

A CUBE HAS SIX SIDES
The White Cube as Medium

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PART 1

Documentation As Art

A History of Documenting Artwork

In 1298, while Marco Polo was in prison, he told stories of his travels through China to the writer Rustichello of Pisa, who shared a prison cell with Polo. As a result of these conversations, Rustichello's *The Travels of Marco Polo* was published shortly thereafter. A large section of the book was dedicated to Polo's admiration for Chinese art and architecture; this remains one of the few primary accounts of thirteenth-century Chinese art beyond the remaining artifacts themselves.¹

Documentation has always been a vital part to how art history is presented and archived; it gives the viewer an additional layer of experience (and context) beyond the physical visit to the exhibition where the artwork is displayed.

2 Polo and Rustichello of Pisa.
The Travels of Marco Polo.
(The Project Gutenberg eBook,
Volume 2), Introduction.

FEBRUARY 1, 2011:

In 2011, Google launched *Art Project*, an online platform (similar to Google Street View) where the public is invited into three-dimensional representations of seventeen of the world's most important museums (the Tate Gallery in London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Uffizi in Florence, etc.). One year later, Google expanded the project to 151 museums from 40 countries. This project represents the moment after which more of the public will see the world's most culturally significant artworks in screen-based documentation, rather than in person. This essay seeks to chronicle the rise of documentation images and their major role in the experience of viewing art, the identity of the artist, and how these images have shifted the concept of the White Cube gallery. The contents of this essay will focus primarily on artworks and exhibitions that were produced after 2007, under the genre of Post-Internet art. However, in order to understand how Post-Internet art relates to the broader context and history of the documentation of art, I will examine H.W. Janson's *History of Art* (1962), Harald Szeemann's exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), and the photographs of American artist Louise Lawler (1980).

SELECTION

COMPOSITION

DISTRIBUTION

In 1962, Russian-American art history scholar, H.W. Janson released *The History of Art*, a book that would go on to become one of the most-used art history textbooks in universities around the world; it has sold millions of copies, been translated into 14 different languages, and is now in its ninth edition (published in 2013). Janson's text is not only important to the history of art documentation but it is also a good model to understand the structure of how art documentation operates. These structures can be reduced to three main components: selection, composition, and distribution.

First, the notion that the all-encompassing history of art (as the title suggests) can be reduced to 572 pages is problematic. It speaks to a process of selection, lead by Janson, who offers his selection as comprehensive history, which dislodges *History of Art* from the objective art historical canon. Furthermore, there is no history of the *History of Art* to suggest that Janson's selections were more than the will of one man. Today, a comparable book of this type would have a committee that would advise on selections before deferring to a single editor — no such system is evident with *History of Art*. Winston Churchill's saying that "history is written by the victors" seems appropriate here: certain

material from the art historical canon is included in Janson's selected narrative — and a great deal is left out.²

Second, the images that are included as visual support to the selected artworks are composed, first by the photographer who takes the photograph, and then by the graphic designer who places them in the layout. Key to this process of composition is photography's inherent inability to represent reality, thus pushing the photograph further away from the original artwork that it is depicting. Susan Sontag tackles the truth claim of photography head-on in *On Photography*, published in 1977:

Even when photographers are most concerned with mirroring reality, they are still haunted by tacit imperatives of taste and conscience. The immensely gifted members of the Farm Security Administration photographic project of the late 1930s (among them Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, Russell Lee) would take dozens of frontal pictures of one of their sharecropper subjects until satisfied that they had gotten just the right look on film [...] In deciding how a picture should look, in preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects.³

Demonstrating a similar awareness of the artifice, John Szarkowski, in a 1978 press release for *Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960*,⁴ describes photography as “a *window* — through which the exterior world is [...] so clearly and uncompromisingly explored through the uniquely prejudicial qualities of photographic description.”⁵ Sontag and Szarkowski articulate one of photography's greatest limitations: the inability to represent objective truth. The photograph is unable to be completely objective, or separated from the taste of the photographer. The language that photography imposes on the subject matter is inescapable. While this is a quality of all photographs, it has a particular effect within *History of Art* where each image not only documents, but also serves Janson's editorial perspective on what should serve as an icon of art history.

