

borderline between art and non-art had to be the three-dimensional, where sculpture was, everything material that was not art also was. I lost the lead because it was so ineluctably art, evolved on sculpture or something like it to advance. (I don't pretend to be giving the actual insight by which Minimal art was arrived at, but I see the essential logic of it.)

Pop (Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg) did a lot of flirting with the third dimension. It did more than that, but seldom escaped a pictorial context. The shaped-canvas school used the third dimension mainly in order to hold on to the 'profiled' drawing: painters whose departure from the rectangle or tondo emphasize the drawing in determining just what other shapes or frames their pictures are to have. In using the mediums, straddling the line between drawing and sculpture, seemed the far-out thing to do; in aesthetic experience it has proven almost the same – at least in the context of painting, where even references to the third dimension seem inevitably, if not twenty-five years ago, to invoke traditional drawing.

Neither or not the Minimalists themselves have really escaped the pictorial context can be left aside for the time being. What seems definite is that they commit themselves to the third dimension because it is, among other things, a coordinate that art has to share with non-art (as Duchamp and others already saw). The aim of the Minimalists is to 'project' objects, assemblages of objects that are just nudgeable into art. The object is rigorously rectilinear or spherical. The content within the given piece is usually by itself of the same modular shape, which may or may not be varied in size. The look of machinery is shunned because it does not go far enough towards the look of sculpture, which is presumably an 'inert' look that offers the minimum of 'interesting' incident – unlike the look of painting, which is arty by comparison (and when I think of Tinguely I would agree with this). Still, no matter how simple the object may be, there remain the interrelations of surface, contour and spatiality. Minimal works are readable as art, as almost always today – including a door, a table or a blank sheet of paper. (That almost any nonfigurative object can be made the condition of architecture or of an architectural member is, on the other hand, beside the point. It is the fact that some works of Minimal art are made on the wall in the attitude of bas-relief. Likeness or attitude is not necessary in order to make a seemingly arbitrary object as art.) Yet it would be a kind of art nearer the condition of non-art than sculpture, to be envisaged or ideated at this moment.

More precisely, is the trouble. Minimal art remains too far from ideation, and not enough anything else. Its function is an idea, something deduced instead of felt or discovered. The geometrical and modular simplicity of the work and signify the artistically furthest-out, but at the same time the signals are understood for what they want to convey artistically. There is hardly any

aesthetic surprise in Minimal art, only a phenomenal one of the same order as in Novelty art, which is a one-time surprise. Aesthetic surprise hangs on forever – it is still there in Raphael as it is in Pollock – and ideas alone cannot achieve it. Aesthetic surprise comes from inspiration and sensibility as well as from being abreast of the artistic times. Behind the expected, self-cancelling emblems of the furthest-out, almost every work of Minimal art I have seen reveals in experience a more or less conventional sensibility. The artistic substance and reality, as distinct from the programme, turns out to be in good safe taste. I find myself back in the realm of Good Design, where Pop, Op, assemblage and the rest of Novelty art live. By being employed as tokens, the 'primary structures' are converted into mannerisms. The third dimension itself is converted into a mannerism. Nor have most of the Minimalists escaped the familiar, reassuring context of the pictorial: wraiths of the picture rectangle and the Cubist grid haunt their works, asking to be filled out – and filled out they are, with light-and-dark drawing.

All of which might have puzzled me more had I not already had the experience of Rauschenberg's blank canvases, and of Yves Klein's all-blue ones. And had I not seen another notable token of far-outness, Reinhardt's shadowy monochrome, part like a veil to reveal a delicate and very timid sensibility. (Reinhardt has a genuine if small gift for colour, but none at all for design or placing. I can see why he let Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still influence him towards close and dark values, but he lost more than he gained by the desperate extreme to which he went, changing from a nice into a trite artist.) I had also learned that works whose ingredients were notionally 'tough' could be very soft as wholes, and vice versa. I remember hearing Abstract Expressionist painters ten years ago talking about how you had to make it ugly, and deliberately dirtying their colour, only to render what they did still more stereotyped. The best of Claude Monet's lily-pad paintings – or the best of Morris Louis' and Jules Olitski's paintings – are not made any the less challenging and arduous, on the other hand, by their nominally sweet colour. Equations like these cannot be thought out in advance, they can only be felt and discovered.

In any case, the far-out as end in itself was already caught sight of, in the area of sculpture by Anthony Caro in England back in 1960. But it came to him as a matter of experience and inspiration, not of ratiocination, and he converted it immediately from an end into a means – a means of pursuing a vision that required sculpture to be more integrally abstract than it had ever been before. The far-out as end in itself was already used up and compromised by the time the notion of it reached the Minimalists: used up by Caro and the other English sculptors for whom he was an example; compromised by Novelty art.

