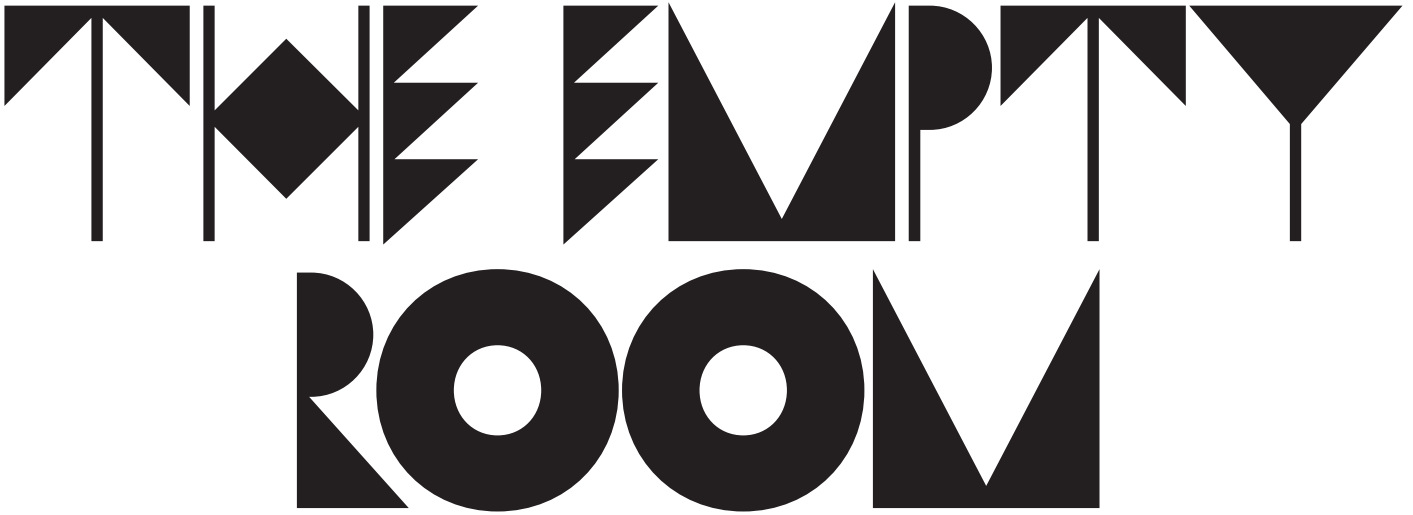
THE EMPTY
ROOM

AND
THE END OF
MAN

Robert Slifkin

The Empty Room and the End of Man

It is indeed impossible to imagine our own death;
and whenever we attempt to do so we can perceive that
we are in fact still present as spectators.
Sigmund Freud, 1915[1]

The spotless gallery wall . . . is a perfect surface
off which to bounce our paranoias.
Brian O'Doherty, 1976[2]

"I can see the whole room! . . . And there's nobody in it!" These words, borrowed from a dime-store detective comic book, where they float above the head of a man gazing out of a peephole, become in the 1961 painting of the same title by Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997) a potent allegory of the ideal conditions for aesthetic experience in the postwar era (fig. 1). By imagining the elimination of any beholders in front of the canvas, Lichtenstein's painting slyly parodies the modernist principle of a disembodied and disinterested mode of spectatorship in which the subjective contingencies of personal experience in no way influence the work's ultimate significance. Beyond its engagement with the legacy of the monochrome and color field painting, the work presents a decidedly forward looking vision of the seemingly depopulated spaces that would serve in the ensuing decades as the privileged sites for experiencing and understanding the avowedly

1
Roy Lichtenstein, *I Can See the Whole Room and There's Nobody in It*, 1961. Oil and graphite on canvas, 48 × 48 in. (121.92 × 121.92 cm). Private collection.

I CAN SEE THE WHOLE ROOM!
...AND THERE'S NOBODY IN IT!

2
Dan Flavin, *untitled (to Dorothy and Roy Lichtenstein on not seeing anyone in the room)*, 1968. Cool white fluorescent light, 96 × 132 × 7 in. (243.84 × 335.28 × 17.78 cm). San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Accessions Committee Fund purchase: gift of Emily L. Carroll, Collectors Forum, Susan and Robert Green, Elaine McKeon, Modern Art Council, Helen and Charles Schwab, and Danielle and Brooks Walker, Jr.

"dematerialized" advanced art of the period.[3] Like a good avant-garde work of art, *I Can See the Whole Room* imagines a yet-to-be-realized future audience, or, perhaps better stated, invites its present audience to imagine experiencing something unprecedented, something inconceivable.

Increasingly throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, artists, and to a certain extent curators, materialized—and as a corollary, viewers experienced—the vacancy imagined in front of Lichtenstein's painting. In 1968, Dan Flavin (1933–1996) seemed to draw on the work's central conceit in his *untitled (to Dorothy and Roy Lichtenstein on not seeing anyone in the room)* in which a "barricade" of nine white florescent light fixtures illuminate an inaccessible space with "nobody in it" (fig. 2). Around the same time, Bruce Nauman (b. 1941) literalized such architectural inaccessibility in a group of works, including *Audio-Video Underground Chamber* (1972–1974) in which the interiors

3
Bruce Nauman, *Live-Taped Video Corridor*, 1970. Wallboard, video camera, two video monitors, videotape player, and videotape, dimensions variable, approximately: (ceiling height) × 384 × 20 in. ([ceiling height] × 975.4 × 50.8 cm). Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Panza Collection, Gift, 1992, 92.4165. Installation view: *1970 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Sculpture*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, December 12, 1970–February 7, 1971.

of hermetically sealed spaces were broadcast aboveground on closed-circuit monitors. In a related piece, *Live-Taped Video Corridor* from 1970 (fig. 3), Nauman disarmingly dramatized the annihilation of the perceiving subject imagined in Lichtenstein's *I Can See the Whole Room*. The work consists of two monitors stacked one atop the other at the end of a long narrow corridor, one displaying a prerecorded loop of the corridor in an unoccupied state and the other projecting the viewer's image as seen from the entry of the corridor so that the televised body appears to shrink as it approaches the monitors, producing an unsuspecting performance of the disappearance of the human figure both as subject and audience in the art of the late 1960s. Between Lichtenstein's painting of 1961 and Nauman's installation nearly a decade later can be discerned a trajectory in which empty space—typically mediated through some form of technology, such as in Lichtenstein's use of Ben-Day dots and the shutter-like oculus at

the center of his composition or, more explicitly, Flavin's use of fluorescent lighting and Nauman's use of closed-circuit television—becomes a privileged site of artistic investigation.

