodox methods of modelling and casting resulted in highly unusual surface characteristics, as in the painted plaster and later bronze versions of *Ecce Puer* ('Behold the Boy', fig. 7). The index to Barr's catalog was compiled by none other than Lucy Lippard, who had started working freelance for MoMA in 1958, and Barr's use of the verb 'dematerialize', which harks back to Rosso's motto to 'forget the material' of sculpture, is similar to Lippard's own loose use of the term 'dematerialization'.[43]

Beyond biographical source-hunting, this investigation illuminates a tradition of a figurative use of the terms 'dematerialize' and 'dematerialization' that clearly informed Lippard and Chandler's usage. One prominent example is the artist Wassily Kandinsky's (1866-1944) treatise *Point and Line to Plane* (1926), written while he was teaching at the Bauhaus in Dessau (fig. 8). In his analysis of the 'basic plane' of painting, he referred to the possibility of a 'dematerialized plane' as an 'indefinable (immaterial) space'.[44] Kandinsky understood dematerialization as an optical effect realized through technical means and a precise knowledge of the material, but that was nevertheless dependent on a certain 'inner attitude of the observer'.[45] Similar to Rosso, he therefore conceived of dematerialization as an optical effect that is generated by material strategies, but that ultimately occurs in the process of reception and not in the object itself. None of these earlier views are close enough to Lippard and Chandler's to qualify as a real model for their understanding of dematerialization. However, they all share a figurative rather than a literal notion of the term. Furthermore, this short overview

[42] Cat. New York 1963, 21; 22.
[43] Hecker 2017, 153. I am grateful to Sharon Hecker for alerting me to Lippard's work on the index, which is also credited in the catalog (cat. New York 1963, 89).
[44] Kandinsky 1979, 144. Original: 'Dematerialisierte Fläche (…) in einem undefinierbaren (unmateriellen) Raum' (Kandinsky 1926, 138-139). See Ehleiter 2018.
[45] Kandinsky 1979, 145.

demonstrates clearly that, in contrast to the way it has generally been framed, dematerialization was not a category developed exclusively for Conceptual art. Moreover, it has proven to be an elastic concept.

Lippard demonstrated her own flexible use of the term in the pages of *Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, the landmark anthology that she published in 1973 (fig. 9). In her preface, Lippard acknowledged the criticism that she had received, but insisted on using the term for lack of alternatives.[46] *Six Years*' notoriously long subtitle lists, among others, anti-form, earth and process art, all of them material-based art practices, some of which could be associated with the 'art as action' category from her earlier essay. This demonstrates that Lippard's intention was not, in the art historian Petra Lange-Berndt's words, to do away with materials entirely but rather to rethink the category.[47] Evidently, 'dematerialization' is a misleading label. But the openness of Lippard's concept allows for a less dogmatic or reductive approach towards Conceptual art and conceptualism in a wider sense, as well as for the unordered complexity of 1960s art that could only be sorted into neat categories in retrospect.[48]

By insisting on dematerialization as catchword in the title of *Six Years,* Lippard made herself vulnerable to criticism. More significantly, however, the book testifies to her ability to critically reexamine her own standpoints and to change her own perspective.[49] The most obvious example is her decision to include an excerpt of an older unpublished conversation as the longest section of her preface. She framed this as a conscious choice to demonstrate her own 'lack of hindsight' — because according to her, the hopes she had voiced back then were already proven wrong by the time of the book's publication.[50] The artist and writer Ursula Meyer (1915-2003), herself an important early chronicler of Conceptual art and the 'de-objectification of the object', had conducted the interview with her in December 1969.[51] Lippard stressed the increased mobility for artists and their work, and

[46] Lippard 1973, 5: 'But for lack of a better term I have continued to refer to a process of dematerialization, or a deemphasis on material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness).' The less catchy notion of a 'deemphasis on material aspects' could however be seen as such an alternative.
[47] See Lange-Berndt 2015, 19.
[48] See Applin 2012.
[49] See Bryan-Wilson 2012, 89.
[50] Lippard 1973, 6. Lippard expressed the political dimension of 'dematerialized' art as well as her later disillusionment with it in many other texts, especially in the 'Postface' to *Six Years* (Lippard 1973, 263-264).
[51] See Meyer 1969; Meyer 1972. A similar alternative notion to dematerialization as Meyer's notion of 'de-objectification' is the critic Donald Karshan's (1929-2003) term 'post-object art'. See Karshan 1970. He was the

the resultant chances of 'getting the power structures out of New York' in order to establish an 'alternative information network'.[52] This demonstrates that Lippard's perspective on what she referred to as dematerialization had changed considerably soon after the publication of the article she wrote with Chandler. While the older article had argued to a certain extent from an idealist perspective, Lippard reconfigured dematerialization as a communicative tool and a catalyst of the decentralization of the art world. Although many of her hopes remained unfulfilled, this transformation from art as idea to art as information or communication provides the basis for what I will discuss below as 'the politics of information'.

Shifting the focus from North American and Western European Conceptual art to the wider manifestation of a 'global conceptualism' — a term introduced as the title for a groundbreaking exhibition at Queens Museum, New York in 1999 — in different parts of the world around the same period, one can find motivations and manifestations of a new attitude towards the art object that establish similar links between dematerialization and communication. The exhibition's main curators Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss argue that although dematerialization in the Anglo-American context was mainly based on the reception of Marcel Duchamp's notion of the *readymade* and a critique of art's commodity status, it could be adopted as a 'strategic move' by artists working under repressive political conditions to produce, display and distribute works, to escape censorship and to participate in international networks and activities.[53] In Argentina, Oscar Masotta linked dematerialization and communication as early as 1967 in a lecture entitled 'After Pop, We Dematerialize' ('Después del Pop, nosotros desmaterializamos'), which he presented at the Instituto Di Tella in Buenos Aires. The published version, dating from 1969, begins with an extensive quote from 'The Future of the Book', a text by the Russian artist and designer El Lissitzky (1890-1941) dating from 1926/27 and that had been published in English in early 1967 in the *New Left Review*. In observing how technology changed communication — for instance the increasing amount of written correspondence that had been 'relieved' by radio and telephone — Lissitzky argued that while materialism was the most important idea of his present moment, 'dematerialization is the characteristic

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organizer of *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects*, an important early exhibition that was held at the New York Cultural Center in 1970. See cat. New York 1970a.

[52] Lippard 1973, 8; 9.

[53] Cat. New York 1999, viii.

of the epoch.'[54] Yet with no medium to replace the book, or printed media in general, in sight, he went on to assess innovative directions that book design might take, based on new forms of page layout, typesetting, and photomontage that artists (including himself) created in the newly formed Soviet Union. Taking Lissitzky's text as a point of departure, Masotta argued for an 'anti-visual aesthetic' that would speak to the mind instead of the eyes, and ultimately for the transformation of art into a communicative act:

> [T]he 'works of communication' also define their own area of 'materiality'. The 'material' ('immaterial,' 'invisible') with which informational works of this type are made is none other than the processes, the results, the facts, and/or the phenomena of information set off by the mass information media.[55]

This claim resonates closely with the hopes Lippard voiced in *Six Years*. Based on these affinities, the possible connections between Lippard and Masotta's respective usages of the term dematerialization have been the subject of some debate, up to a point where Lippard's integrity has been called into question. Lippard herself underscored the significance of the Argentinian context to her thinking when she repeatedly referred to a trip to Argentina in fall 1968 as the moment of her belated politicization.[56] Invited to serve as juror for an exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires during the height of the military regime that had overthrown the elected government in 1966, Lippard was confronted with the repressive political circumstances and came into contact with radical artists such as the *Grupo de artistas de vanguardia* or 'Rosario Group'. At this particular moment, the Rosario Group artists were in the midst of preparing *Tucumán arde* ('Tucumán is Burning'), a collective project they had initiated in order to draw attention to the desolate political and economic

[54] Lissitzky 1967, 40. Original: 'Die Idee, die heute die Masse bewegt, heißt Materialismus, aber was eben die Zeit charakterisiert, ist die Dematerialisation.' (Lissitzky 1927, 172.)
[55] Masotta 2004a, 214. Original (Masotta 2004b, 350): 'las "obras de comunicación" definen ellas también el área de su propria "materialidad". *La "materia" ("inmaterial", "invisible") con la que se construyen obras informacionales de tal tipo no es otra que los procesos, los resultados, los hechos y lon fenómenos de la información masiva*'.
[56] See e.g. Lippard 1973, 8; Lippard 1995, 20.

situation in the northwestern region of Tucumán, one of the country's poorest provinces.[57] However, Lippard missed the final installation and therefore partly misread the group's work; her knowledge of current events Argentina was limited at the time.[58] Yet studies on Latin American conceptualism have implied that in *Six Years* she had claimed to have invented the term 'dematerialization' against better knowledge or that she took the term from Masotta. The first criticism is simply inaccurate.[59] As for Masotta, his lecture was published only in 1969.[60] It is not impossible that Lippard met him in person, yet to my knowledge, there is no direct evidence that such a meeting took place.

