

A photograph of a person with a backpack standing on a dirt path in a forest. The person is wearing a light-colored hat, a blue jacket, and dark pants. The path is made of dry, yellowish-brown earth and leads into a dense forest of tall, dark green evergreen trees. The lighting is natural, suggesting daytime. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

MIWON KWON

ONE PLACE AFTER ANOTHER

SITE-SPECIFIC ART AND LOCATIONAL IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

Site-determined, site-oriented, site-referenced, site-conscious, site-responsive, site-related. These are some new terms that have emerged in recent years among many artists and critics to account for the various permutations of site-specific art in the present. On the one hand, this phenomenon indicates a return of sorts: an attempt to rehabilitate the criticality associated with the anti-idealist, anticommmercial site-specific practices of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which incorporated the physical conditions of a particular location as integral to the production, presentation, and reception of art. On the other hand, it signals a desire to distinguish current practices from those of the past—to mark a difference from artistic precedents of site specificity whose dominant positivist formulations (the most well-known being Richard Serra's) are deemed to have reached a point of aesthetic and political exhaustion.

This concern to reassess the relationship between the art work and its site is largely provoked by the ways in which the term "site-specific" has been uncritically adopted as another genre category by mainstream art institutions and discourses. The term is indeed conspicuous in a diverse range of catalogue essays, press releases, grant applications, magazine reviews, and artist statements today; it is applied rather indiscriminately to art works, museum exhibitions, public art projects, city arts festivals, architectural installations; and it is embraced as an automatic signifier of "criticality" or "progressivity" by artists, architects, dealers, curators, critics, arts administrators, and funding organizations.¹ For those who adhere to cooptation as the most viable explanation of the relationship between advanced art, the culture industry, and the political economy throughout the twentieth century, the unspecific (mis)uses of the term "site-specific" are yet another instance of how vanguardist, socially conscious, and politically committed art practices always become domesticated by their assimilation into the dominant culture. And this argument would insist that if the aesthetic and political efficacy of site-specific art has

Many have coopted

...ne insignificant or innocuous in recent years, it is because it has been weak- and redirected by institutional and market forces.

But the current efforts to redefine the art-site relationship are also inspired recognition that if site-specific art seems no longer viable—because its critical s have dulled, its pressures been absorbed—this is partly due to the concep- imitations of existing models of site specificity itself. In response, many artists, s, historians, and curators, whose practices are engaged in problematizing ved notions of site specificity, have offered alternative formulations, such as xt-specific, debate-specific, audience-specific, community-specific, project- d.² These terms, which tend to slide into one another at different times, collec- signal an attempt to forge more complex and fluid possibilities for the art-site onship while simultaneously registering the extent to which the very concept e site has become destabilized in the past three decades or more.

Yet despite these efforts to rethink site specificity, and despite the rise in- it in the artistic developments of the 1960s and 1970s in general, contemporary iscourse still lacks a substantive account of the historical and theoretical unds" of site specificity. Consequently, the framework within which we might ss the artistic merit and/or political efficacy of the various formulations of site ificity, old and new, remains inconclusive.³ Most importantly, what remain un- gnized, and thus unanalyzed, are the ways in which the very term "site speci- y" has itself become a site of struggle, where competing positions concerning ature of the site, as well as the "proper" relationship of art and artists to it, are g contested.

This book critically examines site specificity not exclusively as an artistic re but as a problem-idea,⁴ as a peculiar cipher of art and spatial politics. In ad- on to providing analysis and theorization of the various artistic (re)configura- s of site specificity, and reevaluating the rhetoric of aesthetic vanguardism and tical progressivism associated with them, the book situates the questions con- ning the siting of art as a spatio-political problematic. Which is to say, site speci- y is here conceived as what art historian Rosalyn Deutsche has called an oan-aesthetic" or "spatial-cultural" discourse, which combines "ideas about art,

3 PARADIGMS OF SITE SPECIFICITY -
- phenomenological / experiential
- social / institutional
- cipher of
- overlapping
- not necessarily
- problematic

* Site specificity conceived as combination of ideas about art, architecture, and urban design with "training" in city, social space, and public space.
- what about the individual? One personal informed by critical urban theory, postmodernism, identity po architecture, and urban design, on the one hand, with theories of the city, social space, and public space, on the other.¹⁵

Informed by critical urban theory, post- modernist criticism in art and architecture, and debates concerning identity poli- tics and the public sphere, the book seeks to reframe site specificity as the cultural mediation of broader social, economic, and political processes that organize urban life and urban space. site specificity as mediation, the organization of urban life & space

As a point of departure, the first chapter proposes a genealogy of site speci- ficity since the late 1960s. Emerging out of the lessons of minimalism, site-specific art was initially based in a phenomenological or experiential understanding of the site, defined primarily as an agglomeration of the actual physical attributes of a particular location (the size, scale, texture, and dimension of walls, ceilings, rooms; existing lighting conditions, topographical features, traffic patterns, seasonal char- acteristics of climate, etc.), with architecture serving as a foil for the art work in many instances. Then, through the materialist investigations of institutional critique, the site was reconfigured as a relay or network of interrelated spaces and econ- omies (studio, gallery, museum, art market, art criticism), which together frame and sustain art's ideological system. Works by artists such as Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles are seen as challenging the hermeticism of this system, complicating the site of art as not only a physical arena but one constituted through social, economic, and political processes.

In more recent site-oriented, project-based art by artists such as Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, Renée Green, Christian Philipp Müller, and Fred Wilson, among many others, the site of art is again redefined, often extending beyond familiar art contexts to more "public" realms. Dispersed across much broader cultural, social, and discursive fields, and organized intertextually through the nomadic movement of the artist—operating more like an itinerary than a map—the site can now be as various as a billboard, an artistic genre, a disenfranchised community, an institu- tional framework, a magazine page, a social cause, or a political debate. It can be literal, like a street corner, or virtual, like a theoretical concept. While chapter 1 proposes three paradigms of site specificity—phenomenological or experiential; social/institutional; and discursive—in a somewhat chronological manner, there are

Both a Street corner + Theoretical concept can be sites
Phenomenological / experiential (is "experiential" all they mean by "phenomenological"? what about Hesserl + The E. etc.)
if it is just experiential - should look to Dewey as a

EXPERIENTIAL

New definition of "site"

urban

*
*
*

become insignificant or innocuous in recent years, it is because it has been weakened and redirected by institutional and market forces.

But the current efforts to redefine the art-site relationship are also inspired by a recognition that if site-specific art seems no longer viable—because its critical edges have dulled, its pressures been absorbed—this is partly due to the conceptual limitations of existing models of site specificity itself. In response, many artists, critics, historians, and curators, whose practices are engaged in problematizing received notions of site specificity, have offered alternative formulations, such as context-specific, debate-specific, audience-specific, community-specific, project-based.² These terms, which tend to slide into one another at different times, collectively signal an attempt to forge more complex and fluid possibilities for the art-site relationship while simultaneously registering the extent to which the very concept of the site has become destabilized in the past three decades or more.

Yet despite these efforts to rethink site specificity and despite the rise in interest in the artistic developments of the 1960s and 1970s in general, contemporary art discourse still lacks a substantive account of the historical and theoretical "grounds" of site specificity. Consequently, the framework within which we might discuss the artistic merit and/or political efficacy of the various formulations of site specificity, old and new, remains inconclusive.³ Most importantly, what remain unrecognized, and thus unanalyzed, are the ways in which the very term "site specificity" has itself become a site of struggle, where competing positions concerning the nature of the site, as well as the "proper" relationship of art and artists to it, are being contested.

This book critically examines site specificity not exclusively as an artistic genre but as a problem-idea,⁴ as a peculiar cipher of art and spatial politics. In addition to providing analysis and theorization of the various artistic (re)configurations of site specificity, and reevaluating the rhetoric of aesthetic vanguardism and political progressivism associated with them, the book situates the questions concerning the siting of art as a spatio-political problematic. Which is to say, site specificity is here conceived as what art historian Rosalyn Deutsche has called an "urban-aesthetic" or "spatial-cultural" discourse, which combines "ideas about art,

problem-idea, cipher of art and spatial politics

3 PARADIGMS of site specificity - phenomenological / experiential - social / institutional - DISCURSIVE

overlapping not mutually exclusive

SOCIAL SPACE, and public space "informed by urban design, on the one hand, architecture, and urban design, on the other."⁵ Informed by urban design, on the one hand, architecture, and urban design, on the other.

return

EXPERIENTIAL

mediation of broader social, economic, and political life and urban space. site specificity as phenomenon of urban organization of urban space. As a point of departure, the first chapter pro-

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new definition of "site"

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Both A Street corner + theoretical concept can

phenomenological / experiential (1) what does it mean by "phenomenological"? what does it mean if it is just experiential - should I know, not phenomenological proper

no discrete separations or neat periodizing breaks between them. The paradigms are outlined as competing definitions that operate in overlapping ways in past and current site-oriented art.

nomadic model
site-specific art?

Chapter 2 examines some key aspects of what the transformation of the site—from a sedentary to a nomadic model—might mean for the art object, artists, and art institutions today. Critical questions concerning the status of originality, authenticity, uniqueness, and authorship, those concepts so central to modernist ideologies of art, which in turn were problematized throughout the 1970s and 1980s, are raised anew in the first section of the chapter. The discussion here takes account of the ways in which the recent trend of reproducing, refabricating, and traveling site-specific art first produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s would seem to betray the earlier premise of site specificity. At the same time, the new conceptual, ethical, and practical problems provoked by this situation force a reorganization of the conventional terms of making, selling, collecting, exhibiting, and distributing site-specific art in both institutional and market contexts. As such, the current mobilization and commodification of site specificity is seen to represent its most salient critical moment even as it enacts a "betrayal" of its earlier aspirations.