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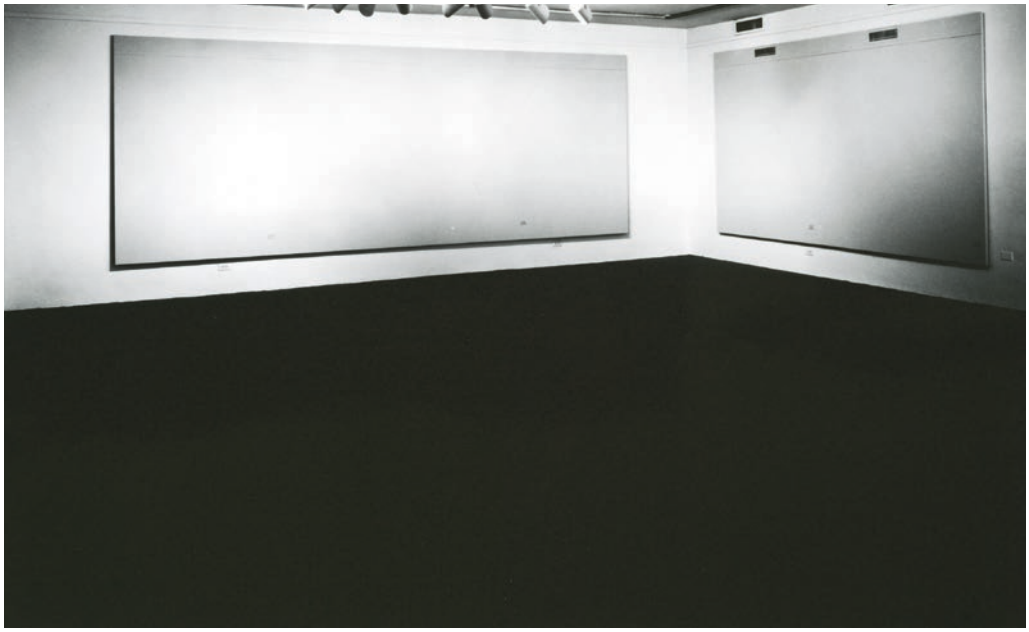
Understood as part of the broader countercultural critiques associated with the 1960s, this body of work presented—or, considering the experiential form of address, invited participants to enact for themselves—a potent antihumanist critique of universal subjectivity and teleological understandings of time. Ideally, a body moving through and around these objects would experience the fact of multiple, equally valid perceptual realities having no definitive significance. According to the influential reading by Rosalind Krauss (b. 1941), elaborated on in various texts during the 1970s, minimal and early installation art such as Flavin's and Nauman's realigned sculpture's focus "to the outside, no longer modeling its structure on the privacy of psychological space but on the public, conventional nature of what might be called cultural space."[4] Yet the precise coordinates of this cultural space in the years of minimalism's emergence and expansion into installation-based practices—roughly between 1960 and 1970—are for the most part yet to be delineated. By producing what seemed to be blank, unpopulated environments that encouraged unprecedented and unprescribed experiences, many artists associated with minimalism and its phenomenological legacy explored what could be called strategies of evacuation in which they relinquished their presence as creators and correspondingly produced works that diminished the physical presence of other viewers as well as the work itself. Yet motivating the stridency of these imperturbable visions of a cool, impersonal sensibility—and, in turn, a new order of experience and possibly even society—was a concern for humankind's planetary survival. The emptiness and silence produced by artists in the 1960s signaled the impending end of humankind (and with it, the end of history) in both its most utopian and apocalyptic implications.

While these cultural meanings have been largely unrecognized in the conventional history of this body of work—and may likely seem implausible to some people considering the mute vacancy at the heart of much minimalist art—they are central to what could be considered the most unequivocal declaration of the empty room as aesthetic experience: *Six Sites*, which William Anastasi (b. 1933) exhibited in 1967 at the Dwan Gallery in New York (fig. 4). The works

consist of six large screen prints on canvas based on photographs of the very walls on which they hung, rendered in a slightly reduced scale so that the few architectural details, such as the molding, electrical outlets, and air shaft grates, appeared just above and below their real-life referents. The critic Gregory Battcock (1937–1980), arguably one of the most politically attuned minds writing about art in the 1960s, seemed to recognize, however vaguely, the political implications of this body of work. Admiring the "cerebral integrity," which he compared to "the candid observations of Bob Dylan, Stokey Carmichael and the films of Andy Warhol," Battcock ended his short review by asserting that "there is no credibility gap here," invoking a contemporaneous term used to describe the growing sense of mistrust many American citizens felt toward their government.[5] For Battcock, Anastasi's show was a "prophetic exhibition" that "summed up, in confident and aware terms, what Minimal Art is all about."[6] Battcock's provocative assertion draws on a strong if typically undeveloped understanding of minimalism that recognized the work's rigorous detachment, frank use of materials, and attention to context as objectifying an alternative model of social relations, keenly attuned to an impartial view of reality and freed from the grip of possessiveness and the illusions of political and commercial manipulation. This position would be clearly articulated by the critic Barbara Rose (b. 1938),



4
Installation view of William Anastasi's *Six Sites* exhibition, Dwan Gallery, New York, April 29, 1967/unidentified photographer. Photograph. Dwan Gallery (Los Angeles, California, and New York, New York) records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.

who, using words that in many ways describe Anastasi's works better than the sculpture of Donald Judd (1928–1994) for which they were written, praised minimalist works for the way they "insist on the coincidence of experience with reality," presenting viewers with expressly the sort of "experience that in no way misleads the senses."[7]

If Rose's description of the experiential authenticity of minimalism reveals the ways in which its rhetoric of dispassionate objectivity extended the "Apollonian," self-reflexive autonomy of the specific art object associated with high modernism into the "expanded" but still largely aesthetically circumscribed field of postmodernism, Battcock's alignment of such illusion-defying strategies with the "credibility gap" of American society (as well as Judd's frequent invocation of the word "credible" as the preeminent criterion of aesthetic value in his own writings) suggests how this central strand of postwar aesthetics operated within the specific political contours in which it was produced.[8] According to Battcock, the "prophetic," confident summing up of minimalism's cultural significance in Anastasi's *Six Sites*, what the critic abstractedly described as a critique of "the hypocrisy, distortion, and reaction characteristic of the modern world,"[9] would only be fully articulated nearly thirty years later when, in an interview in 1989, the artist recalled how he saw these works—and notably described them at the time of their creation—as powerfully engaged with the collective fear of nuclear annihilation:

> *In the 1960s it seemed to me that the individual death that we had to contemplate in the past had now changed so that we had to contemplate collective death as well; now the hardware was in place to effect that. I remember sort of ironically telling people, Oh this is bomb art . . . because the nuclear age had changed everything. I mean, just looking ahead to the morning after, if we ever did it, we would realize instantly how unnecessary decoration is and how wonderful plain reality is if it's accessible.*[10]

Anastasi's retrospective remarks suggest how the ascetic aesthetics of the empty room could simultaneously figure an ideal world unburdened by material possessions—what he described as "the Platonic idea that in a truly civilized utopian situation art would not be necessary"—and the obliterated landscape "the morning after" wrought by nuclear devastation.[11] Indeed, the minimizing and ephemeralizing strategies proposed by artists and thinkers in the 1960s as a means to

promote a new sensibility were often grounded in a motivating fear of technological self-annihilation. In 1964, the visionary architect Buckminster Fuller (1895–1983) identified the related extremities of "utopia or oblivion" as the critical crossroads facing humanity. According to Fuller, because of the advances of science and technology that enabled what he called "do-invisibly-more-with-invisibly-less techniques," human beings had reached a pivotal moment in history where scarcity of vital resources, which he notes has served as the primary agent of martial conflict throughout history, might become obsolete, and with it, the threat of war. Ironically the very technologies of "miniaturization" and "ephemeralization," which he wrote were primarily a "by-product of the weaponry race," could ideally remedy the military industrial complex, redirecting humankind's creative energies toward more-beneficial endeavors. While the characteristically optimistic Fuller emphasized the liberatory potential of this new state of affairs, he nonetheless acknowledged the existential exigency motivating his utopian predictions. Quoting the contemporary physicist John Platt, Fuller warned, "The world has become too dangerous for anything less than utopia."[12]

Anastasi's canvases, based on photographs the artist took from the same location where viewers at the Dwan Gallery would later stand, subtly expressed the distinctly prospective trauma of human absence augured by the bomb. Rigorously synchronized to particular spatial coordinates previously occupied by a now-absent photographer, the works also signaled an equally undefined futurity embedded in their site specificity. If the canvases were ever exhibited in another location, they would, as Battcock noted, "retain something of the gallery in which they originally hung," making their brief exhibition at the Dwan Gallery a precarious monument to the emergent new sensibility they seek to engender and the fatal consequences of its belated arrival.[13]