In the end, the almost simultaneous occurrence of such similar considerations on a transnational level is more telling than the issue of 'intellectual copyright'.[61] Therefore, leaving questions of temporal priority or direct connections aside, one can observe important affinities between Masotta's text regarding the role of communication, dissemination, and ultimately the dissolution of art into social life, and Lippard's increasingly politicized assessment of the potentials of a 'dematerialized' art — although Masotta's perspective was more radical, as the Argentinian writer aimed towards a dissolution of art in the mass media and finally in society.[62] Lippard's trip to Argentina surely contributed to her new position, but it was also parallel to her involvement with the protests against the Vietnam War that peaked between 1967 and 1969 and with the Art Workers' Coalition that was founded in New York in the beginning of 1969.

The Politics of Information

The new understanding of so-called dematerialized art as a form of information and the enhanced communicative possibilities it allowed for were central to the assumption held by many protagonists

[57] See Giunta 2007. See also Zanna Gilbert's and Niko Vicario's essays in this volume.
[58] See Bryan-Wilson 2009.
[59] Longoni & Mestman 2004, 157. They quote from Lippard's preface as if she had claimed to have invented the concept ('I was the first to write about that subject in 1967.'), although it is clear that Lippard herself made no such allegation when the full quote is taken into account: 'While these ideas are more or less concerned with what I once called a "dematerialization" of the art object, the form of the book intentionally reflects chaos rather than imposing order. And since I first wrote on the subject in 1967, it has often been pointed out to me that dematerialization is an inaccurate term.' (Lippard 1973, 5.)
[60] The text appeared in Masotta 1969. As Longoni and Mestman rightly point out, similar considerations were published earlier in Masotta *et al*. 1967 (esp. 10-11). However, I could find no mention of the term 'dematerialization' in this book. Longoni & Mestman 2004, 170, n. 14.
[61] Longoni & Mestman 2004, 158.
[62] See Longoni 2017, 24-37.

regarding the political potential inherent to the new forms and strategies of Conceptual art. However, the necessity to interpret this new type of work against the backdrop of the broader socioeconomic changes of the period has led some of the most important historians of the movement to regard Conceptual art as a mere reflection of these changes, thus denying it any critical or political potential. As these controversial discussions circle around economic transformations from industrial production to what the Italian philosopher Maurizio Lazzarato (b. 1955) has termed 'immaterial labor', they are intimately linked to the notion of dematerialization.[63] The political hopes of the time stood in similarly close connection to it, regarding both the overcoming of the art object's commodity status and the enhanced possibilities for dissemination and communication that a dematerialized art would supposedly enable.

Lippard directly expressed the connection between 'dematerialized' work and her political agenda in a lecture titled 'Toward a Dematerialized or Non Object Art' that she delivered in November 1969 at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax. According to the unpublished manuscript, she argued that 'an idea of decentralization, increased accessib[i]lity of, and dispersion of information about art and information that is art' were directly 'connected to radical political goals', adding that 'those parallels are so obvious they don't have to be pointed out.'[64] Siegelaub, who took a long hiatus from the art world when he moved to Paris in 1972, similarly underscored the significance of 'the broad social issues of the time',[65] especially the Vietnam War, in various retrospective accounts. He framed Conceptual art and 'dematerialization' — terms that he employed only reluctantly — as attempts 'to avoid the fatality of the art object as commodity'.[66] For the *January Show* and other pioneering exhibition projects that he organized with Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, LeWitt, Weiner, and others between 1968 and 1972, the notion of art as information was a key concept.[67] In a well-known interview for *Studio International* in 1969, he introduced the distinction between 'primary' and 'secondary information' that served as a theoretical basis for his

[63] Lazzarato 1996. See cat. Baltimore 2003; Buchmann 2006; Dezeuze 2009.
[64] Lucy R. Lippard, 'Toward a Dematerialized or Non Object Art', typewritten transcript of lecture given at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 29 November 1969, 1. Lucy R. Lippard Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
[65] Kosuth & Siegelaub 1991, 155.
[66] Cat. Paris 1989, 92.
[67] See Martinetti 2013.

expanded use of the catalog as the exclusive or primary site for the exhibition in many of his projects.[68] For Siegelaub, this purported neutrality of the material support served as a precondition for the communication and dissemination of art, also on a more international scope — concerns that Lippard shared.[69]

While artists and critics stressed the utopian ideal of escaping the commodity character of art as well as the enhancement of communication that conceptualist work would enable, some of Conceptual art's most prominent historians have contested this political potential. In their influential accounts of the movement, Alexander Alberro and Benjamin Buchloh both argue that Conceptual art's shift from the manufacturing of objects to generating ideas closely mimicked the logic of advanced capitalism and the postindustrial consumer society as it emerged after World War II. In *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, an insightful study of Siegelaub and the artists he promoted, Alberro identified Conceptual art's emergence with a transformation in advanced capitalism from industrial production to the provision of services and the manipulation of information, which in turn led to the growing importance of advertising.[70] Alberro based his observations on the philosopher Jean Baudrillard's (1929-2007) concept of the 'sign value' as well as the political theorists Michael Hardt (b. 1960) and Antonio Negri's (b. 1933) notion of 'informatization' from their book *Empire*.[71] These concepts capture important aspects of the socioeconomic context in which artists and exhibition organizers conceived new forms and strategies for the creation and presentation of work.[72] However, the fact that Conceptual art did not succeed, against the initial hopes held by many of its protagonists, in its attempt to transcend the object character of art, does not mean that it straightforwardly imitated

[68] Siegelaub & Harrison 1969, 202. Harrison later stated that he had appeared in name alone as interviewer, but that all questions and answers had been framed by Siegelaub himself. Alberro refers to a conversation with Harrison on 4 February 1994. Alberro 1996, 419, n. 71.
[69] For instance, Siegelaub stressed this international character in his reply to Buchloh. See Kosuth & Siegelaub 1991, 155. For the limits of his conception of internationality, which was fundamentally confined to North America and Western Europe, see Cras 2015; Bryan-Wilson 2016.
[70] Alberro 2003.
[71] Hardt & Negri 2000; Baudrillard 1981; for a critique of Alberro's reading of these approaches, see Osborne 2003.
[72] Another important factor that cannot be considered in detail here is the transformation of art education during the period. As a result, the artists discussed here belonged to the first generation who held university degrees. See Osborne 1999, 50; Singerman 1999, 166-174.

the advertising industry's pursuit of selling ideas, or that it could, in the photographer and art historian Jeff Wall's (b. 1946) polemic account, be reduced to its 'helplessly ironic mimicry'.[73]

Buchloh linked his influential formula of Conceptual art's 'aesthetic of administration' with a similar equation when he argued that this form of art simply mirrored the social identity of a supposedly apolitical postwar middle class.[74] To Buchloh, the political aspirations that Lippard and Siegelaub spelled out for these new medial and formal strategies were nothing but 'culturally and politically naive visions' projected on the artists' work.[75] The only critical potential he saw was in the turn to Institutional Critique by artists that he championed and promoted, such as Michael Asher (1943-2012), Daniel Buren (b. 1938), and Hans Haacke (b. 1936). Buchloh's assumption that critics and exhibition organizers like Lippard and Siegelaub had merely projected their own political ideas and aspirations on the work of the artists they wrote about and presented is debatable. Not only were there close individual connections between protagonists, but the boundaries between artistic production, criticism, and what would later be called curatorial practice were shifting, and artists attempted to take over the functions of criticism.[76]

Moreover, as Kosuth and Siegelaub pointed out in their critical responses to Buchloh's essay, the art historian did not acknowledge the profound self-criticism undertaken by artists and critics in the 1970s. The notion of Conceptual art's 'failure' was originally a product of this self-critique, as it was performed, for example, on the pages of *The Fox*, the short-lived journal Kosuth founded in New York together with Ian Burn (1939-1993), Sarah Charlesworth (1947-2013), Michael Corris, Mel Ramsden (b. 1944), and others under the imprint of the 'Art & Language Foundation'. The expression

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[73] Wall 1991, 18. For more dialectical readings and a critique of Wall's view see Newman 1996; Shannon 2009 (especially 219, n. 3). Wall's own hope, as articulated in the same text, lies in the revival or reinvention of a socially-critical modernist art. See Wall 1991 (especially 82, n. 4; 101). Also see Wall 1995, here focused on the medium of photography.