The second section of the chapter poses similar questions concerning the status of originality, authenticity, uniqueness, and authorship in relation to the nomadic conditions under which artists pursue new site-oriented practices today. As more artists try to accommodate the increase in demand for singular on-site projects in various cities across the globalized art network (as evidenced, for instance, in the rise in number of city-based biennials and annuals around the world), the definition of site specificity is being reconfigured to imply not the permanence and immobility of a work but its impermanence and transience. The chapter focuses on the impact of this reconfiguration on the role of the artist (now a cultural-artistic service provider rather than a producer of aesthetic objects), the new commodity status of such art "work," and the general shift from the "aesthetics of administration" to the administration of aesthetics in contemporary art. In addition, the chapter reflects on the ways in which such new site-oriented practices accommodate and/or trouble the construction and commodification of urban identities.

site-specific
specificity
impermanence
transience

Artist as cultural - artistic service provider
rather than producer of aesthetic objects
+ its commodity status
) why not
institutional -
in street performance?

Chapter 3 charts the changes in the concept within the mainstream public art arena, examining the public relevance and its sociopolitical ambitions ha the art-site relationship over the past three decades specificity as a programmatic imperative by local, state agencies in the mid-1970s encouraged the development in which artists were asked to collaborate with arching public spaces, such as urban plazas, waterfront parks, and office lobbies. The resulting paradigm of "place-making" accommodated several ongoing scales of artistic (sculptural) practices of the period, and Michael Heizer, for instance, the need of public officials to integrate art into the urban environment in a and the accelerated growth of real estate investment projects throughout the country. Meant to equalize and architects in the design of public spaces, this presumed the humanizing influence of art over the inh The ideology of functional utility, foundational to the and urban design, came to overtake the essentially ally associated with art: site-specific public art now

Against this backdrop, Richard Serra proposed specificity with his sculpture Tilted Arc (1981-1989) proach, in which he uses the language of sculpture to accommodate the given architecture, disrupted the site at Federal Plaza in New York City and challenging oriented definition of site specificity. The controversy Tilted Arc—precisely on the point of site specificity validity—is revisited here to establish the terms that discourse in subsequent years. John Ahearn's figure Art commission in the South Bronx (1991), installed within one week because of local protest, serves a

breaks between them. The paradigms generate in overlapping ways in past and present. The transformation of the status of what the artist might mean for the art object, artists' concepts so central to modernist ideology throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the discussion here takes account of reproducing, refabricating, and traveling. At the same time, the new concept of site specificity is seen to represent its own "betrayal" of its earlier aspirations, and authorship in relation to the new site-oriented practices today. As in demand for singular on-site projects network (as evidenced, for instance, and annuals around the world), the chapter focuses on the artist (now a cultural-artistic set of objects), the new commodity status of the "aesthetics of administration" temporary art. In addition, the chapter re-evaluated practices accommodate and/or of urban identities.

W.M.W. (W.M.W. in street performance?)

Chapter 3 charts the changes in the conceptualization of site specificity

within the mainstream public art arena, examining the ways in which an art work's public relevance and its sociopolitical ambitions have been measured in terms of the art-site relationship over the past three decades. The incorporation of site specificity as a programmatic imperative by local, state, and national public art agencies in the mid-1970s encouraged the development of a design team approach in which artists were asked to collaborate with architects in producing or refurbishing public spaces, such as urban plazas, waterfront promenades, neighborhood parks, and office lobbies. The resulting paradigm of art-as-public-spaces, or "place-making," accommodated several ongoing circumstances: the expanded scale of artistic (sculptural) practices of the period, such as those of Scott Burton and Michael Heizer, for instance; the need of public art administrators and city officials to integrate art into the urban environment in a more "accessible" manner; and the accelerated growth of real estate investment and urban redevelopment projects throughout the country. Meant to equalize the creative authority of artists and architects in the design of public spaces, this mode of site specificity presumed the humanizing influence of art over the inhumanity of urban architecture. The ideology of functional utility, foundational to the modernist ethos of architecture and urban design, came to overtake the essentialism of formalist beauty, traditionally associated with art; site-specific public art now needed to be "useful."⁶

Against this backdrop, Richard Serra proposed a countermodel of site specificity with his sculpture *Tilted Arc* (1981–1989). His "medium-differential" approach,⁷ in which he uses the language of sculpture to interrogate rather than accommodate the given architecture, disrupted the spatial conditions of the art work's site at Federal Plaza in New York City and challenged the prevailing design-oriented definition of site specificity. The controversy surrounding the removal of *Tilted Arc*—precisely on the point of site specificity's artistic, political, and social validity—is revisited here to establish the terms that become central to public art discourse in subsequent years. John Ahearn's figurative sculptures for a Percent for Art commission in the South Bronx (1991), installed and deinstalled by the artist within one week because of local protest, serves as an important comparative study

for the consideration of another alternative model of site specificity. In this case, the site is not simply a geographical location or architectural setting but a network of social relations, a community, and the artist and his sponsors envision the art work as an integral extension of the community rather than an intrusive contribution from elsewhere. The volatile reactions that emerged in response to Ahearn's project, and Ahearn's own response to those reactions, exposed the incommensurate expectations, presumptions, and ideologies at play in much community-based public art today. With the shift from site to community, or the conversion of community into a site, questions concerning the role of the artist, the public function of art, and the definition of community are given new urgency.

Chapter 4 attends more generally to the artistic, architectural, social, and political implications of the shift from site specificity to community specificity in "new genre public art."⁸ Claiming a major break from previous approaches to public art, proponents of new genre public art favor temporary rather than permanent projects that engage their audience, particularly groups considered marginalized, as active participants in the conceptualization and production of process-oriented, politically conscious community events or programs. Drawing on a detailed analysis of the highly acclaimed 1993 community-based public art exhibition "Culture in Action" as a case study, this chapter questions the presumptions of aesthetic radicalism, public accessibility, audience empowerment, social relevance, and democracy that support such practice. While many of the goals of new genre public art are salutary, this chapter counters the claims made by many of its advocates that its newness overcomes the contradictions of previous models of site specificity. The chapter unpacks the ways in which new genre public art can exacerbate uneven power relations, remarginalize (even colonize) already disenfranchised groups, depoliticize and reify the artistic process, and finally further the separation of art and life (despite claims to the contrary).

Tracking the complex exchanges among numerous participants in the planning and presentation of "Culture in Action," the chapter also offers a schematic typology of four "communities" that commonly emerge out of community-based collaborations: community of mythic unity, "sited" communities, temporary in-

temporary within
from permanent
works
press oriented

New genre art
may, in practice,
reify the
oppression of
groups

Typology of communities:

Community of mythic unity
"Sited" communities
Temporary in-
communities
Community of
mythic unity
"Sited" communities
Temporary in-
communities

vented communities; and ongoing invented categories reveal that despite the effort of many to unify recent trends in public art as a coherence and contradictions in the field. Consistencies and contradictions in the field type might require extensive artist and/or insular self-sufficient in overseeing the development of a different role for the artist of the collaborative relationship. These variously concept of "community" remains highly art today.

This last point is emphasized in the re-nity-based art in chapter 5, especially as the power relations in the triangulated exchange tion, and a community group. From Hal Foster methods, to Grant Kester's claims of its reform Critical Art Ensemble's complete rejection of critics of community-based art, this chapter or definition of a community remains open, struggle. Relying on the work of feminist soci one hand and French philosopher Jean-Luc L against the common notion of the community nation—equally valorized by neoconservative serves exclusionary and authoritarian purposes. Instead, the chapter proposes the idea of community to open onto an altogether different mo "operative" specter in order to think beyond the concept of the "public sphere," the comm elusive discursive formation that as Nancy P nonessential "being-in-common." Based on a provocation to imagine "collective artistic based art" = ?

is this relevant to anyone else but art theorists?

Argues that community is not
elusive discursive formation
communities - unstable and incomp
beyond formalistic prescriptions
to "democratic" communities like
nonessential "being in common"

vented communities; and ongoing invented communities. Collectively, the categories reveal that despite the effort of many artists, curators, critics, and historians to unify recent trends in public art as a coherent movement, there are numerous inconsistencies and contradictions in the field. For instance, while one community type might require extensive artist and/or institutional involvement, another type remains self-sufficient in overseeing the development of its own project. Further, each category defines a different role for the artist, posing, in turn, alternative renditions of the collaborative relationship. These variations indicate the extent to which the very concept of "community" remains highly ambiguous and problematic in public art today.

This last point is emphasized in the review of the key critiques of community-based art in chapter 5, especially as they pertain to ethical issues of uneven power relations in the triangulated exchange between an artist, a curator-art institution, and a community group. From Hal Foster's critique of its ethnographic working methods, to Grant Kester's claims of its reformist-minded "aesthetic evangelism," to Critical Art Ensemble's complete rejection of it, to Martha Fleming's critique of the critics of community-based art, this chapter reveals the extent to which the identity or definition of a community remains open, like the site, as a scene of political struggle. Relying on the work of feminist social theorist Iris Marion Young on the one hand and French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy on the other, the chapter argues against the common notion of the community as a coherent and unified social formation—equally valorized by neoconservatives and the liberal left—which often serves exclusionary and authoritarian purposes in the very name of the opposite. Instead, the chapter proposes the idea of community as a necessarily unstable and "inoperative" specter in order to think beyond formulaic prescriptions of community, to open onto an altogether different model of collectivity and belonging. Like the concept of the "public sphere," the community may be seen as a phantom, an elusive discursive formation that, as Nancy puts it, is not a "common being" but a nonessential "being-in-common." Based on this insight, the chapter concludes with a provocation to imagine "collective artistic praxis," as opposed to "community-based art."

INTRODUCTION

Both + site remain open to political struggle

critiques of community based art
 Art Curator Community

what of Larisberg body?

Argues that community is not unified social formation
 - elusive discursive formation
 - unstable and inoperative "specter" - Think beyond formulaic prescriptions of community

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ous participants in the plan- r also offers a schematic out of community-based omunities; temporary in-

workshop/plant site
 community based
 Invention of
 place

A is this record to anyone else but art organizers?