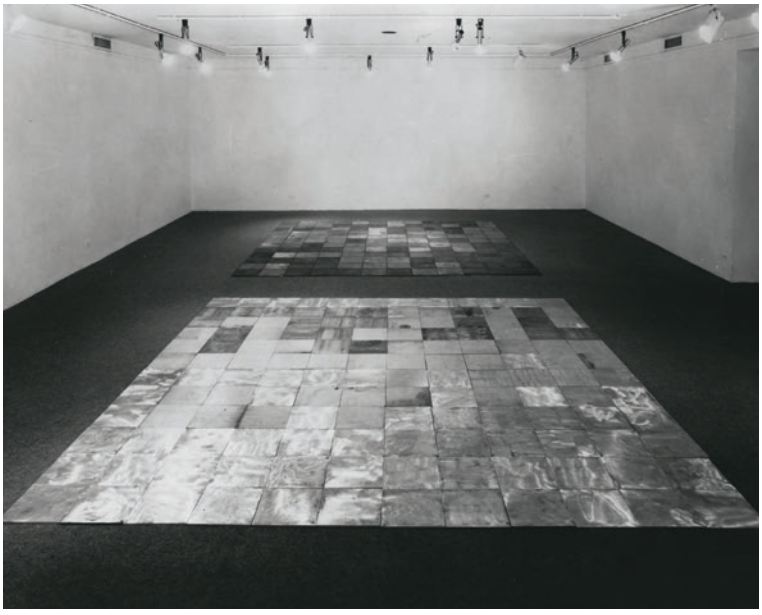
Battcock's canny recognition that Anastasi's *Six Sites* "summed up" the fundamental meaning of minimal art suggests how the perilous dynamics of "utopia or oblivion," with its equally precarious future-oriented temporality, deeply informed central aspects of the new sculpture of the 1960s. At around the same time that Lichtenstein painted *I Can See the Whole Room*, artists like Robert Morris (b. 1931) and Donald Judd began to produce large geometric structures whose architectural scale coupled with their unconventional, oftentimes industrial materials seemed to activate the surrounding gallery space and call attention to the viewer's embodied relationship to the work (fig. 5). As Morris wrote in his influential analysis of the

5
Robert Morris, installation view, Green Gallery, New York, December 1964–January 1965. Left to right: *Untitled (Table), Untitled (Corner Beam), Untitled (Floor Beam), Untitled (Corner Piece), Untitled (Cloud)*. Photograph by Rudy Burckhardt.

new sculpture in 1966, "The better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision."[14]

Paradoxically, however, the spatial expansiveness of these works coupled with their often remarked-on impersonality (rendered primarily through their characteristically simple forms and factureless surfaces) encouraged a particular mode of perception. Approaching Morris's looming and often larger-than-human sculptural slabs, the viewer's presence seems to be canceled out or at least atomized into an infinite number of possible subject positions (contingent on such variable factors as space, light, and one's field of vision). According to Krauss, "Part of the meaning of much Minimal sculpture issues from the way in which it becomes a metaphorical statement of the self understood only in experience."[15] In other words, minimal art produced experiential situations that addressed the viewer in terms of immediate sensory perception and bodily engagement rather than preconceived concepts and emotional responses based in the mind. Many critics have recognized the critical if not liberatory politics of these experiential effects, arguing that the unsentimental dramatization of the contingencies of subjective perception engendered by such art might help produce (or perhaps condition) a mode of being that could address the world free from totalizing presumptions, thus setting the stage for a new, more equitable, or at least less deluded, society.[16]

Yet this focus on experiential sensation in these works entailed a crucial degree of what could be called experiential seclusion. This correlation between alienation and subjective experience was diagnosed by the psychologist R. D. Laing in his influential study *The Politics of Experience* published in 1967. As he wrote in the early pages of the book, "I cannot experience your experience. You cannot experience my experience. We are both invisible men. All men are invisible to each other. Experience is man's invisibility to man."[17] If the stoic presence of minimal art could be said to transform *perceiving* viewers into *experiencing* bodies, it also isolated each body's experience as unique and intransmissible so that, as Michael Fried surmised in his 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood," the minimalist object "exists for [the individual viewer] alone," canceling out the significance of other subjects, even the artist's.[18] The artist Dan Graham recognized this fundamental feature of minimalism, writing that in the work of Judd, Carl Andre (b. 1935), and Sol LeWitt (1928–2007), "the artist and viewer are read out of the picture."[19] While the unadorned, square metal plates that Andre placed directly on the gallery floor bore little signs of his presence as creator, the way the work seemed to become a stage-like demarcation of the air space extending above it, even while making no substantial claims on the room in which it was exhibited, presented viewers (or "experiencers") of the work with a vivid demonstration of charged absence, whose invitation for bodily engagement—



6
Carl Andre, installation view of *144 Pieces of Magnesium* and *100 Pieces of Lead* (both works 1969), Dwan Gallery, New York, 1969. Photograph.

Andre famously allowed gallerygoers to walk on top of his floor pieces—dramatized the individualized and intransmissible experiential component of his work (fig. 6). While the galleries that displayed minimal art like Andre's may have been regularly inhabited by multiple viewers during the run of the exhibition, the works themselves encouraged a mode of spectatorship that seemed to cancel out the other occupants of the space so that each single viewer experienced the work as a unique and solitary event.

This paradoxical but essential facet of a great deal of minimalist art is demonstrated in the original critical reception surrounding the work. Repeatedly, writers emphasized the way in which these works seemed to diminish the presence not only of the other people in the gallery but also the perceiving subject experiencing the work. For instance, responding to these artistic trends in 1967, Susan Sontag (1933–2004) analyzed what she described as "the aesthetics of silence" prevalent in "a great deal of contemporary art," which "annihilates the perceiving subject" and "seems moved by a desire to eliminate the audience from art, an enterprise that often presents itself as an attempt to eliminate 'art' altogether."[20] In 1964, Robert Smithson (1938–1973) constructed a work consisting of crooked neon tubes set within an angled alcove of mirrored panels whose title, *The Eliminator*, made its hermetic relationship to its audience explicit. With the neon light reaching far beyond the sculpture itself, the work, like a great deal of the new sculpture of the 1960s, seemed to aesthetically activate its surroundings, making the concept of a discrete object of aesthetic perception problematic. These mute, monumental structures were not so much objects of perception as objects of experience, and the experience they regularly provided to the bodies that approached them, at least when they were initially exhibited, was of the world without human presence or, perhaps, considering the existential near impossibility of imagining one's own absence from the site of perception, an evacuated world perceived in isolation.