[74] Buchloh 1990, 128. An earlier version appeared in cat. Paris 1989. Buchloh drew his concept of the middle class from German social theorist Hans Günter Helms (1932-2012), who argued that this group 'deprives itself voluntarily of the rights to intervene within the political decision-making process in order to arrange itself more efficiently with the existing political conditions' (Helms 1966, 3, as cit. in Buchloh 1990, 129).

[75] Buchloh 1990, 141.

[76] See Kosuth 1970, 2, on how Conceptual art 'annexes the functions of the critic'. Also see Guercio 1989; Stimson 1999. Important cases of artist-run institutions or exhibitions staged by artists are, for instance, the Lannis Gallery/Museum of Normal Art founded by Kosuth and Christine Kozlov (1945-2005) in New York in 1967 or Mel Bochner's pivotal exhibition *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art* that was presented at the School of Visual Arts Gallery, New York, in December 1966 (see Cherix 1997).

'the failure of Conceptual Art' was used verbatim on the poster advertising the first issue of *The Fox*.[77] In her contribution to this issue, Charlesworth observed that 'art as idea' had turned into **'**art as idea as art product', but advertised a critical reexamination of the tools that Conceptual art had developed, as a productive way to learn from its shortcomings as well as its achievements.[78] However, the notion of 'failure' soon assumed an important role in teleological narratives that tried to establish the preeminence of other movements, such as Minimalism and Institutional Critique, the legitimization of photography as art or the ongoing importance of medium-based considerations in general. In addition to Buchloh and Wall, the art historian Rosalind Krauss' critical accounts of Barry and Kosuth in particular in her essays on 1970s sculpture and on the 'post-medium condition' are important cases in point here.[79]

Yet one should not underestimate the critical potential that the new strategies of this allegedly apolitical Anglo-American Conceptual art held at that historical moment. The critic Gregory Battcock's (1937-1980) review of the *January Show* gives a sense of the political hopes transported by this new art:

> It's like everything that happened in 1968, at Columbia and Paris and all other symbolic places is finally being understood, and it all REALLY meant something and it really will result in something because it already has in this show. Finally (…), the revolution (…) — it's here, in art.[80]

For Battcock, this revolutionary potential was mainly realized through the negation of painting and other 'obsolete' forms of art. He embraced it not only for its intellectual stimulus, but also as an effective critical move against traditional institutions such as museums and art schools, when he wrote:

[77] Kosuth 1975, 87.
[78] Charlesworth 1975, 5.
[79] Krauss 1973; Krauss 2000.
[80] Battcock 1999, 88.

> What a show like this does is, in one stroke not only demolish the Museum of Modern Art (…) but all those painting courses they are still cranking out in the "art" schools, which were doomed a decade ago but nobody noticed, oh well it's too bad, after spending all that money on paints and everything.[81]

Battcock obviously set his sights too high. Yet some of the hopes associated with conceptualism, or what the art historian Blake Stimson has termed as 'the promise of Conceptual art', have been realized indeed, especially regarding collaborative activities — such as the ones by Art & Language — and the easy dissemination of works, or even entire exhibitions, as in Lippard and Siegelaub's respective projects.[82]

Critics and curators such as Kynaston McShine (1935-2018) and Jack Burnham (b. 1931) understood this new form of practice as an alignment with strategies of communication and information exchange. An important example is the exhibition *Information*, curated by McShine at the Museum of Modern Art in summer 1970. The catalog explicitly invoked the contemporary political context: Photographs of political protests figured prominently in the catalog's extensive appendix of images, which also included examples of artistic protest leveled against the museum itself by the Art Workers' Coalition and by the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama (b. 1929). By using the exhibition catalog in part to decry the establishment and the Vietnam War, McShine and MoMA addressed some of the criticism the museum had received in the preceding months.[83] In his essay for the catalog, the curator directly referenced the political circumstances, drawing connections between artists in the United States and elsewhere:

> The material presented by the artists is considerably varied, and also spirited, if not rebellious — which is not very surprising, considering the general social, political, and economic crises that are almost universal phenomena of 1970. If you are an artist in Brazil, you know of at least one friend who is being tortured; if you are one in Argentina, you probably have had a

[81] Battcock 1999, 89.
[82] Stimson 1999.
[83] See Allan 2004.

> neighbor who has been in jail for having long hair, or for not being 'dressed' properly; and if you are living in the United States, you may fear that you will be shot at, either in the universities, in your bed, or more formally in Indochina. It may seem too inappropriate, if not absurd, to get up in the morning, walk into a room, and apply dabs of paint from a little tube to a square of canvas. What can you as a young artist do that seems relevant and meaningful?[84]

For McShine, the particular historical context fostered contemporary artists' desire to reach broader audiences and to exchange ideas rather than create objects:

> Many of the highly intellectual and serious young artists represented here have addressed themselves to the question of how to create an art that reaches out to an audience larger than that which has been interested in contemporary art in the last few decades. (…) With the sense of mobility and change that pervades their time, they are interested in ways of rapidly exchanging ideas, rather than embalming the idea in an 'object'.[85]

The notion of 'information', in the context of the 1960s, must therefore be understood in connection with the contemporary political climate, but also against the backdrop of the important technical developments and theoretical debates of the time, especially of communication theory, cybernetics, and systems theory.[86] These provided the framework in which Jack Burnham developed his concept of a specific 'systems esthetics', which he elaborated most prominently in two articles published in *Artforum* in 1968/69 and in his catalog essay for *Software*, the exhibition that he curated at the Jewish Museum in New York in 1970.[87] While 'systems esthetics' cannot simply be taken as a synonym for Conceptual art, there are nonetheless close correspondences. For instance, Burnham established systems-based art as an alternative to more traditional approaches, identifying 'a polarity between the

[84] Cat. New York 1970b, 138. The reference to Argentina and Brazil is reflected in the inclusion of several artists from both countries for the exhibition — an example of Conceptual art's noteworthy, yet also limited attempts at internationalization. See Cras 2015 for this aspect.
[85] Cat. New York 1970b, 139.
[86] See Shanken 2015; Drucker 2004; Lee 2004; Hayles 1999.
[87] See Burnham 2015; Jones 2012; Shanken 2015; Skrebowski 2006.

finite, unique work of high art (…) and conceptions which can loosely be termed unobjects'[88] and diagnosing a general 'movement away from art objects'[89] that challenged the 'illusion (…) that art resides in specific objects.'[90] These quotes clearly suggest a close affinity between Burnham's 'systems esthetics' and Lippard and Chandler's 'dematerialization'.

While some contributions to *Software* incorporated computer systems and other advanced technology, it importantly also encompassed Conceptual art practices that did not rely on such technological infrastructure at all. For instance, in *Room Situation (Proximity)*, Vito Acconci (1940-2017) or a substitute would position themselves close to visitors in the exhibition space so as to intrude on their personal space. John Baldessari (b. 1931) planned to inter a container with the ashes from his *Cremation Project* (1969), for which he had burned all his earlier paintings, into a wall of the museum. Douglas Huebler's main contribution was his *Variable Piece 4: Secrets*, which prompted visitors to anonymously share their secrets by writing them down and slipping the papers in a box within the gallery space, for which they would receive someone else's (photocopied) secret in return.[91] As Burnham highlighted in the catalog, *Software* was less concerned with 'technological art' than with new understandings of communication generated by the emergence of information technology.[92]

The few works in *Information* and *Software* that referred to politics directly included those by Hans Haacke, who participated in both exhibitions, and several of the Latin American contributions to *Information*.[93] But what is crucial here is that the paradigm of art as information afforded such possibilities, based on new and supposedly more direct forms of communicative exchange that would help to establish new connections to the world at large.

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[88] Burnham 1968, 31.
[89] Cat. New York 1970c, 10-11.
[90] Burnham 1969, 50. Featured among the illustrations for this essay are an installation view of the *January Show* and one of Robert Barry's radiation pieces.
[91] In that case, admittedly, the copy machine brought in a technological aspect, but not at the heart of the work. The submitted 'secrets' were later published as Huebler 1973.
[92] Cat. New York 1970c, 14.
[93] For Haacke see also Niko Vicario's essay in this volume.