'community' remains ambiguous in public art today

Question of subject/object location
 = Homogenization of local scenes
 = Absentia

In the final chapter, the dissipation of the site in site specificity as described in the previous chapters—the prioritizing of its discursivity, its displacement by the community—is examined in relation to the "dynamics of deterritorialization" as elaborated in architectural and urban spatial discourse. While the accelerated speed, access, and exchange of information, images, commodities, and even bodies is being celebrated in one circle, the concomitant breakdown of traditional temporal-spatial experiences and the accompanying homogenization of places and erasure of cultural differences is being decried in another. The intensifying conditions of spatial indifferenciation and departicularization—that is, the increasing instances of locational inspecificity—are seen to exacerbate the sense of alienation and fragmentation in contemporary life. Consequently, the nature of the tie between subject/object and location, as well as the interplay between place and space, has received much critical attention in the past two decades' theorization of oppositional cultural practice. For example, Fredric Jameson's "cognitive mapping,"¹⁰ Lucy Lippard's "tune of the local,"¹¹ Kenneth Frampton's "critical regionalism,"¹² Michel de Certeau's "walking in the city,"¹³ and Henri Lefebvre's "production of space,"¹⁴ as ideologically divergent as they may be, are all attempts to theorize the transforming nexus between the subject/object and location.

To this list we should add site specificity as an analogous artistic endeavor. For if the search for place-bound identity in an undifferentiated sea of abstract, homogenized, and fragmented space of late capitalism is one characteristic of the postmodern condition, then the expanded efforts to rethink the specificity of the art-site relationship can be viewed as both a compensatory symptom and critical resistance to such conditions. Indeed, the resilience of the concept of site specificity as indicated by its many permutations, with its vague yet persistent maintenance of the idea of singular, unrepeatable instances of site-bound knowledge and experience, manifests this doubleness. Countering both the nostalgic desire for a retrieval of rooted, place-bound identities on the one hand, and the antimemorial embrace of a nomadic fluidity of subjectivity, identity, and spatiality on the other, this book concludes with a theorization of the "wrong place," a speculative and heuristic concept for imagining a new model of belonging-in-transience. As evi-

* look up Frederic Jameson - cognitive mapping

One attempt to rethink the art-site relationship is itself a type of artistic endeavor which is both a symptom of our loss of "local color" and a response to localised locality their unique character

denced throughout the book, this task of imagining art and site is an open-ended predicament. Thus, in only conjure the critical capacity of intimacies based ruptures of time and space.

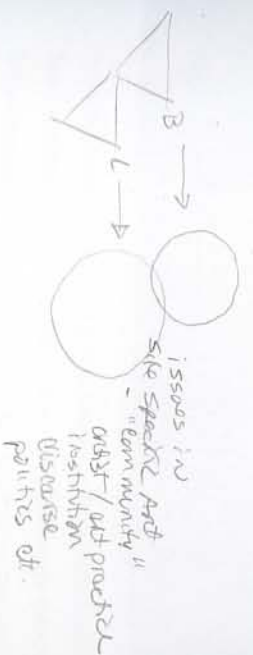
Relevance of 'site specificity' as concept (essence? an existential concept of essence? i.e. essence only after termination of experience)

Kwaid's ultimate proved

* Kwaid - could be both most places and one or of them - place as on conceptual opposition

clues for Sommer - digital

+ combination of places take historical outdoors into new locales of local and historical landscapes - things that goes with them



site specificity as described
 ively, its displacement by the
 of deterritorialization" as
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analogous artistic endeavor:
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ruptures of time and space.

intimacy
 based on
 absence
 distance
 ruptures of
 time | space

Relevance of 'site-specificity' as concept:
 (essence? an existential concept of essence?)
 i.e. - essence and after termination of experience

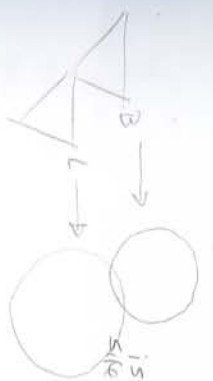
- many permutations
 - vague idea of singular,
 irreparable "site based"
 "knowledge" and experience

kuon's
 ultimate
 project

→ * Kuon - creates both nostalgic for rootedness in specific
 places and one anti-nostalgic which sees concepts
 of "death" as play as fluid by comparing the negative
 on conceptual opposite - of the issues normally summed up in idea
 of death

+ combination of places, people, communities;
 talk historical outdoors, art + poetic figures
 into new locales of locals etc. i combine
 and historical landscapes - and the conceptual
 history that goes with them - with photos + text.

INTRODUCTION



issues in
 "community"
 artist/out practice
 institution
 discourse
 politics of

It seems to me far
 that issues in ss that
 are linguistic/conceptual,
 perhaps primarily work
 bygone - something below -
 of them, by definition,
 are towering, multiple etc.

GENEALOGY OF SITE SPECIFICITY

Site specificity used to imply something grounded, bound to the laws of physics. Often playing with gravity, site-specific works used to be obstinate about "presence," even if they were materially ephemeral, and adamant about immobility, even in the face of disappearance or destruction. Whether inside the white cube or out in the Nevada desert, whether architectural or landscape-oriented, site-specific art initially took the site as an actual location, a tangible reality, its identity composed of a unique combination of physical elements: length, depth, height, texture, and shape of walls and rooms; scale and proportion of plazas, buildings, or parks; existing conditions of lighting, ventilation, traffic patterns; distinctive topographical features, and so forth. If modernist sculpture absorbed its pedestal/base to sever its connection to or express its indifference to the site, rendering itself more autonomous and self-referential, thus transportable, placeless, and nomadic, then site-specific works, as they first emerged in the wake of minimalism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, forced a dramatic reversal of this modernist paradigm.¹ Antithetical to the claim, "if you have to change a sculpture for a site there is something wrong with the sculpture,"² site-specific art, whether interruptive or assimilative,³ gave itself up to its environmental context, being formally determined or directed by it.

In turn, the uncontaminated and pure idealist space of dominant modernisms was radically displaced by the materiality of the natural landscape or the impure and ordinary space of the everyday. And the space of art was no longer perceived as a blank slate, a tabula rasa, but a real place. The art object or event in this context was to be singularly and multiply experienced in the here and now through the bodily presence of each viewing subject, in a sensory immediacy of spatial extension and temporal duration (what Michael Fried derisively characterized as theatricality),⁴ rather than instantaneously perceived in a visual epiphany by a disembodied eye. Site-specific work in its earliest formation, then, focused on

Site as
Actual location
whose
identity is
constituted by
physical
elements;
site specific
art originally
gave itself
up to being
determined or
directed
by its
environmental
context.

Minimalist +
impure
spaces of
landscape + TM
every day
Art Space no longer a
tabula
RASA

Sensory immediacy



Epistemological Challenge - meaning to relocate - meaning of context

What is meant by phenomenology? look up Merleau Ponty! Don't miss just a parts/whole issue??

Serra - site specific art - no relationship to one conceptual + perceptual organization of site

Version of 5.5 - Art emphasizing the physical connection of art to site

AND THE SITE - to locate again that connection - relocate meaning - lived body experience - One Merleau Ponty?

establishing an inextricable, indivisible relationship between the work and its site, and demanded the physical presence of the viewer for the work's completion. The (neo-avant-gardist) aesthetic aspiration to exceed the limitations of traditional media, like painting and sculpture, as well as their institutional setting; the epistemological challenge to relocate meaning from within the art object to the contingencies of its context; the radical restructuring of the subject from an old Cartesian model to a phenomenological one of lived bodily experience; and the self-conscious desire to resist the forces of the capitalist market economy which circulates art works as transportable and exchangeable commodity goods—all these imperatives came together in art's new attachment to the actuality of the site.

In this frame of mind, Robert Barry declared in a 1969 interview that each of his wire installations was "made to suit the place in which it was installed. They cannot be moved without being destroyed." Similarly, Richard Serra wrote fifteen years later in a letter to the director of the Art-in-Architecture Program of the General Services Administration in Washington, D.C., that his 120-foot, Cor-Ten steel sculpture *Titled Arc* was "commissioned and designed for one particular site: Federal Plaza. It is a site-specific work and as such not to be relocated. To remove the work is to destroy the work." He further elaborated his position in 1989:

As I pointed out, *Titled Arc* was conceived from the start as a site-specific sculpture and was not meant to be "site-adjusted" or "relocated." Site-specific works deal with the environmental components of given places. The scale, size, and location of site-specific works are determined by the topography of the site, whether it be urban or landscape or architectural enclosure. The works become part of the site and restructure both conceptually and perceptually the organization of the site.⁷

Barry and Serra echo one another here. But whereas Barry's comment announces what was in the late 1960s a new radicality in vanguardist sculptural practice, marking an early stage in the aesthetic experiments that were to follow through the

1970s (land/earth art, process art, installation art) body art, and various forms of institutional critique twenty years later within the context of public art a crisis point for site specificity—at least for a *physical* inseparability between a work and its site. Informed by the contextual thinking of institutional critique and conceptual art developed a *conceptual* critique that implicitly challenged the "innocence" of *assumption* of a universal viewing subject (albeit *body*) as espoused in the phenomenological *Marcel Broodthaers*, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke many women artists including Mierle Laderman the site not only in physical and spatial terms but the institutions of art. If minimalism returned to institutional critique insisted on the social *sexuality* of the viewing subject.⁸ Moreover, *hermeticism* of the autonomous art object by of its presentation, *institutional critique* further highlighting the idealist hermeticism of the *space* gallery/museum space, for instance, with *no windows*, controlled climate, and pristine solely in terms of basic dimensions and *proposed* a normative exhibition convention serving an *ideal* benign architectural features of a gallery/museum be coded mechanisms that *actively* disassociate world, furthering the institution's idealist *impulse* uses "objective," "disinterested," and "true."⁹ As early as 1970 Buren proclaimed, "Whatever shown imprints and marks this work, whatever is directly—consciously or not—produced for that framework, if it does not explicitly examine

Barry

1970s (land/earth art, process art, installation art, conceptual art, performance/body art, and various forms of institutional critique), Serra's statement, spoken twenty years later within the context of public art, is an indignant defense, signaling a crisis point for site specificity—at least for a version that would prioritize the physical inseparability between a work and its site of installation.⁸

Informed by the contextual thinking of minimalism, various forms of institutional critique and conceptual art developed a different model of site specificity that implicitly challenged the "innocence" of space and the accompanying presumption of a universal viewing subject (albeit one in possession of a corporeal body) as espoused in the phenomenological model. Artists such as Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, and Robert Smithson, as well as many women artists including Mierle Laderman Ukeles, have variously conceived the site not only in physical and spatial terms but as a cultural framework defined by the institutions of art. If minimalism returned to the viewing subject a physical body, institutional critique insisted on the social matrix of the class, race, gender, and sexuality of the viewing subject.⁹ Moreover, while minimalism challenged the idealist hermeticism of the autonomous art object by deflecting its meaning to the space of its presentation, institutional critique further complicated this displacement by highlighting the idealist hermeticism of the space of presentation itself. The modern gallery/museum space, for instance, with its stark white walls, artificial lighting (no windows), controlled climate, and pristine architectonics, was perceived not solely in terms of basic dimensions and proportion but as an institutional disguise, a normative exhibition convention serving an ideological function. The seemingly benign architectural features of a gallery/museum, in other words, were deemed to be coded mechanisms that actively disassociate the space of art from the outer world, furthering the institution's idealist imperative of rendering itself and its values "objective," "disinterested," and "true."