This attention to space and one's embodied experience of it has dominated the reception of minimal art since it was first recognized as a coherent movement in the mid-1960s. By emphasizing the endlessly contingent relationship between the work, the viewer, and the surrounding environment, such critical approaches keep the art object in what Robert Morris has memorably described as "the present tense of space," and for the most part, the art-historical literature surrounding minimal art has foregrounded its formal and phenomenological aspects at the expense of its social and political significance.[21]

Even James Meyer's comprehensive history of the movement published in 2001 more or less sustains the formalist occlusion of social history established by earlier critics like Krauss (but not, notably, Battcock), focusing more on the aesthetic polemics circulating around the works than their possible politics.[22] While there was a strand of advanced artistic practice from the 1960s, exemplified by the work of artists like Bruce Connor, Nancy Spero, Edward Keinholz, and Peter Saul, that did directly and perceptively address the military violence committed by the United States, this body of work has generally been marginalized in the foremost scholarship on the period, thus sustaining a stark dichotomy between a formalist center and a politicized periphery in postwar American art-historical discourse.[23] Just as these overtly political works seemed to extend the existential and humanistic ethos that informed the previous generation of Abstract Expressionist artists (whose work, it should be noted, was until quite recently often approached within major art-historical scholarship in formalistic terms), the "dehumanized art" of minimalism (to borrow the description Mel Bochner [b. 1940] gave of the pristine glass cubes by Larry Bell [b. 1939])[24] can be seen to be equally engaged in broader social ideals and anxieties, albeit in ways that seemed to resist conventional modes of social art-historical analysis.[25] One might argue that it was precisely the work's resistance to overt social content that registered the traumatic content motivating some of its central formal and conceptual characteristics. Indeed, Bochner goes on to write that the "aggressive silence" of Bell's artworks "makes them objects of the time they live in," and he would declare later in the same year that Judd's work represents "a peculiar moment which wants to be read as an end to history."[26] In other words, the sense of mute, albeit aggressive, timelessness these works engendered through their phenomenological address emerged out of prevailing cultural ideals and anxieties in which they were produced.

Considering the unbearable trauma of contemplating the end of the world, let alone one's own nonexistence, it is understandable that this theme was seldom explicitly articulated by artists or recognized by critics, despite the fact that it was—and arguably remains—the essential challenge facing a technologically advanced and, in particular, postatomic society. When artists directly addressed the subject, it was often couched in humor and fantasy, as in the 1962 *Study for the*

End of the World, No. 2 by Jean Tinguely (1925–1991) in which the Swiss artist created a series of self-destructive sculptures from mechanical remnants in the Nevada desert, just a few miles from the Nevada Test Site where the US government had been detonating atomic bombs since 1951.[27] With its Rube Goldberg–like intricacy proving ultimately dysfunctional during its televised performance, the work staged the fear of the inexorable technological processes initiated by humanity, but ultimately beyond its control, to, as the artist put it in an interview in the *Saturday Evening Post*, "cast some badly needed doubt on this 'wonderful age' we're living in."[28] This premise was dramatized more overtly in films such as *Fail Safe* and *Dr. Strangelove* (both 1964) and more allegorically in *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Planet of the Apes* (both 1968). Indeed, science fiction projections of the future took a decidedly catastrophic turn in years following the Second World War when the threat of nuclear war grounded cinematic fantasies of earthly devastation in an all-too-real political veracity. In her 1965 essay "The Imagination of Disaster," Sontag argued that such films allowed viewers "to participate in the fantasy of living through one's own death and more, the death of cities, the destruction of humanity itself." Despite longstanding mythic precedents for these apocalyptic visions, Sontag, like other intellectuals of her time, saw the postatomic age as one of extreme precariousness in which the destruction of life on earth was an ever-present and urgent reality. Echoing concepts asserted by philosophers like Bertrand Russell and Karl Jaspers in books with titles such as *Has Man a Future?* and *The Atom Bomb and the Future of Man* (both 1961), which directly addressed the existential challenges of a postatomic age, Sontag wrote, "From now on to the end of human history, every person would spend his individual life under the threat not only of individual death, which is certain, but of something almost unsupportable psychologically—collective incineration and extinction which could come at any time, virtually without warning."[29]

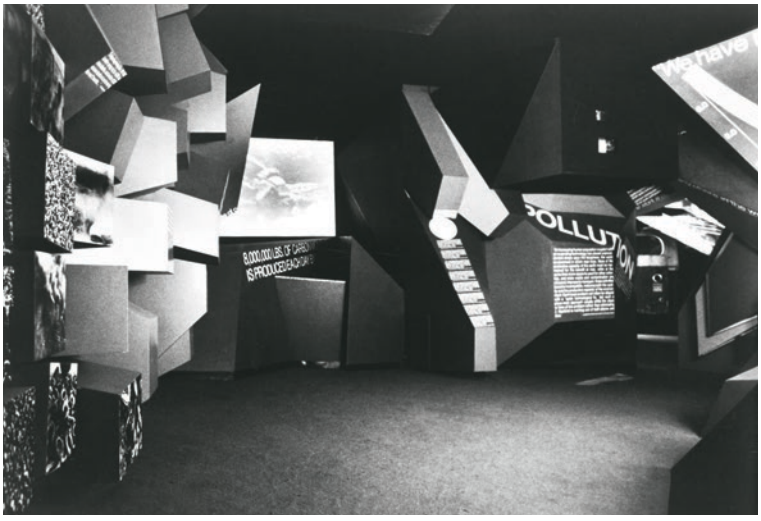
If Tinguely's work represents an overt artistic engagement with the seemingly precarious fate of mankind explored more openly in popular genres, the frequent allusions to science and science fiction, which rivaled the now more common phenomenological understanding of minimalism when it first appeared, suggest the broader, if less overt, influence of this apocalyptic imagination within the visual arts. While the critic John Perreault (1937–2015) saw in Judd's art an "implied IBM numerology" with its "icy science fiction surfaces of Flash Gordon bank vaults," Robert Smithson, whose own writings and works were infused with science fiction motifs and concepts, described a "pink

Plexiglass box" by Judd as suggesting "a giant crystal from another planet." Likewise, in his essay from 1966 "Entropy and the New Monuments," Smithson compared the work of Judd, LeWitt, Flavin, and Will Insley to the "Crystalline" language of "Damon Knight's sci-fi novel 'Beyond the Barrier,'" and related the lustrous surfaces of Craig Kaufman's and Paul Thek's art to the "slippery bubbling ooze from the movie *The Blob*."[30] The same year, the artist and writer Peter Hutchinson (b. 1930) compared minimalist works to the "interiors of spaceships, alien spaceships," and the "alien machines" from Fred Saberhagen's science fiction story "Stone Place" (1965) constructed "for the destruction of life." The title of his article, "Is There Life on Earth?," indicated the posthuman ethos he saw at the core of the minimalist aesthetic.[31]

Smithson identified an ostensibly more factual and notably sculptural manifestation of these prognostications of humankind's entropic future in an exhibition that took place at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Entitled *Can Man Survive?*, the show focused on the ways humans have affected the earth through the deleterious effects of pollution and overpopulation (fig. 7). Exhibition-goers were led through a series of dark passageways constructed from a large metal truss—invoking Fuller's "tensegrity" system of load-bearing compression—that occupied the museum's Great Hall, giving the space a menacing sculptural effect recognized by the reviewer for the *New York Times*: "The visitor's eyes are assaulted by protruding triangles, oversize spheres and thrusting industrial conduits."[32] Mounted in the museum's centennial, the show was one of the costliest and most ambitious exhibitions ever staged, its multimedia extravagance advertising the institution's relevance to the decade's reigning youth culture. In an unpublished review of the exhibition, Smithson ridiculed its facile engagement with current artistic styles, describing the cracked, black cube bearing the exhibition's title that greeted visitors as "a discarded example of 'minimal art,'" and cataloging other ersatz artistic gestures such as the split screen film depicting "the balance of nature . . . in the manner of Andy Warhol," an "ultraviolet painting done in a trivial 'op art' style," and "imitation Louise Nevelsons."[33] If *Can Man Survive?* appropriated the formal lexicon of contemporary art to express the disquieting challenges of planetary survival, Smithson explored his own, notably more sanguine, interest in the end of humankind and history at the American Museum of Natural History in his movie *Spiral Jetty* (1970), which included his eerie, red-filtered footage of its Hall of Dinosaurs set to the slowed-down, echoing sound track of a clock's ticking and the rumble of a Geiger counter, and in an essay, coauthored with Bochner,

describing how the "illustrations of catastrophes and remote times" painted on the walls behind the dinosaur skeletons presented a vision of the earth in which "the problem of the human figure vanishes" and "history no longer exists."[34]