In order to consider this potential from today's point of view and trace its afterlife, Lippard's own later assessments of her initial hopes provide a useful point of departure. In a text written twenty years after the 'dematerialization' article, Lippard described how she and Chandler had sensed 'an aesthetic radicalism in the air that might parallel or give form to the political radicalism of the times' and argued that Conceptual art, in contrast to other postwar art currents, had been 'critically motivated and socially expansive, despite its often uncommunicative facade.'[94] Her most detailed account of the importance, but also the limits of political concerns in Conceptual art is her essay 'Escape Attempts', written for the catalog of the important survey exhibition *Reconsidering the Object of Art*, curated by Ann Goldstein and Anne Rorimer at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles in 1995.[95] Lippard reaffirmed the political dimension of Conceptual art's attempt to overcome the commodity character of art, as illusionary as it might have been, and its more successful take on authorship. She highlighted how the inexpensive, ephemeral character of Conceptual art allowed for a certain degree of internationalization, and also served as an encouragement for women to participate. However, she also acknowledged that the focus on new forms of communication and distribution lacked a corresponding dedication to accessibility, and that there were no real strategies on how to involve broader audiences.[96] Striking a more hopeful tone, Lippard observed a more recent return to conceptualist strategies in politically oriented art practices of the 1980s and 1990s, citing the examples of the Guerrilla Girls, the Women's Action Coalition, or the 1993 Whitney Biennial. In her conclusion, she considered the expansion of art's boundaries through social energies as a possibility and a hope for the future. In her own phrasing, art's 'escape' from the 'white cell' was only temporary, but 'parole is always a possibility.'[97]

The importance of Conceptual art for subsequent practices has been expressed in terms such as 'post-' or 'neo-conceptualism' or even the assumption that all art after Conceptual art was 'post-

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[94] Lippard 1987, 23.
[95] Cat. Los Angeles 1995.
[96] This problem was acknowledged quite early by Robert Barry. During the symposium *Art Without Space* that Siegelaub moderated in New York in November 1969, he countered the latter's appraisal that '[o]ne becomes very much aware of the speed with which this art travels (…) by virtue of its portability' with the observation: 'I haven't found that people understand it any faster even though it is able to get around a lot.' Cit. in Lippard 1973, 131.
[97] Lippard 1995, 38. Lippard's use of the term 'white cell' evidently refers to critic and artist Brian O'Doherty's (b. 1928) influential essay 'Inside the White Cube. The Ideology of the Gallery Space' originally published in 1976. See O'Doherty 1986.

conceptual'.[98] While its — in many ways inconsistent — attempts towards a reconsideration of the object character of art did not result in a fundamental transformation of art's commodity status, its legacy is nonetheless significant. In that sense, dematerialization has aptly been described as a 'useful myth'.[99] Conceptual art did not only challenge capitalist systems of exchange through its critique of objecthood, but also recalibrated the symbolic value of art according to its communicative and socio-political potential.[100] Despite its strong self-reflective dimension, as epitomized in the notion of 'art as idea', and the scarceness of direct sociopolitical content in most of the works in question, Conceptual art thus envisioned and developed key strategies that have enabled the establishment of new connections between art and the world at large — from the immediate aftermath of Lippard's *Six Years* to the present day.

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[98] Osborne 2013; Van Winkel 2012.
[99] Colpitt 1992, 15.
[100] See Kwon 2003; Buchmann 2006; Parvu 2012; Maroja 2014; Dezeuze 2017; Kalyva 2017.

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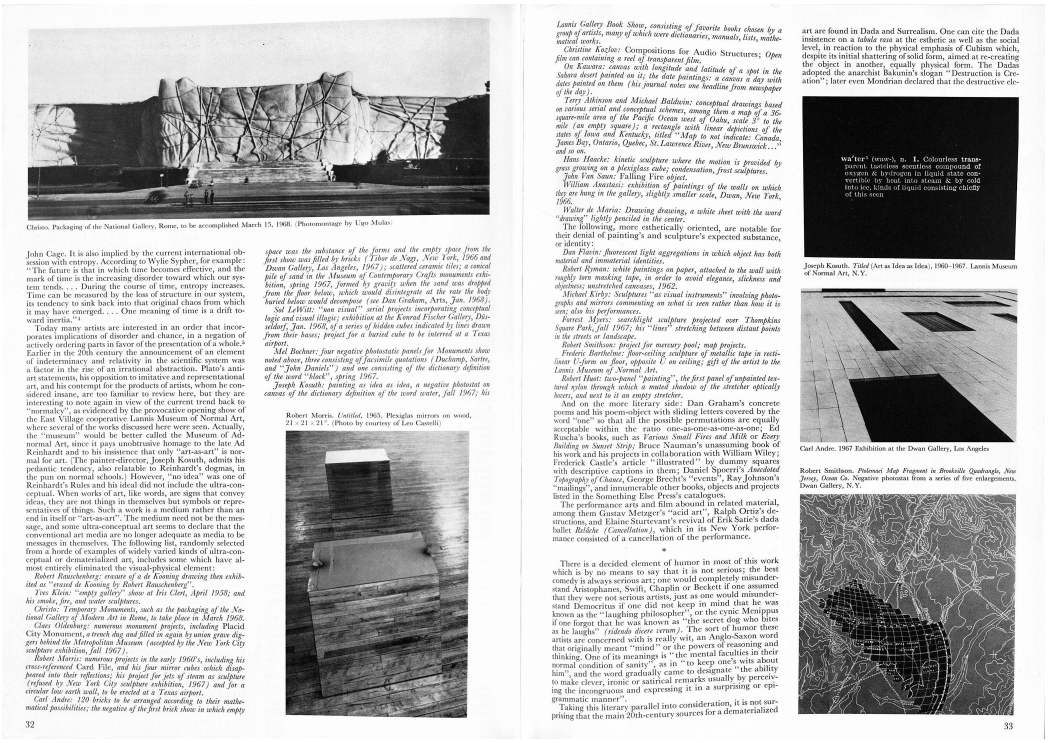

Chirico. Packaging of the National Gallery, Rome, to be accomplished March 15, 1968. (Photomontage by Ugo Mulas)

John Cage. It is also implied by the current international obsession with entropy. According to Wylie Sypher, for example: "The future is that in which time becomes effective, and the mark of time is the increasing disorder toward which our system tends. . . . During the course of time, entropy increases. Time can be measured by the loss of structure in our system; its tendency to sink back into that original chaos from which it may have emerged. . . . One meaning of time is a drift toward inertia."[4]

Today many artists are interested in an order that incorporates implications of disorder and chance, in a negation of actively ordering parts in favor of the presentation of a whole.[5] Earlier in the 20th century the announcement of an element of indeterminacy and relativity in the scientific system was a factor in the rise of an irrational abstraction. Plato's anti-art statements, his opposition to imitative and representational art, and his contempt for the products of artists, whom he considered insane, are too familiar to review here, but they are interesting to note again in view of the current trend back to "normalcy", as evidenced by the provocative opening show of the East Village cooperative Lannis Museum of Normal Art, where several of the works discussed here were seen. Actually, the "museum" would be better called the Museum of Abnormal Art, since it pays unobtrusive homage to the late Ad Reinhardt and to his insistence that only "art-as-art" is normal for art. (The painter-director, Joseph Kosuth, admits his pedantic tendency, also relatable to Reinhardt's dogmas, in the pun on normal schools.) However, "no idea" was one of Reinhardt's Rules and his ideal did not include the ultra-conceptual. When works of art, like words, are signs that convey ideas, they are not things in themselves but symbols or representatives of things. Such a work is a medium rather than an end in itself or "art-as-art". The medium need not be the message, and some ultra-conceptual art seems to declare that the conventional art media are no longer adequate as media to be messages in themselves. The following list, randomly selected from a horde of examples of widely varied kinds of ultra-conceptual or dematerialized art, includes some which have almost entirely eliminated the visual-physical element:

Robert Rauschenberg: erasure of a de Kooning drawing then exhibited as "erased de Kooning by Robert Rauschenberg".

Yves Klein: "empty gallery" show at Iris Clert, April 1958; and his smoke, fire, and water sculptures.

Christo: Temporary Monuments, such as the packaging of the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome, to take place in March 1968.

Claes Oldenburg: numerous monument projects, including Placid City Monument, *a trench dug and filled in again by union grave diggers behind the Metropolitan Museum (accepted by the New York City sculpture exhibition, fall 1967).*

Robert Morris: numerous projects in the early 1960's, including his cross-referenced Card File, *and his four mirror cubes which disappeared into their reflections; his project for jets of steam as sculpture (refused by New York City sculpture exhibition, 1967) and for a circular low earth wall, to be erected at a Texas airport.*

Carl Andre: 120 bricks to be arranged according to their mathematical possibilities; the negative of the first brick show in which empty space was the substance of the forms and the empty space from the first show was filled by bricks (Tibor de Nagy, New York, 1966 and Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles, 1967); scattered ceramic tiles; a conical pile of sand in the Museum of Contemporary Crafts monuments exhibition, spring 1967, formed by gravity when the sand was dropped from the floor below, which would disintegrate at the rate the body buried below would decompose (see Dan Graham, Arts, *Jan. 1968).*

Sol LeWitt: "non ziusat" artist projects incorporating conceptual logic and visual illogic; exhibition at the Konrad Fischer Gallery, Düsseldorf, Jan. 1968, of a series of hidden cubes indicated by lines drawn from their bases; project for a buried cube to be interred at a Texas airport.