Still another artist who anticipated the Minimalists is Anne Truitt. And she anticipated them more literally and therefore, as it seems to me, more embarrassingly than Caro did. The surprise of the boxlike pieces in her first show in New York, early in 1963 (at Emmerich's), was much like that which Minimal art aims at. Despite their being covered with rectilinear zones of colour, I was stopped by their deadpan 'primariness', and I had to look

again and again, and I had to return again, to discover the power of these 'boxes' to move and affect. Far-outness here was stated rather than merely announced and signalled. It was hard to tell whether the success of Truitt's best works was primarily sculptural or pictorial, but part of their success consisted precisely in making that question irrelevant.

Truitt's art did flirt with the look of non-art, and her 1963 show was the first occasion on which I noticed how this look could confer an effect of *presence*. That presence as achieved through size was aesthetically extraneous, I already knew. That presence as achieved through the look of non-art was likewise aesthetically extraneous, I did not yet know. Truitt's sculpture has this kind of presence but did not *hide* behind it. That sculpture could hide behind it – just as painting did – I found out only after repeated acquaintance with Minimal works of art: Judd's, Morris', Andre's, Steiner's, some but not all of Smithson's, some but not all of LeWitt's. Minimal art can also hide behind presence as size: I think of Bladen (though I am not sure whether he is a certified Minimalist) as well as of some of the artists just mentioned. What puzzles me, if I am puzzled, is how sheer size can produce an effect so soft and ingratiating, and at the same time so superfluous. Here again the question of the phenomenal as opposed to the aesthetic or artistic comes in.

Having said all this, I won't deny that Minimal art has brought a certain negative gain. It makes clear as never before how fussy a lot of earlier abstract sculpture is, especially that influenced by Abstract Expressionism. But the price may still not be worth it. The continuing infiltration of Good Design into what purports to be advanced and highbrow art now depresses sculpture as it does painting. Minimal follows too much where Pop, Op, assemblage and the rest have led (as Darby Bannard, once again, has already pointed out). Nevertheless, I take Minimal art more seriously than I do these other forms of Novelty. I retain hope for certain of its exponents. Maybe they will take still more pointers from artists like Truitt, Caro, Ellsworth Kelly and Kenneth Noland, and learn from their example how to rise above Good Design.

1 Darby Bannard, writing in *Artforum* (December 1966), has already said it, 'As with Pop and Op, the "meaning" of a Minimal work exists outside of the work itself. It is a part of the nature of these works to act as triggers for thought and emotion pre-existing in the viewer ... It may be fair to say that these styles have been nourished by the ubiquitous question: "but what does it mean?"'

Clement Greenberg, 'Recentness of Sculpture', *American Sculpture of the Sixties*, ed. Maurice Tuchman (Los Angeles: County Museum of Art, 1967); reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1968) 180–86.

Michael FRIED

Art and Objecthood [1967]

[...] What is it about objecthood as projected and hypostatized by the literalists that makes it, if only from the

perspective of recent Modernist painting, antithetical to art? The answer I want to propose is this: the literalist espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre; and theatre is now the negation of art. Literalist sensibility is theatrical because, to begin with, it is concerned with the actual circumstances in which the beholder encounters literalist work. Morris makes this explicit. Whereas in previous art 'what is to be had from the work is located strictly within [it]', the experience of literalist art is of an object in a situation – one that, virtually by definition, includes the beholder [...]

The theatricality of Morris' notion of the 'nonpersonal or public mode' seems obvious: the largeness of the piece, in conjunction with its nonrelational, unitary character, distances the beholder – not just physically but psychically. It is, one might say, precisely this distancing that makes the beholder a subject and the piece in question ... an object [...]

Furthermore, the presence of literalist art, which Greenberg was the first to analyse, is basically a theatrical effect or quality – a kind of stage presence. It is a function, not just of the obtrusiveness and, often, even aggressiveness of literalist work, but of the special complicity that that work extorts from the beholder. Something is said to have presence when it demands that the beholder take it into account, that he take it seriously – and when the fulfilment of that demand consists simply in being aware of it and, so to speak, in acting accordingly [...]

What has compelled Modernist painting to defeat or suspend its own objecthood is not just developments internal to itself, but the same general, enveloping, infectious theatricality that corrupted literalist sensibility in the first place and in the grip of which the developments in question – and Modernist painting in general – are seen as nothing more than an un compelling and presenceless kind of theatre. It was the need to break the fingers of this grip that made objecthood an issue for Modernist painting.