This premonition of a "lost world" devoid of humans that artists like Smithson and Bochner recognized in both the re-creations of "Archaeozoic" earth and the futuristic surfaces of minimal art was frequently registered in the unprecedented mode of photographic reproduction of this body of work.[35] By making the surrounding gallery an integral component of their aesthetic experience, these works necessitated a mode of documentation in which the entire gallery or a large section of it was included in the photographic image. As is evident in now-canonical installation shots of such groundbreaking exhibitions as *Primary Structures* (1966) at the Jewish Museum (fig. 8) and Donald Judd's and Robert Morris's shows at the Green Gallery in 1963 and 1964 respectively (many of which were taken by Rudy Burckhardt [1914–1999] who brought a similar spatial sensitivity to his famous photographs of Jackson Pollock painting in his studio), this type of art demanded that it be reproduced amid its surroundings, which were commonly depicted in a depopulated state (see fig. 5). Or, perhaps, a better way to state this is that the depopulated space surrounding the work was made visible like never before.[36] Dan Flavin's various descriptions of the gallery in his writings as a "spatial container," "the volume of space," and "the box that is the room" underscore his interest in the surrounding space as a sculptural



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Installation view of *Can Man Survive?*, American Museum of Natural History, New York, 1969. Photograph. American Museum of Natural History Archives, New York.

8
Installation view of *Primary Structures*, The Jewish Museum, New York, April 27–June 12, 1966. *Left to right:* Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1966, and Robert Grosvenor, *Transoxiana*, 1965. Photograph by Rudolph Burckhardt. The Jewish Museum, New York.

component in his work. This aspect found a clever materialization in a layout published in *Look* magazine in 1968 that featured a collage of photographs taken by Arnold Newman that readers could cut out and fold so as to re-create in miniature the spatial effect of the installation (fig. 9). In the accompanying text, the critic Phillip Leider wrote, "Flavin's 'proposals' usually take possession of an entire room, making it part of, rather than a container for, the effect. To simulate this, fold the four walls in the photograph 'up.'"[37]

If readers of *Look* required a tangible demonstration of the gallery space's newfound significance as a component of aesthetic experience (and its identity as a boxlike minimalist object in its own right), readers of *Artforum* and other prominent art journals, who could take the aestheticization of the gallery space as a given by the midsixties, were instead presented with scrupulous descriptions of the artwork's effects on its surroundings so that walls, ceilings, and windows seemed to become formal elements in the aesthetic experience. This sort of confusion between works of art and their architectural setting is captured in the description of Morris's Green Gallery exhibition of 1965 by Lucy Lippard (b. 1937), in which her analysis seems equally applicable to the sculptures and their setting: "The room full of off-white architectural wooden structures unintentionally but unavoidably produces an environmental impression."[38]

9
Arnold Newman,
Portrait of Dan Flavin in Kornblee Gallery,
1967, from *Look*,
January 8, 1968, 20.

The simple forms and architectural connotations of materials like plywood and lighting fixtures in Morris's and Flavin's art further directed one's attention beyond the discrete objects and into the proximities around them so that for certain viewers the work became nearly imperceptible. Perreault, reviewing Flavin's January 1967 exhibition at the Kornblee Gallery, noted that "to the uninitiated the gallery might have seemed empty and the ornate fireplace curiously outstanding" (fig. 10).[39] "Initiated" viewers like Bochner, in fact, experienced the inverse effect. Flavin's art, he claimed, "dematerizaled" the gallery space so that "a vacancy ensued that was as much part of the work as the arrangement of the fixtures."[40] That is to say, for viewers who would not be confused by the artist's use of everyday fluorescent lights, the "incorporeal radiation" (to use the critic Jill Johnson's description) emitted by Flavin's art still contained equally evacuative effects in the way it "demolished corners" and "obliterated [fixtures] by cross shadows."[41] In his review of the show, Battcock described how the emitted light "completely filled" the gallery so that "the observer is totally enveloped" in it. This despite the fact that "the pieces use up practically no space, yet the end result is one of exceptionally aggressive sculptures."[42] Flavin's work, with the still relatively novel fluorescent tubes (at least within gallery and domestic settings) emitting their unearthly, cool light and faint, incessant mechanical buzz, would have seemed particularly effective as a means of projecting a sense of forceful vacancy that encompassed not only the art and it surroundings but the viewing subjects themselves.

The experience of vacancy engendered by the art of Flavin and other minimalists would be distilled and expanded on by subsequent artists who would make the empty gallery itself a site for sensitizing perception and modeling new forms of subjectivity, freed from the constraints of inherited conventions and the burden of the past. The French artist Yves Klein (1928–1962) first established the precedent for an empty gallery as a discrete work of art with his exhibition *The Void* at the Iris Clert Gallery in Paris in 1959. Klein suggested the possible political connotations of his artistic gesture in a statement in 1958: "One must—and this is not an exaggeration—keep in mind that we are living in the atomic age, where everything material and physical could disappear from one day to another, to be replaced by nothing but the ultimate abstraction imaginable."[43] Yet it would be a group of young artists working primarily in the United States at the end of the 1960s who would explore most fully the empty or near-empty gallery as a site of institutional critique, perceptual expansion, and social commentary.

10
Installation view of *Dan Flavin*, Kornblee Gallery, New York, January 7–February 2, 1967. Photograph.

In 1966, Andy Warhol (1928–1987) publicly renounced painting with a show at the Leo Castelli Gallery featuring one empty room covered in wallpaper displaying Day-Glo cows (the "apocalyptic wallpaper" described by the critic Harold Rosenberg in his famous "American Action Painters" essay of 1952?) and another room containing silver balloon "clouds" that floated around the ceiling (one outlying phallic-shaped balloon used to test the helium-filled Mylar structures and launched on the roof of the Factory was allegedly dubbed "the missile" by members of the artist's coterie). Artists such as Michael Asher (1943–2012) and Robert Huot (b. 1935) elaborated on the spatial expansiveness engendered by minimalism and turned the gallery space itself into the principal site of aesthetic consideration, fashioning sparse, subtly reconditioned chambers that encouraged a prolonged and sensitive perceptual engagement (fig. 11). For instance, Hout's simple gesture of painting two walls of the gallery blue, carefully sanding the floors and coating them with polyurethane, and adjusting the lighting to cast shadows from the pipes and draw attention to irregularities on the surface of the walls suggested a mode of artistic practice that evaded commodification and sought to heighten gallerygoers' awareness of the specific situation in which aesthetic perception occurs.

Other artists aligned with the emergent conceptual and body-based practices that famously dematerialized the work of art created

aesthetic situations in which the gallery space appeared remarkably empty. This might be because the art existed primarily in the artist's or viewer's body, as in *Velocity Piece #1: Impact Run, Energy Drain* (1968) by Barry Le Va (b. 1941) in which the artist for 103 minutes ran from one end of an empty gallery to the other, slamming his body into each wall. Or it might be because the work itself was essentially imperceptible, as in the pieces by Robert Barry (b. 1936) in which, as he put it, "various kinds of energy which exist outside the narrow arbitrary limits of our own senses," such as microwaves and radiation, were emitted in what appeared to many visitors to be an empty gallery (fig. 12).[44] In 1969, Barry went so far as to mount a series of *Closed Gallery Pieces*, confronting gallery visitors with a sign tersely declaring that the gallery was closed during the run of the exhibition. Reviewing a show that included one of Barry's carrier wave pieces organized by Seth Siegelaub in 1969, Battcock celebrated how "there's nothing to steal, nothing to damage, no images to remember later."