Mel Bochner: four negative photostatic panels for Monuments show noted above, three consisting of facsimile quotations (Duchamp, Sartre, and "John Daniels") and one consisting of the dictionary definition of the word "black", spring 1967.

Joseph Kosuth: painting as idea as idea, a negative photostat on canvas of the dictionary definition of the word water, fall 1967; his

Robert Morris. *Untitled*, 1965. Plexiglas mirrors on wood, 21 × 21 × 21". (Photo by courtesy of Leo Castelli)

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Lannis Gallery Book Show, consisting of favorite books chosen by a group of artists, many of which were dictionaries, manuals, lists, mathematical works.

Christine Kozlov: Compositions for Audio Structures; *Open film can containing a reel of transparent film.*

On Kawara: canvas with longitude and latitude of a spot in the Sahara desert painted on it; the date paintings: a canvas a day with dates painted on them (his journal notes one headline from newspaper of the day).

Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin: conceptual drawings based on various serial and conceptual schemes, among them a map of a 36-square-mile area of the Pacific Ocean west of Oahu, scale 3" to the mile (an empty square); a rectangle with linear depictions of the states of Iowa and Kentucky, titled "Map to not indicate: Canada, James Bay, Ontario, Quebec, St. Lawrence River, New Brunswick..." and so on.

Hans Haacke: kinetic sculpture where the motion is provided by grass growing on a plexiglass cube; condensation, fluid structures.

John Van Saun: Falling Fire *object.*

William Anastasi: exhibition of paintings of the walls on which they are hung in the gallery, slightly smaller scale, Dwan, New York, 1966.

Walter de Maria: Drawing drawing, a white sheet with the word "drawing" lightly penciled in the center.

The following, more esthetically oriented, are notable for their denial of painting's and sculpture's expected substance, or identity:

Dan Flavin: fluorescent light aggregations in which object has both material and immaterial identities.

Robert Ryman: white paintings; on paper, attached to the wall with roughly torn masking tape, in order to avoid elegance, slickness and objethess; unstretched canvases, 1962.

Michael Kirby: Sculptures "as visual instruments" involving photographs and mirrors commenting on what is seen rather than how it is seen; also his performances.

Forrest Myers: searchlight sculpture projected over Thompkins Square Park, fall 1967; his "lines" stretching between distant points in the streets or landscape.

Robert Smithson: project for mercury pool; map projects.

Frederic Barthelme: floor-ceiling sculpture of metallic tape in rectilinear U-form on floor, opposite U on ceiling; gift of the artist to the Lannis Museum of Normal Art.

Robert Hunt: two-panel "painting", the first panel of unpainted textured nylon through which a muted shadow of the stretcher optically hovers, and next to it an empty stretcher.

And on the more literary side: Dan Graham's concrete poems and his poem-object with sliding letters covered by the word "one" so that all the possible permutations are equally acceptable within the ratio one-as-one-as-one-as-one; Ed Ruscha's books, such as *Various Small Fires and Milk* or *Every Building on Sunset Strip;* Bruce Nauman's unassuming book of his work and his projects in collaboration with William Wiley; Frederick Castle's article "illustrated" by dummy squares with descriptive captions in them; Daniel Spoerri's *Anecdoted Topography of Chance*, George Brecht's "events", Ray Johnson's "mailings", and innumerable other books, objects and projects listed in the Something Else Press's catalogues.

The performance arts and film abound in related material, among them Gustav Metzger's "acid art", Ralph Ortiz's destructions, and Elaine Sturtevant's revival of Erik Satie's dada ballet *Relâche (Cancellation)*, which in its New York performance consisted of a cancellation of the performance.

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There is a decided element of humor in most of this work which is by no means to say that it is not serious; the best comedy is always serious art; one would completely misunderstand Aristophanes, Swift, Chaplin or Beckett if one assumed that they were not serious artists, just as one would misunderstand Democritus if one did not keep in mind that he was known as the "laughing philosopher", or the cynic Menippus if one forgot that he was known as the "the secret dog who bites as he laughs" *(ridendo dicere verum)*. The sort of humor these artists are concerned with is really wit, an Anglo-Saxon word that originally meant "mind" or the powers of reasoning and thinking. One of its meanings is "the mental faculties in their normal condition of sanity", as in "to keep one's wits about him", and the word gradually came to designate "the ability to make clever, ironic or satirical remarks usually by perceiving the incongruous and expressing it in a surprising or epigrammatic manner".

Taking this literary parallel into consideration, it is not surprising that the main 20th-century sources for a dematerialized art are found in Dada and Surrealism. One can cite the Dada insistence on a *tabula rasa* at the esthetic as well as the social level, in reaction to the physical emphasis of Cubism which, despite its initial shattering of solid form, aimed at re-creating the object in another, equally physical form. The Dadas adopted the anarchist Bakunin's slogan "Destruction is Creation"; later even Mondrian declared that the destructive ele-

Joseph Kosuth. *Titled* (Art as Idea as Idea), 1960–1967. Lannis Museum of Normal Art, N.Y.

Carl Andre. 1967 Exhibition at the Dwan Gallery, Los Angeles

Robert Smithson. *Piolenaei Map Fragment in Brocksille Quadrangle, New Jersey, Dana Co.* Negative photostat from a series of five enlargements. Dwan Gallery, N.Y.

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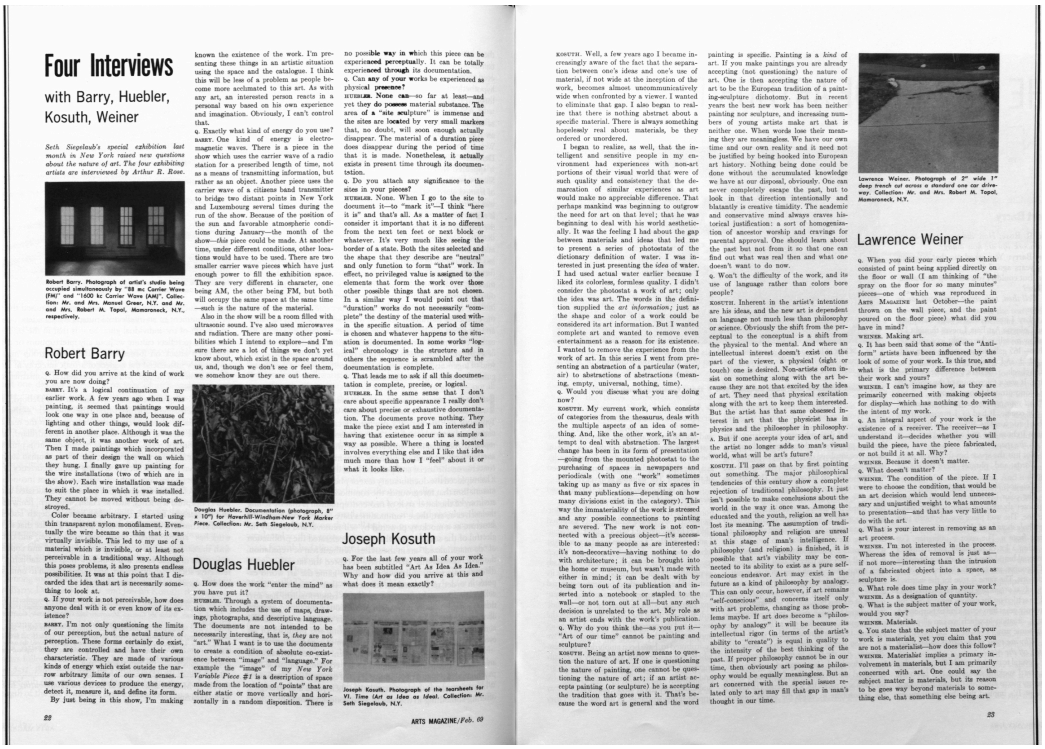
Lucy R. Lippard & John Chandler, 'The Dematerialization of Art' (page-spread), 1968,
Art International 12, no. 2.



Four Interviews

with Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, Weiner

Seth Siegelaub's special exhibition last month in New York raised new questions about the nature of art. The four exhibiting artists are interviewed by Arthur R. Rose.

Robert Barry. Photograph of artist's studio being occupied simultaneously by "93 m. Carrier Wave (FM)" and "1600 kc Carrier Wave (AM)". Collection: Mr. and Mrs. Manuel Greer, N.Y. and Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Topol, Mamaroneck, N.Y., respectively.