As early as 1970 Buren proclaimed, "Whether the place in which the work is shown imprints and marks this work, whatever it may be, or whether the work itself is directly—consciously or not—produced for the Museum, any work presented in that framework, if it does not explicitly examine the influence of the framework upon

see
FOUCAULT
+ power

GENEALOGY OF SITE SPECIFICITY

which able
as an
institutional
disguise
serving an
ideological
function
architecture of
gallery itself
or "coded"
Mechanism sm⁹

laborer of museum
"not" "disinterested" "true"
"objective"

phenomenological model rare assume's universal viewing subject
presence of viewer for work's completion
relationship between work
Commodification
- was body experience
to one party

relationship between the work and its site, rather for the work's completion. The limitations of traditional institutional setting; the epistemological them the art object to the continuous subject from an old Cartesian experience; and the self-interest market economy, which circulate commodity goods—all these point to the actuality of the site. In a 1969 interview that each of which it was installed. They carried Richard Serra wrote fifteen years later in the General Sericulture Program of the General Sculpture Program, Cor-Ten steel sculpture in particular site: Federal Plaza. To remove the work is to decontextualize it in 1989:

from the start as a site-specific "site-adjusted" or ... the environmental composition of site-specific location of the site, whether it be sculpture. The works become perceptually and perceptually

as Barry's comment announces guardist sculptural practice, marked it were to follow through the

IDEALISM

side of
network of
Specialists
in gallery
museum to
behold
etc

popmo + related intellectual
friends on dead -
what's next?

This is old + Bony - ok, we
get it, well know how of it -
now, either we move on or
become so obsessed with unwrapping
this network of power + economics that
it feeds off itself - we become
mired, novel gazy,
Narcissistic theorists

itself falls into the illusion of self-sufficiency—or idealism.¹⁰ More than just the museum, the site comes to encompass a relay of several interrelated but different spaces and economies, including the studio, gallery, museum, art criticism, art history, the art market, that together constitute a system of practices that is not separate from but open to social, economic, and political pressures. To be "specific" to such a site, in turn, is to decode and/or recode the institutional conventions so as to expose their hidden operations—to reveal the ways in which institutions mold art's meaning to modulate its cultural and economic value; to undercut the fallacy of art's and its institutions' autonomy by making apparent their relationship to the broader socioeconomic and political processes of the day. Again, in Buren's somewhat militant words from 1970:

Art, whatever else it may be, is exclusively political. What is called for is the analysis of formal and cultural limits (and not one or the other) within which art exists and struggles. These limits are many and of different intensities. Although the prevailing ideology and the associated artists try in every way to camouflage them, and although it is too early—the conditions are not met—to blow them up, the time has come to unveil them.¹¹

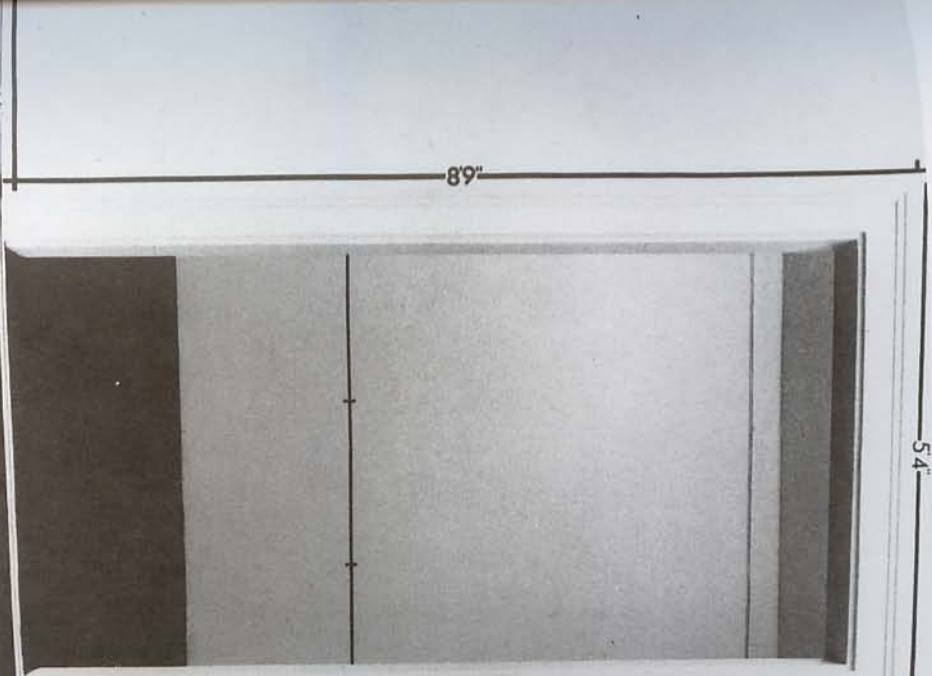
In nascent forms of institutional critique, in fact, the physical condition of the exhibition space remained the primary point of departure for this unwrapping. For example, in works such as Hans Haacke's *Condensation Cube* (1963–1965), Mel Bochner's *Measurement series* (1969), Lawrence Weiner's wall cutouts (1968), and Buren's *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973), the task of exposing those aspects which the institution would obscure was enacted literally in relation to the architecture of the exhibition space—highlighting the humidity level of a gallery by allowing moisture to "invade" the pristine minimalist art object (a mimetic configuration of the gallery space itself), insisting on the material fact of the gallery walls as "framing" devices by notating the walls' dimensions directly on them; removing portions of a wall to reveal the base reality behind the "neutral" white cube; and ex-

on one hand, we've
looked at the
motivation of power
+ power of resist
+ deconstructed
and analyzed
them - popmo
is a good
analytic strategy,
but we want
know it could
stand as a p
because it
is essentially
industrial

could they to keep
intellectually extended
premises and continue
expanded on 2/15/75
on 2/15/75

and critics have their own politico-economic agenda
and just as self interested as that of the museum etc. on 2/15/75

to interact on gallery of art's ad
by showing their relationship
+ politics



Mel Bochner, *Measurement: Room, Tape and Latticel on Wall*, installation
1969. (Photo by the artist. Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

own in home - but it does not literally refer to
it's own walls
* This makes sense economically + political
on ground of understanding - but
my ground is no more solid on
my justification for appealing to socio-
Economics + Political Theory are all
they so have empirical components + so
born in terms of their creation + so
operation a complex empirical ground
on artist/and Marxist to expose
ways of perceiving, and about, and value

not examining the material world
ends it falls into the illusion
-realism

efficiency—or idealism.¹⁰ More than just the mu-
nity of several interrelated but different
studio, gallery, museum, art criticism, art his-
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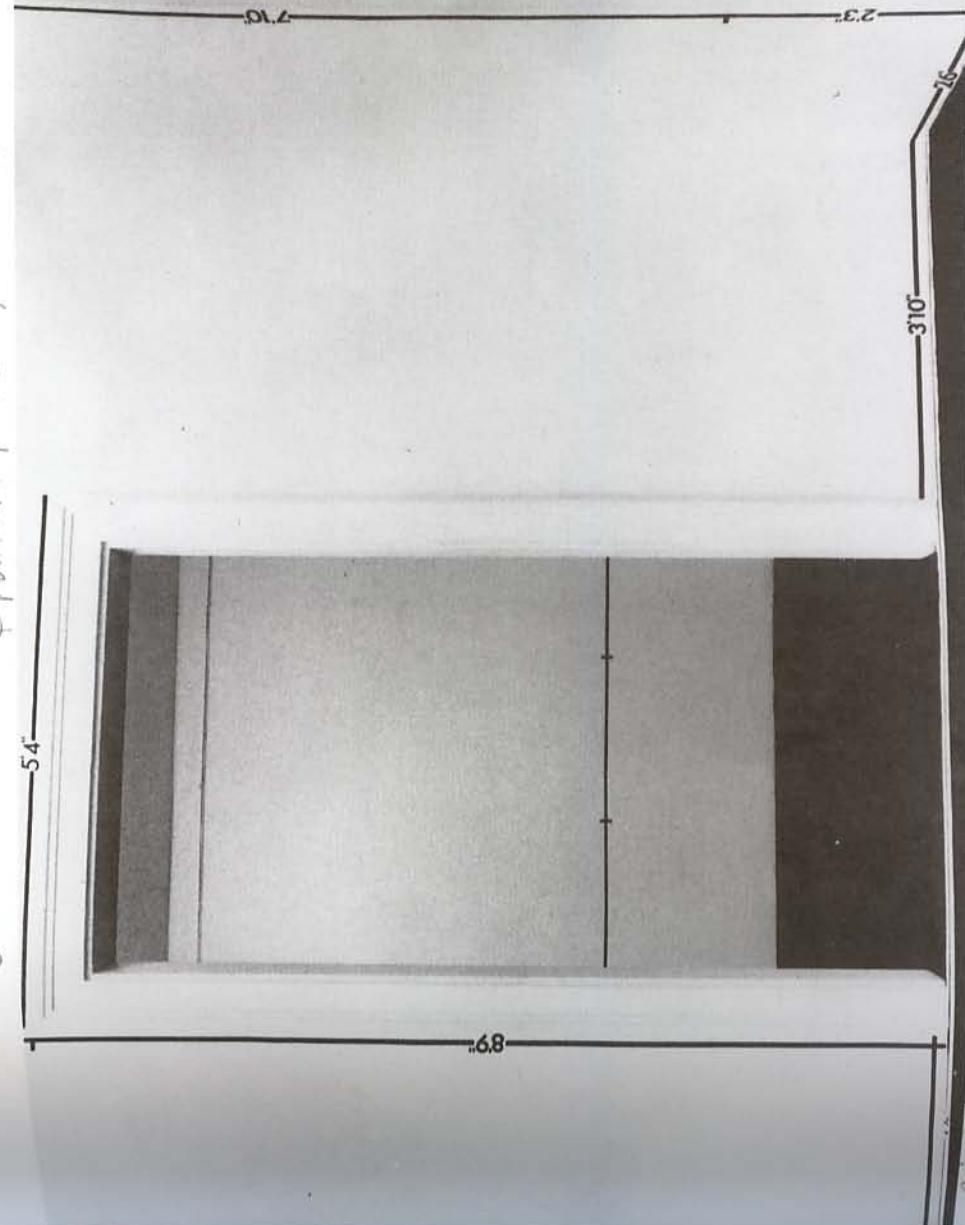
see Engelman