11
Robert Huot, *Two Blue Walls*, 1969. Sanded floor coated with polyurethane, dimensions unknown. Installation view: Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, March–April 1969.

(fig. 13). As in his commentary on Anastasi's *Six Sites*, Battcock saw the near invisibility of such art in exceptionally strong political terms, writing

> *this is perhaps the first exhibit this season that really goes someplace and offers something a little bit new and something that really matters. It's like everything that happened in 1968, at Columbia and Paris and all other symbolic places is finally being understood, and it all REALLY meant something and it really will result in something because it already has in this show. Finally in art, the revolution that one sometimes briefly understands at perhaps the Fillmore, or late night in WBAI, or in weird, unexpected glimpses at surprising places around town, or watching a Warhol movie or in unplanned encounters with sex or metaphysics or acid or grass or just nice people—it's here in art.*[45]

Battcock's breathless celebration of the paradoxical materialization of the revolutionary politics of the counterculture within

12
Robert Barry, *Radiation Piece*, 1969 (detail of wall text). Installation view of *January 5–31, 1969*, Seth Siegelaub Gallery, New York, January 5–January 31, 1969.

13
Installation view of *January 5–31, 1969*, Seth Siegelaub Gallery, New York, January 5–January 31, 1969. Works by Douglas Huebler (books on window sill), Lawrence Weiner (rug stain), Robert Barry (labels), and Joseph Kosuth (newspapers). Seth Siegelaub Archives, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, Gift of Seth Siegelaub and the Stitching Egress Foundation, Amsterdam.

the seemingly empty gallery space reveals how a certain type of viewer—one who embraced what Susan Sontag called the "new sensibility" in which distinctions between high and low culture were abolished—approached the undeniably radical aesthetic of such works. Lucy Lippard recognized the potent if primarily prospective political implications of this ephemeral, dematerialized, and experiential art. In her introduction to the catalog for the 1969 exhibition 557,087 in Seattle, she conveyed the democratizing and ultimately utopian promise these works possessed:

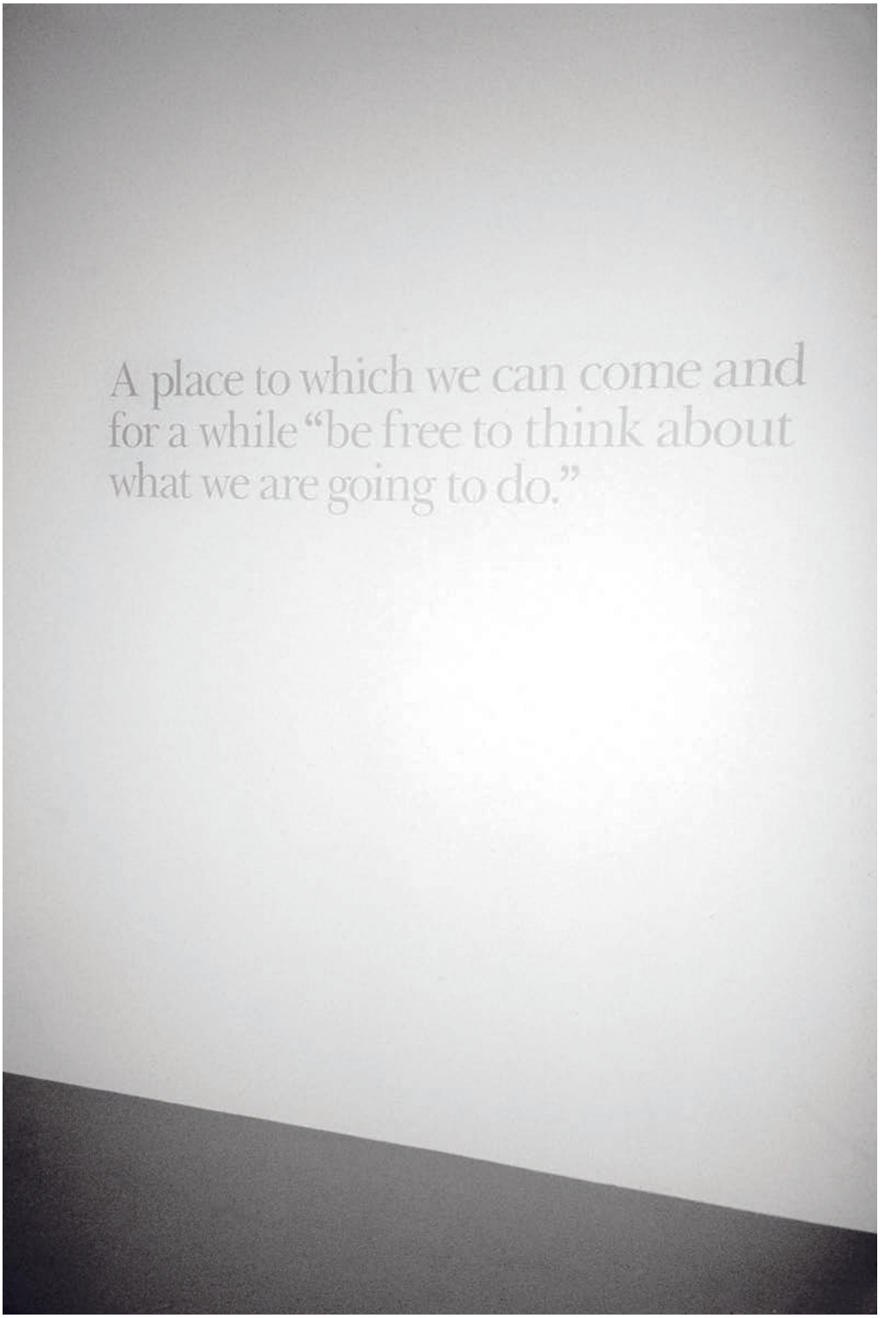
> *Art intended as pure experience doesn't exist until someone experiences it, defying ownership, reproduction, sameness. Intangible art could break down the artificial imposition of "culture" and provide a broader audience for a tangible, object art. When automatism frees millions of hours for leisure, art should gain rather than diminish in importance, for while art is not just play, it is the counterpoint to work. The time may come when art is everyone's daily occupation, though there is no reason to think this activity will be called art.*[46]

Lippard aligned these practices to more explicitly political ends, staging a benefit exhibition at the Paula Cooper Gallery from May 18 to June 15, 1969, for the Art Workers' Coalition, a group of artists and critics who organized in 1969 to make museum policies more open and equitable, which featured a group of willfully self-effacing and hardly noticeable pieces in which shadows were projected from architectural features through directed lighting (Huot), air currents blew from a small fan by the gallery door (Hans Haacke, b. 1936), and a small indention in the wall was produced by the shot of an air rifle (Lawrence Weiner, b. 1942). Certain critics writing in the wake of what they saw as Lippard's "profoundly utopian (and now unimaginably naïve)" vision instead emphasized the way that these evacuative, ephemeral, and visually ascetic artistic strategies could reveal and undermine the present ideologies that sustained the cultural legitimization and commodification of radical art.[47] Understood as an extension of the leftist doctrine of "naming the system," as expressed in a famous speech given by Paul Potter, president of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), at an antiwar rally in Washington in 1965, the politics of such practices, often categorized under the sign of institutional critique, aimed to exact change through a careful and dispassionate analysis of the various forms of social organization that sustained deluded and unjust policies.