Robert Barry

q. How did you arrive at the kind of work you are now doing?

BARRY. It's a logical continuation of my earlier work. A few years ago when I was painting, it seemed that paintings would look one way in one place and, because of lighting and other things, would look different in another place. Although it was the same object, it was another work of art. Then I made paintings which incorporated as part of their design the wall on which they hung. I finally gave up painting for the wire installations (two of which are in the show). Each wire installation was made to suit the place in which it was installed. They cannot be moved without being destroyed.

Color became arbitrary. I started using thin transparent nylon monofilament. Eventually the wire became so thin that it was virtually invisible. This led to my use of a material which is invisible, or at least not perceivable in a traditional way. Although this poses problems, it also presents endless possibilities. It was at this point that I discarded the idea that art is necessarily something to look at.

q. If your work is not perceivable, how does anyone deal with it or even know of its existence?

BARRY. I'm not only questioning the limits of our perception, but the actual nature of perception. These forms certainly do exist, they are controlled and have their own characteristic. They are made of various kinds of energy which exist outside the narrow arbitrary limits of our own senses. I use various devices to produce the energy, detect it, measure it, and define its form.

By just being in this show, I'm making known the existence of the work. I'm presenting these things in an artistic situation using the space and the catalogue. I think this will be less of a problem as people become more acclimated to this art. As with any art, an interested person reacts in a personal way based on his own experience and imagination. Obviously, I can't control that.

q. Exactly what kind of energy do you use?

BARRY. One kind of energy is electromagnetic waves. There is a piece in the show which uses the carrier wave of a radio station for a prescribed length of time, not as a means of transmitting information, but rather as an object. Another piece uses the carrier wave of a citizens band transmitter to bridge two distant points in New York and Luxembourg several times during the run of the show. Because of the position of the sun and favorable atmospheric conditions during January—the month of the show—*this* piece could be made. At another time, under different conditions, other locations would have to be used. There are two smaller carrier wave pieces which have just enough power to fill the exhibition space. They are very different in character, one being AM, the other being FM, but both will occupy the same space at the same time —such is the nature of the material.

Also in the show will be a room filled with ultrasonic sound. I've also used microwaves and radiation. There are many other possibilities which I intend to explore—and I'm sure there are a lot of things we don't yet know about, which exist in the space around us, and, though we don't see or feel them, we somehow know they are out there.

Douglas Huebler. Documentation (photograph, 8" x 10") for Haverhill-Windham-New York Marker Piece. Collection: Mr. Seth Siegelaub, N.Y.

Douglas Huebler

q. How does the work "enter the mind" as you have put it?

HUEBLER. Through a system of documentation which includes the use of maps, drawings, photographs, and descriptive language. The documents are not intended to be necessarily interesting, that is, they are not "art." What I want is to use the documents to create a condition of absolute coexistence between "image" and "language." For example the "image" of my *New York Variable Piece #1* is a description of space made from the location of "points" that are either static or move vertically and horizontally in a random disposition. There is no possible **way in** which this piece can be experienced perceptually. It can be totally experienced **through** its documentation.

q. Can **any of your** works be experienced as physical **presence?**

HUEBLER. None **can**—so far at least—and yet they **do possess** material substance. The area of a **"site** sculpture" is immense and the sites are located by very small markers that, no doubt, will soon enough actually disappear. The material of a duration piece does disappear during the period of time that it is made. Nonetheless, it actually exists in present time through its documentation.

q. Do you attach any significance to the carrier wave of a citizens band transmitter to bridge two distant points in New York and Luxembourg several times during the run of the show. Because of the position of the sun and favorable atmospheric conditions during January—the month of the show—*this* piece could be made. At another time, under different conditions, other locations would have to be used. There are two smaller carrier wave pieces which have just enough power to fill the exhibition space. They are very different in character, one being AM, the other being FM, but both will occupy the same space at the same time —such is the nature of the material.

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Joseph Kosuth

q. For the last few years all of your work has been exhibited "Art As Idea As Idea." Why and how did you arrive at this and what does it mean exactly?

Joseph Kosuth. Photograph of the tearsheets for *Vt. Time (Art as Idea as Idea). Collection: Mr. Seth Siegelaub, N.Y.*

KOSUTH. Well, a few years ago I became increasingly aware of the fact that the separation between one's ideas and one's use of material, if not wide at the inception of the work, becomes almost uncommunicatively wide when confronted by a viewer. I wanted to eliminate that gap. I also began to realize that there is nothing abstract about a specific material. There is always something hopelessly real about materials, be they ordered or unordered.

I began to realize, as well, that the intelligent and sensitive people in my environment had experiences with non-art portions of their visual world that were of such quality and consistency that the demarcation of similar experiences as art would make no appreciable difference. That perhaps mankind was beginning to outgrow the need for art on that level, that he was beginning to deal with his world aestheticly. It was the feeling I had about the gap between materials and ideas that led me to present a series of photostats of the dictionary definition of water. I was interested in just presenting the idea of water. I had used actual water earlier because I liked its colorless, formless quality. I didn't consider the photostat a work of art; only the idea was art. The wording (the definition supplied the *art information;* just as the shape and color of a work could be considered its art information. But I wanted complete art and wanted to remove even entertainment as a reason for its existence. I wanted to remove the experience from the work of art. In this series I went from presenting an abstraction of a particular (water, air) to abstractions of abstractions (meaning, empty, universal, nothing, time).

HUEBLER. In the same sense that I don't care about specific appearance I really don't care about precise or exhaustive documentation. The documents prove nothing. They make the piece exist and I am interested in having that existence occur in as simple a way as possible. Where a thing is located involves everything else and I like that idea much more than how I "feel" about it or what it looks like.

KOSUTH. Well, as the title of my show indicates, I'm not interested in retinal art, in formal relationships which create a unity based on the look of things. I use the word "idea" in my title to mean that the form of the work of art is a conception which is closer to the definition of the word idea. I'm using the word art in its etymological sense as well. Art comes from the Greek word meaning to make. I make propositions which are works of art consistent with the nature of art, that is, tautological. That is, if I make a work of art I am presenting a definition of art as a way of seeing what art is. Anything I do as an artist follows from the nature of art. Art is the question which hopefully answers questions about art. A typical remark about art is that it is a language unto itself, or that it is purely self-referring, or that it exists as art. These statements all point to the tautological nature of art.

q. Do you think that's true of all art now being made?

KOSUTH. I'll pass on that by first pointing out something. The major philosophical tendencies of this century have a complete rejection of traditional philosophy. It just isn't possible to make conclusions about the world in the way it once was. Among the educated and the youth, religion as well has lost its meaning. The assumption of traditional philosophy and religion are unreal at this stage of man's intelligence. If philosophy (and religion) is finished, it is possible that art's viability may be connected to its ability to exist as a pure self-conscious endeavor. Art may exist in the future as a kind of philosophy by analogy. This can only occur, however, if art remains "self-conscious" and concerns itself only with art problems, changing as those problems maybe. If art does become a "philosophy by analogy" it will be because its intellectual rigor (in terms of the artist's ability to "create") is equal in quality to the intensity of the best thinking of the past. If proper philosophy cannot be in our time, then obviously art posing as philosophy would be equally meaningless. But an art concerned with the special issues related only to art may fill that gap in man's thought in our time.

Lawrence Weiner. Photograph of 2" wide 1" deep trench cut across a standard one car driveway. Collection: Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. Topol, Mamaroneck, N.Y.

Lawrence Weiner

q. When you did your early pieces which consisted of paint being applied directly on the floor or wall (I am thinking of "the spray on the floor for so many minutes" pieces—one of which was reproduced in Aarts Magazine last October—the paint thrown on the wall piece, and the paint poured on the floor piece) what did you have in mind?

WEINER. Making art.

q. It has been said that some of the "Anti-form" artists have been influenced by the look of some of your work. Is this true, and what is the primary difference between their work and yours?

WEINER. I can't imagine how, as they are primarily concerned with making objects for display—which has nothing to do with the intent of my work.

q. An integral aspect of your work is the existence of a receiver. The receiver—as I understand it—decides whether you will build the piece, have the piece fabricated, or not build it at all. Why?

WEINER. Because it doesn't matter.

q. What doesn't matter?

WEINER. The condition of the piece. If I were to choose the condition, that would be an art decision which would lend unnecessary and unjustified weight to what amounts to presentation—and that has very little to do with the art.

q. What is your interest in removing as an art process.

WEINER. I'm not interested in the process. Whereas the idea of removal is just so—if not more—interesting than the intrusion of a fabricated object into a space, as sculpture is.

q. What role does time play in your work?

WEINER. As a designation of quantity.

q. What is the subject matter of your work, would you say?