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Decide on recode institutional conventions (in no artwork)
so as to expose their hidden operations. - This needs to
be done to this point viewpoint!

to undercut on fallacy of art's as an institutional autonomy
by showing their relationship to the broader social economy,
+ political processes of the Day



aim in form - but it does not logically negate or disprove modernist notions about
it merely negates
de-emptiness
mess + hopes
This makes socioeconomics + politics the "ultimate" foundation
on ground of understanding - but as people + others have shown,
only ground is no more solid than anything else - so what is
the justification for appealing to socioeconomics + politics? Sociology +
Economics + Political Theory are all themselves supply fields
they do have empirical components, but even these can be criticized
both in terms of their execution + scope - i.e. not everything in human
behavior is measurable, all quantified. So this amounts to an attempt by

Mei Bochner, *Measurement: Room*, tape and Letraset on wall, installation at Galerie Hener Friedrich, Munich, 1968. (Photo by the artist; Collection The Museum of Modern Art, New York.)
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social - economic and cultures have their own politics - socio-economic organization
and just as self-interest to that of the museum etc. on state + its habits, art
institution + its culture, which itself does not have a habit of its own

the to keep
formally
2400
actually
p
the to keep
formally
2400
actually
p



Daniel Buren, photo-souvenir: *Within and Beyond the Frame*, John Weber Gallery, New York, 1973. (© Daniel Buren.)



great work of 1970's

ceeding the physical boundaries of the gallery by having the art work literally go out the window, ostensibly to "frame" the institutional frame. Attempts such as these to expose the cultural confinement within which artists function—"the apparatus the artist is threaded through"—and the impact of its forces upon the meaning and value of art became, as Smithson had predicted in 1972, "the great issue" for artists in the 1970s.¹² As this investigation extended into the 1980s, it relied less and less on the physical parameters of the gallery/museum or other exhibition venues to articulate its critique.

In the paradigmatic practice of Hans Haacke, for instance, the site shifted



Michael Asher, untitled installation at Claire Coppley Gallery, Inc., Los Angeles, 1974. (Photo by Gary Krueger; courtesy the artist.)

from the physical condition of the gallery (as a site of socioeconomic relations within which art's possibilities of being, its fact-based exhibition, its inextricable ties to the ideological power elite, recast the site of art as an institution of a different approach to the institutionally precise displacement projects, which historically and conceptually dimensions. In his "Exhibition" at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1974, sites of exhibition or display to be culturally particular expectations and narratives regarding art, in other words, not only distinguished specific forms of knowledge that are historically mined—not at all universal or timeless standards.

Yet another approach to a critique of the museum was Mierle Laderman Ukeles's 1973 series of "Museum Maintenance" projects at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, literally on her hands and knees, washing, scrubbing, and cleaning the museum for four hours, then scrubbed the floor another four hours. In doing so, she forced a re-evaluation of the museum's relationship with women—cleaning, washing, dusting, and revealing the extent of their self-presentation, its perfectly immaculate "tradition" is structurally dependent on the maintenance and upkeep. By foregrounding this as a hierarchical system of labor relations, she challenged the division between the notions of the gallery and the physical condition of a specific location. In these ways, the site of art begins to articulate the conception of a site. Whether articulated

from the physical condition of the gallery (as in *Condensation Cube*) to the system of socioeconomic relations within which art and its institutional programming find their possibilities of being. His fact-based exposés through the 1970s, which spotlighted art's inextricable ties to the ideologically suspect if not morally corrupt power elite, recast the site of art as an institutional frame in social, economic, and political terms, and enforced these terms as the very content of the art work.¹³ Exemplary of a different approach to the institutional frame are Michael Asher's surgically precise displacement projects, which advanced a concept of site that included historical and conceptual dimensions. In his contribution to the "73rd American Exhibition" at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1979, for instance, Asher revealed the sites of exhibition or display to be culturally specific situations that generate particular expectations and narratives regarding art and art history. Institutional framing of art, in other words, not only distinguishes qualitative value; it also (re)produces specific forms of knowledge that are historically located and culturally determined—not at all universal or timeless standards.¹⁴

Yet another approach to a critique of the institutional frame is indicated in Mierle Laderman Ukeles's 1973 series of "maintenance art" performances at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut.¹⁵ In two of the performances, Ukeles, literally on her hands and knees, washed the entry plaza and steps of the museum for four hours, then scrubbed the floors inside the exhibition galleries for another four hours. In doing so, she forced the menial domestic tasks usually associated with women—cleaning, washing, dusting, and tidying—to the level of aesthetic contemplation, and revealed the extent to which the museum's pristine self-presentation, its perfectly immaculate white spaces as emblematic of its "neutrality," is structurally dependent on the hidden and devalued labor of daily maintenance and upkeep. By foregrounding this dependence, Ukeles posed the museum as a hierarchical system of labor relations and complicated the social and gendered division between the notions of the public and the private.¹⁶

In these ways, the site of art begins to diverge from the literal space of art, and the physical condition of a specific location recedes as the primary element in the conception of a site. Whether articulated in political and economic terms, as in

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GENEALOGY OF SITE SPECIFICITY

*Inst. framing
 Framing
 Power
 Political
 Economic
 +
 Historical
 Not time*

*Museum's
 Institutional
 Site of art*

*Conceptual
 Space*

Site of Art begins to diverge from the

In the 80's, concern shifted from the physical condition of the gallery to the socioeconomic relations of the institution.

X

Hacker



Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Hartford Wash: Washing Tracks, Maintenance Outside*, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, 1973. (Photos courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.)



Mierle Laderman Ukeles, *Harford Wash: Washing Tracks, Maintenance Inside*, Wadsworth Atheneum, Harford, 1973. (Photos courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York.)

But what does this educational "condition" of viewer mean? Or does it mean "condition of viewer"?

SSAAT
 adopt →
 intentional,
 of his hand,
 of depicts,
 + performative
 critiques
 that are
 non-art
 to look at
 to look at
 to look at
 (process)
 (verb)
 (noun)
 (verb)

critical identity
 about me, ideological
 conditions
 main viewing

my paintings +
 one roll of red
 viewer +
 figures look
 @ viewer

Haacke's case, in epistemological terms, as in Asher's displacements, or in systemic terms of uneven (gendered) labor relations, as in Ukeles's performances, it is rather the techniques and effects of the art institution as they circumscribe and delimit the definition, production, presentation, and dissemination of art that become the sites of critical intervention. Concurrent with this move toward the dematerialization of the site is the simultaneous deaestheticization (that is, withdrawal of visual pleasure) and dematerialization of the art work. Going against the grain of institutional habits and desires, and continuing to resist the commodification of art in the marketplace, site-specific art adopts strategies that are either aggressively antivisual—informational, textual, expositional, didactic—or immaterial altogether—gestures, events, or performances bracketed by temporal boundaries. The "work" no longer seeks to be a noun/object but a verb/process, provoking the viewers' critical (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological conditions of their viewing. In this context, the guarantee of a specific relationship between an art work and its site is not based on a physical permanence of that relationship (as demanded by Serra, for example) but rather on the recognition of its unfixd impermanence, to be experienced as an unrepeatable and fleeting situation.

But if the critique of the cultural confinement of art (and artists) via its institutions was once the "great issue," a dominant drive of site-oriented practices today is the pursuit of a more intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life—a critique of culture that is inclusive of nonart spaces, nonart institutions, and nonart issues (blurring the division between art and nonart, in fact). Concerned to integrate art more directly into the realm of the social,¹⁷ either in order to redress (in an activist sense) urgent social problems such as the ecological crisis, homelessness, AIDS, homophobia, racism, and sexism, or more generally in order to relativize art as one among many forms of cultural work, current manifestations of site specificity tend to treat aesthetic and art historical concerns as secondary issues. Deeming the focus on the social nature of art's production and reception to be too exclusive, even elitist, this expanded engagement with culture favors public sites outside the traditional confines of art both in physical and intellectual terms.¹⁸

Furthering previous (at times literal) attempts to take art out of the mu-

deconstruction of art work

The new conception of the relationship between artwork and its site is based on the notion of impermanence - on the experience of an unrepeatable and fleeting situation.



Group Material, DaZibaos, poster project at Union Station

of art is suppressed to "free" choice of self - even pop art
 dream of self *

today

SSAAT

between art + non-art

feature that was not art

interrelate art with address social problem - relative art to art

Site as Field of Intervention / Site as Field of Action
 1st + 2nd + 3rd + 4th + 5th + 6th + 7th + 8th + 9th + 10th + 11th + 12th + 13th + 14th + 15th + 16th + 17th + 18th + 19th + 20th + 21st + 22nd + 23rd + 24th + 25th + 26th + 27th + 28th + 29th + 30th + 31st + 32nd + 33rd + 34th + 35th + 36th + 37th + 38th + 39th + 40th + 41st + 42nd + 43rd + 44th + 45th + 46th + 47th + 48th + 49th + 50th + 51st + 52nd + 53rd + 54th + 55th + 56th + 57th + 58th + 59th + 60th + 61st + 62nd + 63rd + 64th + 65th + 66th + 67th + 68th + 69th + 70th + 71st + 72nd + 73rd + 74th + 75th + 76th + 77th + 78th + 79th + 80th + 81st + 82nd + 83rd + 84th + 85th + 86th + 87th + 88th + 89th + 90th + 91st + 92nd + 93rd + 94th + 95th + 96th + 97th + 98th + 99th + 100th

But what does this educational "condition" of viewer mean? Or does it mean "condition of viewer"?

depersonalization of site
universalization and
deterritorialization of art work

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of the relationship between an
site is based on the viewer
on the experience of an unrepresentable
site.