Despite their apparent focus on major artistic establishments like MoMA, some of these institutionally based activities did address broader and more explicit political issues. Most famously, members of the Art Workers' Coalition created a poster featuring Ronald Haeberle's notorious photograph depicting a pile of corpses taken after an army raid of the Vietnamese village of My Lai in 1968, which they used in a protest event in front of Picasso's *Guernica* at MoMA in January 1970. This action, and the unauthorized distribution of the posters in the museum's lobby, took place alongside an exhibition that sought to present the emerging trend in environmental and experiential art. The show, entitled *Spaces*, included a so-called dead room constructed by Asher that silenced all reverberations of sound, both external and internal, and an arrangement of glass planes by Larry Bell that dimly reflected visitors as they moved about the dark space. Dore Ashton (b. 1928), who ended her review of the show reprimanding MoMA's retracted participation in the production of the My Lai poster, seemed to recognize how certain aspects of the spatial aesthetics addressed in the exhibition could be understood as a response, albeit a largely reactionary one, to the tumultuous political events of

the decade, citing recent research on sensory deprivation chambers that suggested how the sort of aesthetics of experience offered by Asher and Bell could possibly lead to people becoming "indifferent to the chaos of existence."[48] If Ashton saw works like Asher's as solipsistic retreats from the urgent social issues of the moment—at best pro-peace rather than antiwar—even more sympathetic critics of minimalism and the aesthetics of the empty room who emphasize the critical and even politically activist potential of the expansive and institutionally directed strategies typically have disregarded the more constructive and culturally expressive aspects of these artistic practices. Focusing on the works' rhetoric of phenomenological presence and institutional reflexivity, such readings misrecognize (perhaps out of embarrassment for what they take to be their utopian naïveté or because of their traumatic intimations of nonexistence) the complex and intelligent futurological imagination of this art, its vision of a world on the brink of radical transformation.

The promise and dread that motivated the futurological imagination of the aesthetics of the empty room were articulated no more than indirectly by some of the works' earliest critics and, in the case of Anastasi's *Six Sites*, more clearly by the artist only retrospectively. Robert Barry's *Marcuse Piece* from 1970 makes explicit the underlying politics, whether understood as radically posthumanist or tragically post–human race, informing the extreme vacancy of a significant strand of artistic production in the 1960s (fig. 14). Citing the final lines from Herbert Marcuse's *An Essay on Liberation* (1969), the work consists of only a nominal linguistic prompt that can be installed in multiple venues. The textual excerpt invites viewers to see the space in which the words appear as "a place to which we can come and for a while 'be free to think about what we are going to do.'" In the essay that inspired Barry's piece, the philosopher expands on how a "new sensibility," developed primarily in the artistic realm, but enacted in the "dematerialization of labor" and the subsequent redirecting of science and technology toward peaceful, nonexploitative ends, would lead to a "sensitivity receptive to forms and modes of reality which thus far have been projected only in the aesthetic imagination." Like his equally idealistic contemporary Fuller, Marcuse does not linger on the harrowing alternatives to the new sensibility. Only at the end of his essay, three pages away from the quotation used by Barry, does the philosopher warn that inaction on the part of today's youth could lead to "the advent of a long period of 'civilized' barbarism, with or without nuclear destruction."[49] Understood in this light, the vacancy of Barry's piece insinuates the imperative necessity of the world it prefigures.


A place to which we can come and
for a while "be free to think about
what we are going to do."

The particularly impending address of the *Marcuse Piece*, inviting visitors to think about "what we are *going* to do," is registered in the eternally expansive dates the artist gave to the work: 1970–present. This durational, seemingly endless experience proposed by the work suggests the (presumably still-deferred) revolutionary action needed to bring about the utopian state envisioned by the philosopher as well as the emancipatory leisure that this new world would afford. As in Anastasi's *Six Sites*, a current absence (revolution, the photographic instant of the image) overlaps with an as-yet-to-be-realized future (utopia, the canvases' forever out-of-joint existence beyond the Dwan Gallery). Sontag identified this powerful future-oriented infinity commonly found in "the aesthetics of silence" as a form of "apocalyptic" thinking, which, she goes on to add, "must endure the indignity of all apocalyptic thinking: namely, to prophesy the end, to see the day come, to outlive it, and then set a new date for incineration of consciousness and the definitive pollution of language and exhaustion of the possibilities of art discourse."[50]

Such missed encounters with the apocalypse—whether atomic or utopian—define the postwar landscape. The moment of minimalism's emergence as a dominant aesthetic paradigm was powerfully marked by two instances of deferred apocalypse and utopia: the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 and the arguably less traumatic War on Poverty declared by President Johnson in 1964. One might argue that the successive persistence of the human race and its unequal distribution of vital resources has inured many people to the urgency that once attended these respective imminent ends. As such concepts became outlived, as we learned to, if not love, at least live with the bomb and poverty, the stridency that originally informed the underlying politics of minimalism and the aesthetics of the empty room became increasingly obscure to subsequent generations of viewers and were replaced with, on one hand, an academicized understanding of its institutionally bound politics and, on the other, an aestheticized appreciation for the experience of spatial vacancy and architectural dereliction.

By 1976, when Brian O'Doherty (b. 1928) published his classic series of essays in *Artforum* entitled "Inside the White Cube," he could describe the "gallery structure" as "the prime icon" of the art of the 1970s and the blank, evacuated gallery as the fundamental precondition for any aesthetic experience whatsoever: "We have now reached a point where we see not the art but the *space* first." While O'Doherty could still discern the posthumanist principles emanating from the white cube, describing how the idealized timeless space of the gallery

14
Robert Barry, *Marcuse Piece*, 1970–present. Vinyl letters mounted on wall, dimensions variable. Installed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1995.

makes it seem as if "one has to have died already to be there," by the time the essays were republished in 1986, he forecasted their impending total oblivion. "Suffice it to say here," he stated in the afterword, "that the elusive and dangerous art of the period between 1964 and 1976 is sinking, with its lessons, out of sight as, given the conditions of our culture, it must."[51] Our tendency to "see the space first" as it were signals not only the fading from view of the original implications of the danger and elusiveness of these works, their invocation of utopia and oblivion, but, more significantly perhaps, our incapacity to experience their projection of a future different from the present to which we have, for better or worse, accommodated ourselves.

1 Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" [1915], in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 14, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957), 289.

2 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Santa Monica, CA: Lapis Press, 1986), 79–80. Originally published in three parts as "Inside the White Cube" in 1976 in the March, April, and November issues of *Artforum*.

3 Michael Lobel reads *I Can See the Whole Room* as "a visual pun on abstraction" in which a monochrome is invaded by language and recognizable imagery. Lobel, *Image Duplicator* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 75.

4 Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 270. Certain writers have alluded in passing to these larger social inflections in this strand of art. See, for instance, Richard Williams, *After Modern Sculpture: Art in the United States and Europe 1965–1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); and Charlie Gere, *Art, Time, and Technology* (New York: Berg, 2006).

5 G[regory] B[attcock], Reviews, *Arts* 41 (Summer 1967): 57.

6 Gregory Battcock, "Critique, Four Artists Who Didn't Show in New York This Season," *Arts* 42 (Summer 1968): 16.

7 Barbara Rose, "A New Aesthetic," in *A New Aesthetic* (Washington, DC: The Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1969), 18.

8 For a discussion on Judd's invocation of credibility in his own writing and the aesthetics of credibility in his artistic production, see Robert Slifkin, "Donald Judd's Credibility Gap," *American Art* 25 (Summer 2011): 56–75.