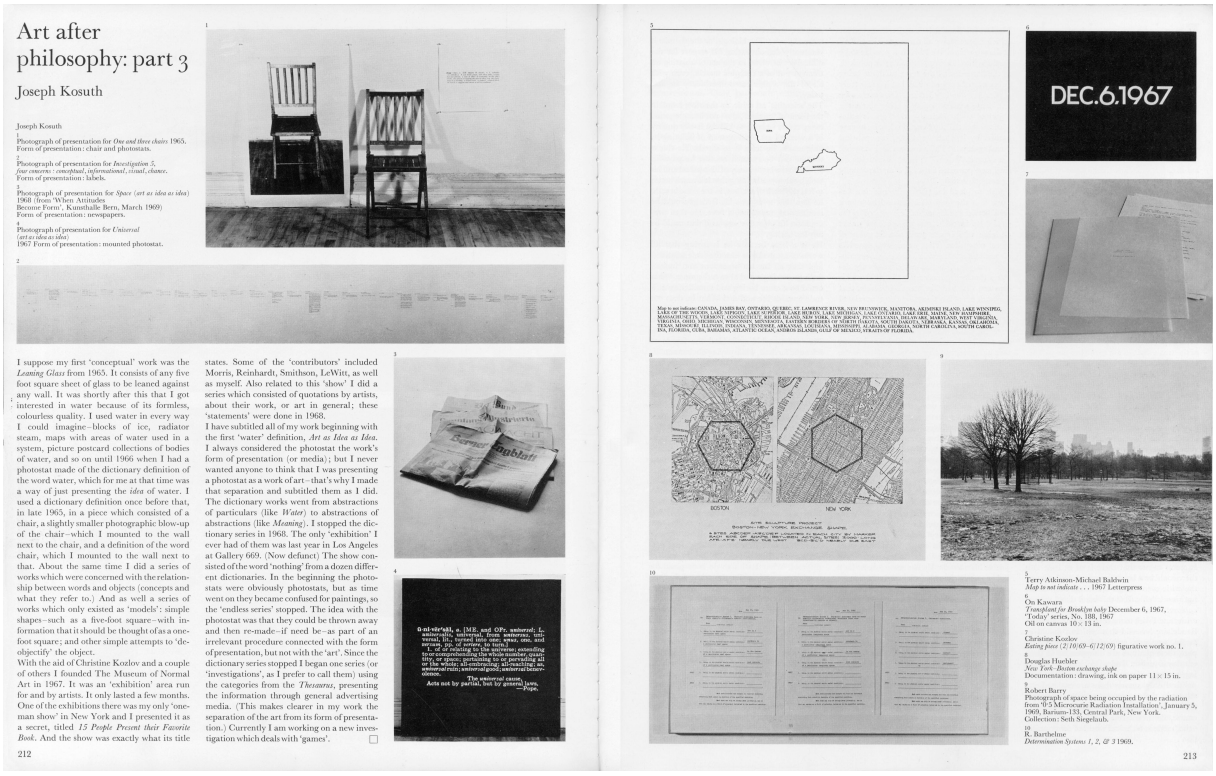
WEINER. Materials.

q. You state that the subject matter of your work is materials, yet you claim that you are not a materialist—how does this follow?

WEINER. Materialist implies a primary involvement in materials, but I am primarily concerned with art. One could say the subject matter is materials, but its reason to be goes way beyond materials to something else, that something else being art.

2

***Four Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kosuth, Weiner*, 1969,**
Arts Magazine 43, no. 4.



Art after philosophy: part 3

Joseph Kosuth

I suppose my first 'conceptual' work was the *Leaning Glass* from 1965. It consists of any five foot square sheet of glass to be leaned against any wall. It was shortly after this that I got interested in water because of its formless, colourless quality. I used water in every way I could imagine–blocks of ice, radiator steam, maps with areas of water used in a system, picture postcard collections of bodies of water, and so on until 1966 when I had a photostat made of the dictionary definition of the word water, which for me at that time was a way of just presenting the *idea* of water. I used a dictionary definition once before that, in late 1965, in a piece which consisted of a chair, a slightly smaller photographic blow-up of the chair–which I mounted to the wall next to the chair, and a definition of the word chair, which I mounted to the wall next to that. About the same time I did a series of works which were concerned with the relationship between words and objects (concepts and what they refer to.) And as well a series of works which only existed as 'models': simple shapes–such as a five-foot square–with information that it should be thought of as a one-foot square; and other simple attempts to 'de-objectify' the object.

With the aid of Christine Kozlov and a couple of others I founded The Museum of Normal Art in 1967. It was an 'exhibition' area run for and by artists. It only lasted a few months. One of the exhibitions there was my only 'one-man show' in New York and I presented it as a secret, titled *15 People Present their Favorite Book*. And the show was exactly what its title states. Some of the 'contributors' included Morris, Reinhardt, Smithson, LeWitt, as well as myself. Also related to this 'show' I did a series which consisted of quotations by artists, about their work, or art in general; these 'statements' were done in 1968.

I have subtitled all of my work beginning with the first 'water' definition, *Art as Idea as Idea*. I always considered the photostat the work's form of presentation (or media); but I never wanted anyone to think that I was presenting a photostat as a work of art–that's why I made that separation and subtitled them as I did. The dictionary works went from abstractions of particulars (like *Water*) to abstractions of abstractions (like *Meaning*). I stopped the dictionary series in 1968. The only 'exhibition' I ever had of them was last year in Los Angeles at Gallery 669. (Now defunct) The show consisted of the word 'nothing' from a dozen different dictionaries. In the beginning the photostats were obviously photostats, but as time went on they became confused for paintings, so the 'endless series' stopped. The idea with the photostat was that they could be thrown away and then re-made–if need be–as part of an irrelevant procedure connected with the form of presentation, but not with the 'art'. Since the dictionary series stopped I began one series (or 'investigations', as I prefer to call them) using the categories from the *Thesaurus*, presenting the information through general advertising media. (This makes clearer in my work the separation of the art from its form of presentation.) Currently I am working on a new investigation which deals with 'games'. □

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DEC.6.1967

Terry Atkinson-Michael Baldwin
Map is not indicate . . . 1967 Letterpress

On Kawara
Transplant for Brooklyn baby December 6, 1967,
'Today' series, No. 188, 1967
Oil on canvas 10 × 13 in.

Christine Kozlov
Rating piece (2/10/69–6/12/69) figurative work no. 1.

Douglas Huebler
New York–Boston exchange sloghe
Documentation: drawing, ink on paper 11 × 15 in.

Robert Barry
Photograph of space being occupied by the radiation from '0·5 Microcurie Radiation Installation', January 5, 1969, Barium-133, Central Park, New York.
Collection: Seth Siegelaub.

R. Barthelme
Determination Systems 1, 2, & 3 1969.

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3
Joseph Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy: part 3*, 1969,
Studio International 178, no. 917.

Mel Bochner, *Measurements: Group B*, installation, May, 1969, Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich.

Excerpts From Speculation

(1967 - 1970)

MEL BOCHNER

For a variety of reasons I do not like the term "conceptual art." Connotations of an easy dichotomy with perception are obvious and inappropriate. The unfortunate implication is of a somewhat magical/mystical leap from one mode of existence to another. The problem is the confusion of idealism and intention. By creating an original fiction, "conceptualism" posits its special non-empirical existence as a positive (transcendent) value. But no amount of qualification (or documentation) can change the situation. Outside the spoken word, no thought can exist without a sustaining support.

A fundamental assumption in much recent past art was that things have stable properties, i.e., boundaries. This seemingly simple premise became the basis for a spiraling series of conclusions. Boundaries, however, are only the fabrication of our desire to detect them . . . a tradeoff between seeing something and wanting to enclose it. For example, what we attribute to objects as "constancy of size," during their progressive diminution when we walk away from them, is not a set of snapshot images gradually blending together. Concentration produces the illusion of consistency. Sight itself is pre-logical and without constants (out-of-focus). The problem is that surrendering the stability of objects immediately subverts any control we think we have over situations. Consider the possibility that the need to identify art with objects is probably the outgrowth of the need to assign our feelings to the things that prompt them.