"Epistemological" conditions of the viewer's activity -
Back to Barthes
"Theology Rules" HA! - Boxing -! (It's almost as if pop art is trying to get to
in pop art, ideology-free viewer/producer subject - even though it eroticizes Academicism
the viewer (as "ideology") and even though it tries to mix self + identity in the midst
of language + body). But why also do this to "free us" by "exposing" it? *



Group Material, *Face*, poster project at Union Square, New York, 1982. (Photo courtesy the artists.)

* of this is supposed to "Face" us - This is a connection to Art, Freedom,
and choice of self - even Pop art wants freedom, even @ expense of our
death of self. *

TODAY SS Art

site as fully defined
in language of culture
is desirable
1980s
1990s
- Focus on Art's production & reception too artist +
- Favors public sites outside of art's traditional physical, intellectual
parameters a more intense engagement w/ the
outside world + everyday life - blurring the distinction
between art + nonart - this becomes a critique
of culture that includes non-art spaces, institutions, and
non-art issues.
- Intergrade into realm of the social
social conceived of
Separate & not intertwined

Contemporary
SS Art
Interdisciplinary

Site
Field of
Knowledge,
Intellectual
Exchange
Cultural
Location +
Soc. of
Contexts
(Forms)
And Subordinate

seum/gallery space-system (recall Daniel Buren's striped canvases marching out the window, or Robert Smithson's adventures in the wastelands of New Jersey or isolated locales in Utah), contemporary site-oriented works occupy hotels, city streets, housing projects, prisons, schools, hospitals, churches, zoos, supermarkets, and they infiltrate media spaces such as radio, newspapers, television, and the Internet. In addition to this spatial expansion, site-oriented art is also informed by a broader range of disciplines (anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, psychology, natural and cultural histories, architecture and urbanism, computer science, political theory, philosophy) and is more sharply attuned to popular discourses (fashion, music, advertising, film, and television). Beyond these dual expansions of art into culture, which obviously diversify the site, the distinguishing characteristic of today's site-oriented art is the way in which the art work's relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) and the social conditions of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a discursively determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate. Furthermore, unlike in the previous models, this site is not defined as a precondition. Rather, it is generated by the work (often as "content"), and then verified by its convergence with an existing discursive formation.

Site does not have to "exist" prior to work - it isn't a precondition for the work - on site is verified with a field of knowledge



▶ Mark Dion, *On Tropical Nature*, in the field near the Orinoco River basin, 1991. (Photo by Bob Bralme, courtesy American Fine Arts Co., New York)
▶ Mark Dion, *On Tropical Nature*, installation at Sala Mendoza, Caracas, 1991. (Photo by Mirwon Kwon.)

- infiltrate media spaces - radio, tv, etc.
- informed by broader range of disciplines
- pop culture - fashion, movies, music



Mark Dion, *New York State Bureau of Tropical Conservation*, with for installation at American Fine Arts Co., New York, 1992. (Photo Arts Co., New York)

Daniel Buren's striped canvases marching out adventures in the wastelands of New Jersey or isolationist site-oriented works occupy hotels, city streets, hospitals, churches, zoos, supermarkets, and radio, newspapers, television, and the Internet. site-oriented art is also informed by a broader sociology, literary criticism, psychology, natural and urbanism, computer science, political theory attuned to popular discourses (fashion, music, beyond these dual expansions of art into culture, the distinguishing characteristic of today's site-oriented art work's relationship to the actuality of a location of the institutional frame (as site) are both defined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, cultural debate. Furthermore, unlike in the previous precondition. Rather, it is generated by the work and by its convergence with an existing discourse.

It's prior to work - it isn't on site is verified by location for the work - on site is verified by work



Orinoco River Basin, 1991. (Photo by Bob Braine; courtesy Mendoza, Caracas, 1991. (Photo by Miwon Kwon)

A contemporary sites for hospitals, clinics - infiltrated by Bronx - informed by Bronx - pop culture - foot



Mark Dion, New York for installation at American Art Co., New York

Schools



Multiple
of site - 5
News

ES: learn
about
simple idea

seeks to
add to debate of
"discourse"
in environment

An ongoing
investigation
diverse media as a
site

Identify as
site of investigation

See
programs?
no capital
no part of
media

the
w
oi
si
si
ei
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ui
w
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D
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H

re, several differ-
e of Dion's inter-
the Orinoco River
eks collecting
ooms, nests, and
ates, were deliv-
isting art institu-
hich were
xtualized within
atic group exhi-
the site to which
become a part of
e global environ-
tent and site,
operating with
chor in the dis-
each produced
s, their consistent
s of (homo)sexu-
ork. And in many
ie Durham, and
thnographic tra-
rtant "site" of
ilvia Kolbowski,
reflected on as-
rency in relation
nifications, or po-
concept, a social
lly an art institu-

with
business
etc operators
fish and demands
social economic
participation

general
specific

But when it ends it becomes a thing, a narrative -
Dion is its site, this paragraph shows.

A site
a function
a narrative
a site

neighborhood or sea
formations of deat
- Still need contain

This is not to say that the parameters of
longer matter, because site-oriented art today
without the contingencies of locational and in-
many site addressed by current manifestation
bound to, or determined by, these contingencies
though the site of action or intervention (phys-
(discursive) are conceived to be continuous, t
Whereas, for example, the site of intervention
Arc were thought of as coincident (Federal Plaza
Dion's site of intervention (the rain forest in Ve
projected site of effect (discourse on nature) a
the latter as material source and inspiration, y
tensionhip to it.

James Meyer has distinguished this ter-
terms of a "functional site": "[The functional s-
ring between sites, a mapping of institutional
ies that move between them (the artist's abow
locus of overlap of text, photographs and vide
things. . . . It is a temporary thing: a movemen
particular focus."²³ Which is to say, the site is r
than spatially, and its model is not a map but a
events and actions through spaces, that is, a n-
lated by the passage of the artist. Correspond-
electronic spaces of the Internet and cybersp
transitive experiences, one thing after anothe
this transformation of the site textualizes spac
A provisional conclusion might be that
thirty years the operative definition of the site
location—grounded, fixed, actual—to a disc-
Web so Mabel (As

MONUMENTAL
NARRATIVE

ETHNOGRAPHY

Site as a Mapping of Relationships
Bodies, spaces, institutions,

primary sites = Cultural Debates, a theoretical concept, social issue
 secondary sites = political problem, institutional framework (not necessarily art)
 neighborhood or second level, historical condition,
 formations of desire
 - Still need contingencies of location + institutional
 (circumstances)

from a thing
 + meaning
 + context
 + history
 + location
 + time

textural
 spaces +
 patterns
 on map and design

"index"
 on map and design

GENEALOGY OF SITE SPECIFICITY

A chain of
 meanings
 derived from
 particular
 forms

- Apollin
 - Nomadic
 - isn't artist
 The focus of
 locus?

mations of desire are deemed to function as sites.²²
 This is not to say that the parameters of a particular place or institution no longer matter, because site-oriented art today still cannot be thought or executed without the contingencies of locational and institutional circumstances. But the primary site addressed by current manifestations of site specificity is not necessarily bound to, or determined by, these contingencies in the long run. Consequently, although the site of action or intervention (physical) and the site of effects/reception (discursive) are conceived to be continuous, they are nonetheless pulled apart. Whereas, for example, the site of intervention and the site of effect for Serra's *Tilted Arc* were thought of as coincident (Federal Plaza in downtown New York City), Dion's site of intervention (the rain forest in Venezuela or Sala Mendoza) and his projected site of effect (discourse on nature) are distinct. The former clearly serves the latter as material source and inspiration, yet does not sustain an indexical relationship to it.

James Meyer has distinguished this trend in recent site-oriented practice in terms of a "functional site": "[The functional site] is a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and discursive filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all). It is an informational site, a locus of overlap of text, photographs and video recordings, physical places and things. . . . It is a temporary thing; a movement; a chain of meanings devoid of a particular focus."²³ Which is to say, the site is now structured (inter)textually rather than spatially, and its model is not a map but an itinerary, a fragmentary sequence of events and actions through spaces, that is, a nomadic narrative whose path is articulated by the passage of the artist. Corresponding to the model of movement in electronic spaces of the Internet and cyberspace, which are likewise structured as transitive experiences, one thing after another, and not in synchronic simultaneity,²⁴ this transformation of the site textualizes spaces and spatializes discourses.

A provisional conclusion might be that in advanced art practices of the past thirty years the operative definition of the site has been transformed from a physical location—grounded, fixed, actual—to a discursive vector—ungrounded, fluid, virtual.

Web 2.0 Model (Art)
 ITINERARY
 - functions through spaces
 - transitive experiences
 - itinerarily numbered

But when it ends it becomes a 'thing' a narrative - stems
 DM + is its E

general
 specific

nature, several different sites of Dion's interest of the Orinoco River weeks collecting mushrooms, nests, and crates, were delivering art institutions, which were contextualized within thematic group exhibitions as the site to which to become a part of the global environment and site, operating with anchor in the diverse each produced ones, their consistent mics of (homo)sexual work. And in many nmie Durham, and ethnographic trace important "site" of Silvia Kolbowski, are reflected on as currency in relation ramifications, or political concept, a social clearly an art institution.

- information
 - relationships between
 - information

Competing definitions of site specificity (and various practices)

New practice of SSA art provide more ways to market force (curator forced) + commodification + Standard of SSA - strong hand on the capacity to create network of social + political organization w/ greater + meaning. Imped + meaning.

tual. Of course, even if a particular formulation of site specificity dominates at one moment and recedes at another, the shifts are not always punctual or definitive.