9 Battcock, "Critique," 16

10 William Anastasi, interview with Thomas McEvilley, August 1989, in William Anastasi, *A Selection of Work from 1960 to 1989* (New York: Scott Hanson Gallery, 1989), 19.

11 Ibid. A similar sentiment was expressed by the physicist Richard Feynman, who worked on the Manhattan Project: "I sat in a restaurant in New York, for example, and I looked out at the buildings and I began to think, you know, about how much the radius of the Hiroshima bomb damage was and so forth. . . . How far from here was 34th street? . . . All those buildings, all smashed—and so on. And I would go along and I would see people building a bridge, or they'd be making a new road, and I thought, they're *crazy*, they just don't understand, they don't *understand*. Why are they making new things? It's so useless." Feynman, quoted in *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman! Adventures of a Curious Character* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 136.

12 Buckminster Fuller, "Utopian or Oblivion," in *Utopia or Oblivion: The Prospects for Humanity* (New York; Bantam, 1969), 278, 285, 288.

13 G[regory] B[attcock], Reviews, *Arts* 41 (Summer 1967): 57.

14 Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture 2," *Artforum* 4 (Feb. 1966), reprinted in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 15.

15 Rosalind Krauss, "Sense and Sensibility: Reflections on Post-60s Sculpture," *Artforum* 12 (Nov. 1973): 49.

16 For a good summary of the possible political and existential implications of minimalism's phenomenological mode of address, see Alex Potts, "The Performance of Viewing," in *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 235–68.

17 R. D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1967), 4.

18 Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 21.

19 Dan Graham, "Subject Matter" [1969], in *Rock My Religion: Writings and Art Projects: 1965–1990* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 40.

20 Susan Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," in *Styles of Radical Will* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1969), 8, 16.

21 Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," in *Continuous Project Altered Daily*, 175–209.

22 See James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

23 There has been a recent surge of scholarship addressing this manifestly political art from the 1960s. See, for instance, Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Matthew Israel, *Kill for Peace: American Artists against the Vietnam War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013).

24 Mel Bochner, "Review of Larry Bell," *Arts* (Jan. 1966), reprinted in Bochner, *Solar System & Restrooms: Writings and Interviews, 1965–2007* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 2.

25 For a revisionist account of the political underpinnings of Abstract Expressionism, see Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expression: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993). There have been a few notable exceptions to the general lack of social-historical readings of minimalism. See, for instance, Anna Chave, "Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power," *Arts* 64 (Jan. 1990): 44–63; and, more recently, Joshua Shannon's analysis of Donald Judd's work in his book *The Disappearance of Objects: New York and the Rise of the Postmodern City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 149–86.

26 Bochner, "Review of Larry Bell," 2; and Mel Bochner, "Donald Judd," *Arts* (Apr. 1966), reprinted in Bochner, *Solar System and Restrooms*, 5.

27 For a comprehensive account of Tinguely's work and its relation to the atomic culture of the West see, Emily Eliza Scott, "Desert Ends," in *Ends of the Earth: Land Art to 1974*, ed. Philipp Kaiser and Miwon Kwon (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2012), esp. 68–82.

28 Jean Tinguely, quoted in William Byron, "Wacky Artist of Destruction," *Saturday Evening Post*, Apr. 21, 1962, 78.

29 Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1966), 212, 224. The journalist Arthur Koestler made a similar point in his 1978 book *Janus*: "From the dawn of consciousness until 6 August 1945, man had to live with the prospect of death as an *individual*; since the day when the first atomic bomb outshone the sun over Hiroshima, mankind as a whole has had to live with the prospect of its extinction as a *species*." Koestler, quoted in Paul Boyer, "Sixty Years and Counting: Nuclear Themes in American Culture, 1945 to the Present," in *The Atomic Bomb and American Society: New Perspectives*, ed. Rosemary B. Mariner and G. Kurt Piehler (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009), 4.

30 John Perreault, "No One Has Clearly Pointed Out," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1970), 259; Robert Smithson, "The Crystal Land" and "Entropy and the New Monuments," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 7, 14–15, 17.

31 Peter Hutchinson, "Is There Life on Earth?," *Art in America* 54 (Nov./Dec. 1966): 68, 69. See also Peter Hutchinson, "Science-Fiction: An Aesthetic for Science," *Art International* 12 (Oct. 1968): 32, 34.

32 Robert Smith, "Museum Uses Psychedelic Lights and Electronic Music to Show That Life Ban Be Ugly," *New York Times*, May 19, 1969, 29. See also Wilfred Sheed, "Evolution of a Bad Trip," *Life*, July 11, 1969, 7.

33 Robert Smithson, "Can Man Survive?," in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam, 33.

34 Robert Smithson and Mel Bochner, "The Domain of the Great Bear," in *The Collected Writings*, 367.

35 Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, 16 mm film, 35 min, color, sound.

36 See Alex Potts, "The Minimalist Object and the Photographic Image," in *Sculpture and Photography: Envisioning the Third Dimension*, ed. Geraldine Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 181–98.

37 Phillip Leider, "Gallery '68: High Art and Low Art," *Look* 32 (Jan. 1968), reprinted in Michael Govan and Tiffany Bell, *Dan Flavin: A Retrospective* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2004), 19. Anne Wagner has noted, "The documentary photographs published to date have mostly recorded Flavin's pieces devoid of viewers, with the camera assuming the spectator's role. There are exceptions, of course, but surprisingly few have made their way into print."

Wagner, "Flavin's Limited Light," in *Dan Flavin: New Light*, ed. Jeffrey Weiss (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 124.

38 Lucy Lippard, "New York Letter," *Art International* 9 (Mar. 1965): 46.

39 John Perreault, "Dan Flavin's New Arrangements," *Art International* 11 (Mar. 1967), reprinted in Battcock, *Minimal Art*, 258. Flavin himself, writing in a personal note, described his early icons as "constructed concentrations celebrating barren rooms." Flavin, quoted in *Dan Flavin, Three Installations in Fluorescent Light* (Cologne, Ger.: Kunsthalle Köln, 1973), 83.

40 Mel Bochner, "Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism," in Battcock, *Minimal Art*, 99.

41 Jill Johnson, Reviews and Previews, *Art News* 63 (Jan. 1965): 13; Bochner, "Serial Art," 99. Jack Burham similarly notes how Flavin's works "neatly succeed [optically] in destroying the corners of a rectilinear space." Burham, "A Dan Flavin Retrospective in Ottawa," *Artforum* 9 (Dec. 1969): 54.

42 Gregory Battcock, "Aggressive Sculpture," *Westside News*, Nov. 2, 1967, 8.

43 Yves Klein, "Ma position dans le combat entre la ligne et la couleur" [1958], in *Zero*, ed. Otto Piene and Heinz Mack, trans. Howard Beckman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973), 10.

44 Robert Barry, quoted in "Four Interviews with Author Rose," *Arts* (Feb. 1969), reprinted in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 71.

45 Gregory Battcock, "Painting Is Obsolete," *New York Free Press*, Jan. 23, 1969, 7, reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 88.

46 Lucy Lippard, introduction to *557,087* (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, Sept. 5–Oct. 5, 1969), reprinted in Alberro and Stimson, *Conceptual Art*, 178.

47 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 141. Alex Potts provides a more historically expansive account of such installation practices and their implications in his essay "Installation and Sculpture," *Oxford Art Journal* 24 (2001): 5–24.

48 Dore Ashton, "New York Commentary," *Studio International*, (Mar. 1970), 118.

49 Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation* (New York: Beacon, 1969), 27, 29, 31, 37, 49, 82.

50 Sontag, "The Aesthetics of Silence," 32.

51 O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 77, 14, 15, 91.