Objecthood has also become an issue for Modernist sculpture. This is true despite the fact that sculpture, being three-dimensional, resembles both ordinary objects and literalist work in a way that painting does not [...]

It may seem paradoxical to claim both that literalist sensibility aspires to an ideal of 'something everyone can understand' (Smith) and that literalist art addresses itself to the beholder alone, but the paradox is only apparent. Someone has merely to enter the room in which a literalist work has been placed to become that beholder, that audience of one – almost as though the work in question has been waiting for him. And in as much as literalist work depends on the beholder, is incomplete without him, it has been waiting for him. And once he is in the room the work refuses, obstinately, to let him alone – which is to say, it refuses to stop confronting him, distancing him, isolating him [...]

It is, I think, significant that in their various statements the literalists have largely avoided the issue of value or quality at the same time as they have shown considerable uncertainty as to whether or not what they are making is art. To describe their enterprise as an attempt to establish a new art does not remove the uncertainty; at most it

points to its source. Judd himself has as much as acknowledged the problematic character of the literalist enterprise by his claim, 'A work needs only to be interesting' [...]

The literalist preoccupation with time – more precisely, with the duration of the experience – is, I suggest, paradigmatically theatrical: as though theatre confronts the beholder, and thereby isolates him, with the endlessness not just of objecthood but of time; or as though the sense which, at bottom, theatre addresses is a sense of temporality, of time both passing and to come, simultaneously approaching and receding, as if apprehended in an infinite perspective ... 'This preoccupation marks a profound difference between literalist work and Modernist painting and sculpture. It is as though one's experience of the latter has no duration – not because one in fact experiences a picture by Kenneth Noland or Jules Olitski or a sculpture by David Smith or Anthony Caro in no time at all, but because at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest [...]

1 The connection between spatial recession and some such experience of temporality – almost as if the first were a kind of natural metaphor for the second – is present in much Surrealist painting (e.g., de Chirico, Dali, Tanguy, Magritte ...). Moreover, temporality – manifested, for example, as expectation, dread, anxiety, presentiment, memory, nostalgia, stasis – is often the explicit subject of their paintings. There is, in fact, a deep affinity between literalists and Surrealist sensibility (at any rate, as the latter makes itself felt in the work of the above painters), which ought to be noted. Both employ imagery that is at once wholistic and, in a sense, fragmentary, incomplete; both resort to a similar anthropomorphizing of objects or conglomerations of objects (in Surrealism the use of dolls and mannequins makes this explicit); both are capable of achieving remarkable effects of 'presence'; and both tend to deploy and isolate objects and persons in situations – the closed room and the abandoned artificial landscape are as important to Surrealism as to literalism. (Tony Smith, it will be recalled, described the airstrips, etc. as 'Surrealist landscapes'.) This affinity can be summed up by saying that Surrealist sensibility, as manifested in the work of certain artists, and literalist sensibility are both theatrical. I do not wish, however, to be understood as saying that because they are theatrical, all Surrealist works that share the above characteristics fail as art; a conspicuous example of major work that can be described as theatrical is Giacometti's Surrealist sculpture. On the other hand, it is perhaps not without significance that Smith's supreme example of a Surrealist landscape was the parade ground at Nuremberg.

Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum* (June 1967); reprinted in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1968) 116–47.

Yvonne RAINER

A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A [1968]

OBJECTS

Eliminate or Minimize

1. role of artist's hand
2. hierarchical relationship of part

3. texture

4. figure reference

5. illusionism

6. complexity and detail

7. monumentality

Substitute

1. factory fabrication

2. unitary forms, modules

3. uninterrupted surface

4. nonreferential forms

5. literalness

6. simplicity

7. human scale

DANCES

phrasing

development and

variation: rhythm,

shape, dynamics

character

performance

variety: phrases and

spatial field

the virtuosic move

feat and the fully

extended body

energy equality and

'found' movement

equality of parts

repetition or disc

events

neutral performan

task or task-like ac

singular action, ev

tone

human scale

Although the benefit to be derived from making a one relationship between aspects of so-called Minimal sculpture and recent dancing is questionable, I have drawn up a chart that does exactly that [...]. It should be thought that the two groups of elements are mutually exclusive [...]. Neither should it be thought that the dance I shall discuss has been influenced exclusively by art. The changes in theatre and dance reflect changing ideas about man and his environment that have affected all the arts. That dance should reflect these changes is of interest, since for obvious reasons it has always been the most isolated and inbred of the arts. What is unprecedented in the short history of the Modern Dance is the close correspondence between concurrent developments in dance and the plastic arts [...]

Within the realm of movement invention – and I am talking for the time being about movement generation – means other than accomplishment of a task or deal