Thus, the three paradigms of site specificity I have schematized here—phenomenological, social/institutional, and discursive—although presented somewhat chronologically, are not stages in a neat linear trajectory of historical development. Rather, they are competing definitions, overlapping with one another and operating simultaneously in various cultural practices today (or even within a single artist's single project). Nonetheless, this move away from a literal interpretation of the site, and the multiple expansions of the site in locational and conceptual terms, seem more accelerated today than in the past. The phenomenon is embraced by many artists, curators, and critics as offering more effective avenues to resist revised institutional and market forces that now commodify "critical" art practices. In addition, current forms of site-oriented art, which readily take up social issues (often inspired by them), and which routinely engage the collaborative participation of audience groups for the conceptualization and production of the work, are seen as a means to strengthen art's capacity to penetrate the sociopolitical organization of contemporary life with greater impact and meaning. In this sense the chance to conceive the site as something more than a place—as repressed ethnic history, a political cause, a disenfranchised social group—is an important conceptual leap in redefining the public role of art and artists.²⁸ - oil self

But the enthusiastic support for these salutary goals needs to be checked by a serious critical examination of the problems and contradictions that attend all forms of site-specific and site-oriented art today, which are visible now as the art work is becoming more and more unhinged from the actuality of the site once again—"unhinged" both in a literal sense of a physical separation of the art work from the location of its initial installation, and in a metaphorical sense as performed in the discursive mobilization of the site in emergent forms of site-oriented art. This unhinging, however, does not indicate a reversion to the modernist autonomy of the siteless, nomadic art object, although such an ideology is still predominant. Rather, the current unhinging of site specificity indicates new pressures upon its practice today—pressures engendered by both aesthetic imperatives and external history—

today—pressures engendered by both aesthetic imperatives and external history—

Side as something more than a place is important

in redefining public role of art + one artist

Autonomous / self-specific self as site

own Cindy Sherman is a SSA artist

Problems / contradictions of SSA as work becomes unhinged

in time of 1's def. One is good - getting respect to see arts returned by using trad art forms to paradigm is hand between person around them know down in re-determined meaning

possible SSA standards: Does it clarify or further the debate? Does it make a concept more meaningful does it deepen our experience, understanding, or appreciation of it? If it doesn't tell us anything new does it make us see something pondered in new ways? Does it bring to light - make us reflect or consider - that which we may typically miss or ignore?

cal determinants, which are not exactly example, what is the status of traditional activity, and uniqueness in site-specific art local, unrepeatable preconditions of a relegation of authorship to the condition reader-viewers, a continuing Barthesian or a recasting of the centrality of the art more, what is the commodity status of oriented, ephemeral, performative even commodification by insisting on immo and nomadism for the same purpose. (also defines capital and power in our then, a form of resistance to the ideology, the logic of capitalist expansion? Guided by these questions, the tions within which site-specific and site cent years. First, since the late 1980s, t traveling site-specific art works, despite work is to destroy the work. Concurrently from the minimalist and post in the art world. The increasing trend site-bound works has raised new que nality of such works as well as their co specific practices have become famli world, artists are traveling more than e ectis in situ. The extent of this mobiliza modify status of the art work, the natura relationship. New SSA practices are various per restrictions - one picture - a other

Standards for SSA can play

plurality standards - unity, shared

SSA: where the words + structure

that art becomes part of its intended

First SSA rule the practice

Exam a painter draws on mobile

journey of process of making a painting

and can be visited by narrative

one the po beyond the - po so pr it's a co

may end up being only an illustration of the decisions + not actually impact or extend discourse

ar formulation of site specificity dominates at one the shifts are not always punctual or definitive. e specificity I have schematized here—phenom- and discursive—although presented somewhat a neat linear trajectory of historical development. itions, overlapping with one another and operating al practices today (or even within a single artist's s move away from a literal interpretation of the site, he site in locational and conceptual terms, seem the past. The phenomenon is embraced by many offering more effective avenues to resist revised insti- now commodify "critical" art practices. In addition, rt, which readily take up social issues (often in- tinely engage the collaborative participation of ptualization and production of the work, are seen as acy to penetrate the sociopolitical organization er impact and meaning. In this sense the chance ng more than a place—as repressed ethnic history, ised (social group)—is an important conceptual leap art and artists.²⁵ - oil self port for these salutary goals needs to be checked on of the problems and contradictions that attend all oriented art today, which are visible now as the art ore unhinged from the actuality of the site once teral sense of a physical separation of the art work stallation, and in a metaphorical sense as performed of the site in emergent forms of site-oriented art. This ndicate a reversion to the modernist autonomy of the though such an ideology is still predominant. Rather, pecificity indicates new pressures upon its practice id by both aesthetic imperatives and external histori- 2005 M Can also be self place is important in terms of L's def. One artist returned by US's trad art forms as post-dig- art world became post-

cal determinants, which are not exactly comparable to those of thirty years ago. For example, what is the status of traditional aesthetic values such as originality, authenticity, and uniqueness in site-specific art, which always begins with the particular local, unrepeatable preconditions of a site, however, it is defined? Is the prevailing relegation of authorship to the conditions of the site, including collaborators and/or reader-viewers, a continuing Barthesian performance of the "death of the author" or a recasting of the centrality of the artist as a "silent" manager/director? Furthermore, what is the commodity status of anticommodities, that is, immaterial, process-oriented, ephemeral, performative events? While site-specific art once defied commodification by insisting on immobility, it now seems to espouse fluid mobility and nomadism for the same purpose. Curiously, however, the nomadic principle also defines capital and power in our times.²⁶ Is the unhinging of site specificity, then, a form of resistance to the ideological establishment of art, or a capitulation to the logic of capitalist expansion? in situ / mobile common mobility mobility of

Guided by these questions, the next chapter examines two different conditions within which site-specific and site-oriented art have been "circulating" in recent years. First, since the late 1980s, there have been increasing numbers of traveling site-specific art works, despite the once-adamant claim that to move the work is to destroy the work. Concurrently, refabrications of site-specific works, particularly from the minimalist and postminimalist eras, are becoming more common in the art world. The increasing trend of relocating or reproducing once unique site-bound works has raised new questions concerning the authenticity and originality of such works as well as their commodity status. Secondly, now that site-specific practices have become familiar (even commonplace) in the mainstream art world, artists are traveling more than ever to fulfill institutional/cultural critique projects in situ. The extent of this mobilization of the artist radically redefines the commodity status of the art work, the nature of artistic authorship, and the art-site relationship. new SSA practices are commodious and marketing are proving to be winners for institutional contexts - are SS artists being co-opted? one potentially distinguishing feature of SSA from painterly painting standards - unity, balance, compelling presence etc are harder to apply to SSA; whereas the goals + standards of SSA may not be at all applicable to trad. art because of its interdisciplinary, natural. one takes the creative self as site one takes the creative self as site Even a painter draws on many different discourses of discipline. The

2005 M Can also be self place is important in terms of L's def. One artist returned by US's trad art forms as post-dig- art world became post-

GENEALOGY OF SITE SPECIFICITY
being centered on
with one party
with the documentarism & all that goes before the
value documents SSA - just how different are they? 2005

UNHINGING OF SITE SPECIFICITY

Mobilization of Site Specificity

The "unhinging" of art works first realized in the 1960s and 1970s is provoked not so much by aesthetic imperatives as by pressures of the museum culture and the art market. Photographic documentation and other materials associated with site-specific art (preliminary sketches and drawings, field notes, instructions on installation procedures, etc.) have long been standard fare in museum exhibitions and a staple of the art market. In the recent past, however, as the cultural and market values of such works from the 1960s and 1970s have risen, many of the early precedents in site-specific art, once deemed difficult to collect and impossible to reproduce, have reappeared in several high-profile exhibitions, such as "L'art conceptuel, une perspective" at the Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris (1989) and "The New Sculpture 1965-75: Between Geometry and Gesture" (1990) and "Immaterial Objects" (1991-1992), both at the Whitney Museum.¹

For exhibitions like these, site-specific works from decades ago are being relocated or refabricated from scratch at or near the location of their representation, either because shipping is too difficult and costly or because the originals are too fragile, in disrepair, or no longer in existence. Depending on the circumstances, some of these refabrications are destroyed after the specific exhibitions for which they are produced; in other instances, the recreations come to coexist with or replace the old, functioning as *new originals* (some even finding homes in permanent collections of museums).² With the cooperation of the artist in many cases, art audiences are now being offered the "real" aesthetic experiences of site-specific copies.

The chance to view again such "unrepeatable" works as Richard Serra's *Splash Piece: Casting* (1969-1970), Barry Le Va's *Continuous and Related Activities: Discontinued by the Act of Dropping* (1967), or Alan Saret's *Sulfur Falls* (1968) offers



Activities: Discontinued (1967), felt and glass, Whitney Museum, California, 1982.
Activities: Discontinued (1967), felt and glass, Whitney Museum, California, 1982.
Act of Dropping (1967), felt and glass, Whitney Museum, California, 1982.
New Sculpture 1965-75: Between Geometry and Gesture at the Whitney Museum, New York, 1990, with funds from the Whitney Museum.

an opportunity to reconsider their historical significance, especially in relation to the current fascination with the late 1960s and 1970s in art and criticism. But the very process of institutionalization and the attendant commercialization of site-specific art also overturn the principle of place-boundedness through which such works developed their critique of the ahistorical autonomy of the art object. Of course, with much of postminimal, proto-conceptual art work under consideration, there is an ambiguity between ephemerality and site specificity, but both asserted unrepeatability, which is the point I am stressing here.³ Contrary to the earlier conception of site specificity, the current museological and commercial practices of re-fabricating (in order to travel) once site-bound works make transferability and mobilization new norms for site specificity. As Susan Hapgood has observed, "the once-popular term 'site-specific' has come to mean 'movable under the right circumstances,'"⁴ shattering the dictum that "to remove the work is to destroy the work."