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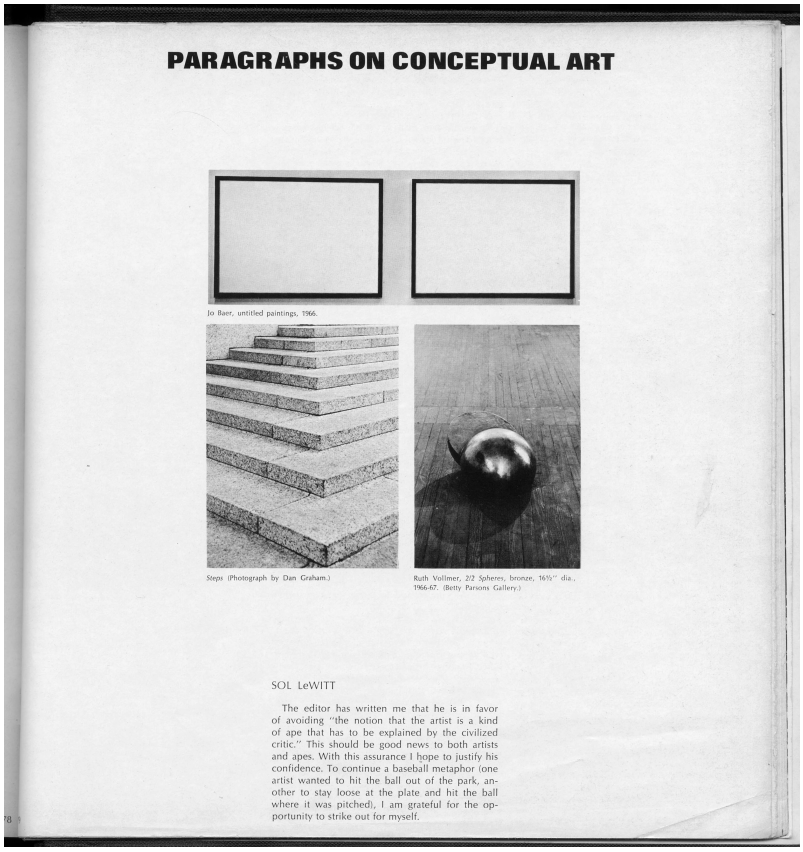
4
Mel Bochner, *Excerpts from Speculation (1967-1970)* (first page), 1970,
Artforum 8, no. 9.



PARAGRAPHS ON CONCEPTUAL ART

Jo Baer, untitled paintings, 1966.

Steps (Photograph by Dan Graham.)

Ruth Vollmer, 2/2 Spheres, bronze, 16½" dia., 1966-67. (Betty Parsons Gallery.)

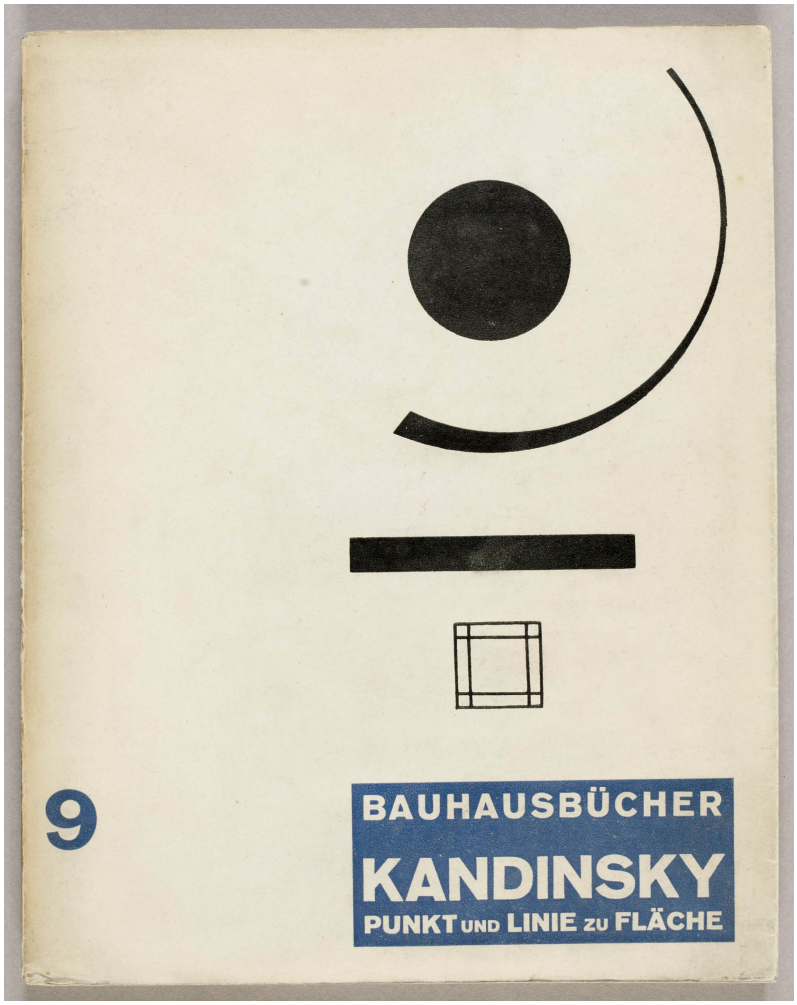
SOL LeWITT

The editor has written me that he is in favor of avoiding "the notion that the artist is a kind of ape that has to be explained by the civilized critic." This should be good news to both artists and apes. With this assurance I hope to justify his confidence. To continue a baseball metaphor (one artist wanted to hit the ball out of the park, another to stay loose at the plate and hit the ball where it was pitched), I am grateful for the opportunity to strike out for myself.

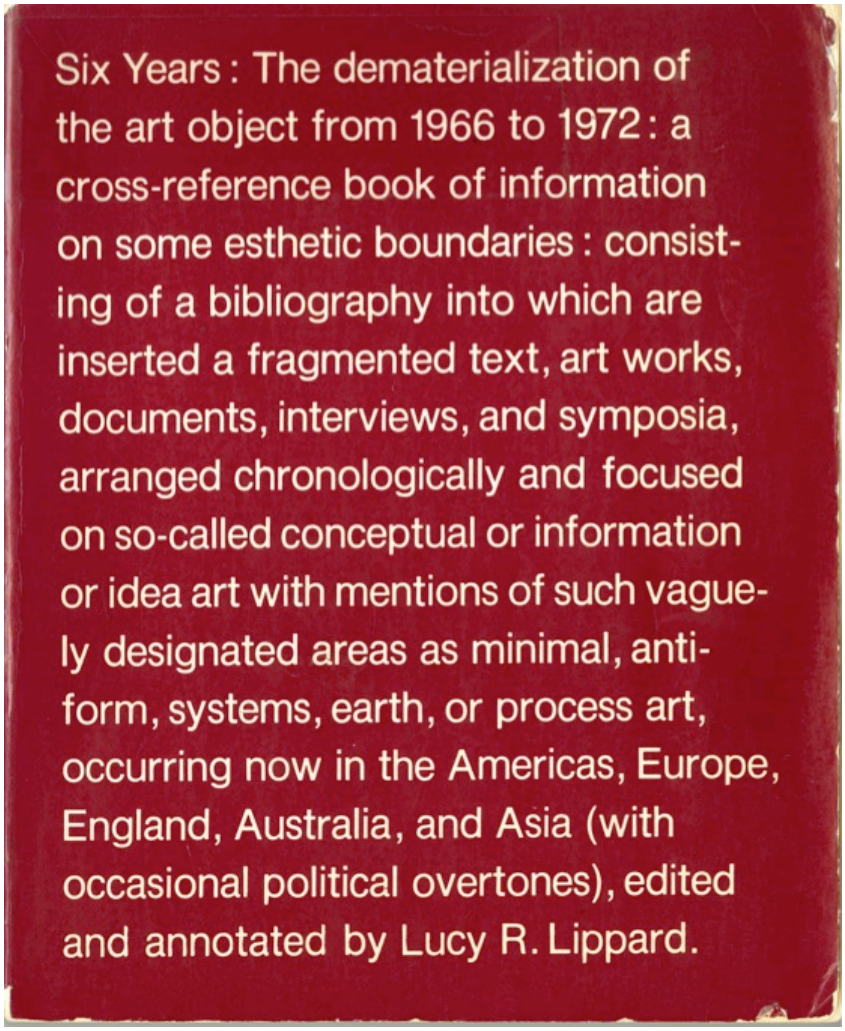
5
Sol LeWitt, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art* (first page), 1967,
Artforum 5, no. 10.

6
Larry Poons, *Out*, 1967,
acrylic paint on canvas, 20 x 52 cm, London, Tate (© Larry Poons/VAGA, New York and DACS, London 2018).

7
Medardo Rosso, *Ecce Puer (Behold the Boy)*, 1906,
bronze, 43.2 x 35.6 x 25.4 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey H. Loria, 1990.



8
Wassily Kandinsky, *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche. Beitrag zur Analyse der malerischen Elemente* (cover), 1926,
cover design by László Moholy-Nagy, *Bauhausbücher*, vol. 9 (photo: Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Paris).



9
Lucy R. Lippard (ed.), ***Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 (…)*** **(cover), 1973,**
copy from Allan Kaprow's library, Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute (photo: author).