The consequences of this conversion, effected by object-oriented decontextualizations in the guise of historical recontextualizations, are a series of normalizing reversals in which the specificity of the site in terms of time and space is rendered irrelevant, making it all the easier for autonomy to be smuggled back into the art work, with the artist allowed to regain his/her authority as the primary source of the work's meaning. The art work is newly objectified (and commodified), and site specificity is re-described as the personal aesthetic choice of an artist's stylistic preference rather than a structural reorganization of aesthetic experience.⁵ Thus, a methodological principle of artistic production and dissemination is recaptured as content; active processes are transformed into inert art objects once again. In this way, site-specific art comes to represent critically rather than performing it. The "here and now" of aesthetic experience is isolated as the signified, severed from its signifier.

If this phenomenon represents another instance of domestication of vanguardist works by the dominant culture, it is not solely because of the self-aggrandizing needs of the institution nor the profit-driven nature of the market. Artists, no matter how deeply convinced of their anti-institutional sentiment or how

Style + Choice is structural reorganization of A. experience

Style

Artists tied
to objects
Autonomy

Site specific
to artist's
choices + style

Radar from
Structure
Reorganization
of aesthetic
experience

he has employs aesthetic experience
in that working of
as a result of representing self, SSA comes to represent authenticity
rather than performing it

adamant their critique of dominant ideology, are or with ambivalence, in this process of cultural le 1990 Carl Andre and Donald Judd both wrote letters to publicly disavow authorship of sculptures attributed to them at the Ace Gallery in Los Angeles a 1989 exhibition at the Ace Gallery in Los Angeles recreations: of Andre's 49-foot-long steel sculpture iron wall piece by Judd of 1970, both from the Panza and high cost of crating and shipping such latitudes and high cost of crating and shipping such latitudes and high cost of crating and shipping such latitudes Panza gave permission to the organizers of them locally following detailed instructions. As they seemed of little consequence to the director of the artists, however, felt otherwise. Not having been and installation of these surrogates, they denounce falsification" and a "forgery" despite the fact that to the "originals" in Italy and were reproduced a be sold or exhibited elsewhere.

More than merely a case of ruffled artists' status concerning the status of authorship and authenticity years ago finds new contexts today. For Andre attributed works illegitimate was not that each was stalled in Varese, Italy, which in principle cannot anyway, but that the artists themselves did not author in California. In other words, the recreations missing site of their original installation but become the process of their (re)production. By reducing to the point of obtuse blankness, and by adopting minimal art had voided the traditional standards the handiwork of the artist as the signifier of authenticity gallery case amply reveals, despite the withdrawal and authenticity remain in site-specific art as a

Plus - The human way
was done - to

1. Autonomy of Art object
A. experience

l significance, especially in relation to and 1970s in art and criticism. But the attendant commercialization of site-place-boundedness through which which historical autonomy of the art object. Of conceptual art work under consideration, ty and site specificity; but both asserted ssing here.³ Contrary to the earlier onological and commercial practices of re-bound works make transferability and. As Susan Hapgood has observed, "the to mean 'movable under the right cir- to remove the work is to destroy the on, effected by object-oriented decontextualizations, are a series of normal- the site in terms of time and space is r for autonomy to be smuggled back into in his/her authority as the primary is newly objectified (and commodified), personal aesthetic choice of an artist's reorganization of aesthetic experience.⁵ production and dissemination is recap- sformed into inert art objects once again, ssent criticality rather than performing it.⁶ ce is isolated as the signified, severed.

ther instance of domestication of van- is not solely because of the self- me profit-driven nature of the market. f their anti-institutional sentiment or how

to represent contemporary

again, Panza - all always
com back to the self
Pis - The human need of interest in seeing what are
has done - to look back and see where we are
wants - to answer - "what was it all about?"

adamant their critique of dominant ideology, are inevitably engaged, self-serving or with ambivalence, in this process of cultural legitimization. For example, in spring 1990 Carl Andre and Donald Judd both wrote letters of indignation to Art in America to publicly disavow authorship of sculptures attributed to them that were included in a 1989 exhibition at the Ace Gallery in Los Angeles.⁶ The works in question were recreations: of Andre's 49-foot-long steel sculpture Fall from 1968 and of an untitled iron wall piece by Judd of 1970, both from the Panza Collection.⁷ Due to the difficulties and high cost of crating and shipping such large-scale works from Italy to California, Panza gave permission to the organizers of the exhibition to refabricate them locally following detailed instructions. As the works had been industrially produced in the first place, the participation of the artists in the refabrication process seemed of little consequence to the director of the Ace Gallery and to Panza. The artists, however, felt otherwise. Not having been consulted on the (re)production and installation of these surrogates, they denounced the refabrications as "a gross falsification" and a "forgery," despite the fact that the sculptures appeared identical to the "originals" in Italy and were reproduced as one-time exhibition copies, not to be sold or exhibited elsewhere.

More than merely a case of ruffled artistic egos, this incident exposes a crisis concerning the status of authorship and authenticity as site-specific art from years ago finds new contexts today. For Andre and Judd, what made the refabricated works illegitimate was not that each was a reproduction of a singular work installed in Varese, Italy, which in principle cannot be reproduced anywhere else anyway, but that the artists themselves did not authorize or oversee the refabrication in California. In other words, the recreations are inauthentic not because of the missing site of their original installation but because of the absence of the artists in the process of their (re)production. By reducing visual variations within the art work to the point of obtuse blankness, and by adopting modes of industrial production, minimal art had voided the traditional standards of aesthetic distinction based on the handiwork of the artist as the signifier of authenticity. However, as the Ace Gallery case amply reveals, despite the withdrawal of such signifiers, authorship and authenticity remain in site-specific art as a function of the artist's "presence" at

adds
original work
55A in the collection
5,000 copies
right Judd

the point of (re)production. That is, with the evacuation of "artistic" traces, the artist's authorship as producer of objects is reconfigured as his/her authority to authorize in the capacity of director or supervisor of (re)production. The guarantee of authenticity is finally the artist's sanction, which may be articulated by his/her actual presence at the moment of production-installation or via a certificate of verification.⁸

While Andre and Judd once problematized authorship through the recruitment of serialized industrial production, only to cry foul years later when their proposition was taken to one of its logical conclusions,⁹ artists whose practices are based in modes of "traditional" manual labor have registered a more complex un-

*Andre + Judd
wanted to undermine
authorship by
it came to
their work*

C E R T I F I C A T E
This is to certify that the Sol LeWitt wall drawing number <u>150</u> evidenced by this certificate is authentic
Ten thousand one-inch (2.5 cm) lines evenly spaced on each of six walls. Black pencil First Drawn by: S. Kato, Kazuko Miyamoto, Ryo Watanabe First Installation: Finch College, New York, NY, October, 1972
This certification is the signature for the wall drawing and must accompany the wall drawing, if it is sold or otherwise transferred.
Certified by <u>Sol LeWitt</u> Sol LeWitt © Copyright Sol LeWitt, New York, NY

Sol LeWitt, certificate for *Wall Drawing no. 150*, October 1972 (Courtesy The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, Panza Collection.)

derstanding of the *politics* of authorship of feminist art entitled "Division of the Bronx Museum, Faith Wilding at the California Institute of the Arts, specific installation *Womb Room* house project in Los Angeles. As presented Wilding with a number and intensive physical labor required to redo the piece for the sake of it would have been an act of self-invention would write Wilding and an aspect history (again). But on the other object for a white cubic space in ing of the work as it was first established, while the cultural legitimacy Wilding's work allowed for the (the) factories of feminist art, in the instance the Museum of Contemporary Art (men) became for the most part formal, the handicraft nature of it

But even if the efficacy of when it is re-presented, the programmatic headaches that such situated institutions are still meaningful. Tablished patterns of (re)producing, and commissioning/executing artists regress into the traditional fend their site-specific practice, ity associated with such principle Rather than resisting mobilization specificity as a *nomadic practice*

*in the form of reproduction
to reinvent sale*

ask to authorize / supervise

...on of "artistic" traces, the
...ured as his/her authority to au-
...e) production. The guarantee of
...be articulated by his/her ac-
...n or via a certificate of verifi-
...thorship through the recruit-
...oul years later when their
...s,⁹ artists whose practices are
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transferred.	
le Witt	

derstanding of the *politics* of authorship. A case in point: for a 1995 historical survey of feminist art entitled "Division of Labor: 'Women's Work' in Contemporary Art" at the Bronx Museum, Faith Wilding, an original member of the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts, was invited to recreate her room-sized site-specific installation Womb Room (Crocheted Environment) from the 1972 Woman-house project in Los Angeles. As the original piece no longer existed, the project presented Wilding with a number of problems, least of which were the long hours and intensive physical labor required to complete the task. To decline the invitation to redo the piece for the sake of preserving the integrity of the original installation would have been an act of self-marginalization, contributing to a self-silencing that would write Wilding and an aspect of feminist art out of the dominant account of art history (again). But on the other hand, to recreate the work as an independent art object for a white cubic space in the Bronx Museum also meant voiding the meaning of the work as it was first established in relation to the site of its original context. Indeed, while the cultural legitimization as represented by the institutional interest in Wilding's work allowed for the (temporary) unearthing of one of the neglected trajectories of feminist art, in the institutional setting of the Bronx Museum and later the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, Womb Room (Crocheted Environment) became for the most part a beautiful but innocuous work, its primary interest formal, the handicraft nature of the work rendered thematic (feminine labor).¹⁰

re-creating
work
with
original
meaning

UNHINGING OF SITE SPECIFICITY

But even if the efficacy of site-specific art from the past seems to weaken when it is re-presented, the procedural complications, ethical dilemmas, and pragmatic headaches that such situations raise for artists, collectors, dealers, and host institutions are still meaningful. They present an unprecedented strain on established patterns of (re)producing, exhibiting, borrowing/lending, purchasing/selling, and commissioning/executing art works in general. At the same time, while some artists regress into the traditional argument of authorial inviolability in order to defend their site-specific practice, others are keen to undo the presumption of criticality associated with such principles as immobility, permanence, and unrepeatability. Rather than resisting mobilization, these artists are attempting to reinvent site specificity as a nomadic practice.

in the face of reproducing sth, some artists are trying to reinvent site specificity as a nomadic practice