The third and final component to art documentation is distribution. Janson's decisions to select and compose the artworks included in *History of Art* are legitimized and disseminated by the large-scale distribution model that the textbook has received over the 52 years it has been in

2 Broude and Garrard. *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*. (New York: Abrams, 1994). “Women artists in the 1950s and 1960s suffered professional isolation not only from one another, but also from their own history, in an era when women artists of the past had been virtually written out of the history of art, H.W. Janson's influential textbook, *History of art*, first published in 1962, contained neither

the name nor the work of a single woman artist. In thus excluding women from the history of art.”

3 Susan Sontag. *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1977), 175.

4 An exhibition at the MoMA from July 28 - October 2 1978.

5 John Szarkowski. “Mirrors and Windows: American Photography since 1960.” *Museum of Modern Art New York*. (1978), 3.

print. For instance: in Toronto alone, hundreds of copies of *History of Art* are available in 46 separate libraries around the city. Additionally, all nine editions (and their revised editions) are available together at the Toronto Reference Library. The loudest voice in the room is the one that is most clearly heard. All of these components that help define art documentation tend to abstract the art from any physical or social context. The audience of the book replaces the audience of the original work of art. However, once the limitations of documenting artworks, and exhibitions, became evident artists and curators started to experiment with how the qualities of the documentation image could instead be used to enhance an artwork.

LIVE IN YOUR HEAD
 LIVE IN YOUR HEAD
 LIVE IN YOUR HEAD
 LIVE IN YOUR HEAD

Art ≠ Aesthetics → Taste

In 1969, as Janson's *History of Art* was nearing its second edition, American conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth released *Art After Philosophy*, a defining essay on the emergence of Conceptual art. Kosuth explains that Conceptual art "originated as a reaction to the subjective aesthetics and general mindlessness of formalist art and criticism."⁶ Kosuth (with the help of Greenberg⁷) defines aesthetics as "a branch of philosophy which dealt with beauty and thus, taste."⁸ Because of aesthetics' connection to subjectivity and opinion, Kosuth believed it had no place

6 Frances Colpitt, "The Formalist Connection and Originary Myths of Conceptual Art," *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 28.

7 Clement Greenberg, *Homemade Esthetics: Observations on Art and Taste* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)104. "Aesthetic Judgment: how the devil is it that we agree about taste,

and why is it that taste is so necessary, and so forth."

8 Frances Colpitt, "The Formalist Connection and Originary Myths of Conceptual Art," *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 29.

in art. As a result of this rejection of formalism, aesthetics, and therefore *objectness*, the art that came from artists such as Kosuth, Lucy R. Lippard, Sol LeWitt, Ed Ruscha, and Lawrence Weiner relied heavily on documentation to convey its linguistic, performative, systematic, and installation activities.

Meanwhile in Bern Switzerland, curator Harald Szeemann, the director of the Kunsthalle Bern, also took strides to define Conceptual art by organizing an important exhibition that brought together a wide range of international artists. *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* opened in March 1969 and ran through the next month. The exhibition, which became known as the “Attitudes show,” displayed works from: Carl Andre, Joseph Beuys, Robert Morris, Joseph Kosuth, Richard Serra, Sol LeWitt, Lawrence Weiner, and many others. During its run, art critics praised *Attitudes* for its broad survey of Conceptual art. However, the idea that the 80 exhibited artists’ practices would all speak to one particular stream of Conceptual art was problematic. For instance, Kosuth was very careful to distinguish his definition of “antiformalism” from the sculptural style of antiform, which was a rejection of the “formalism” (having form) of Minimal art.”⁹ The works of antiform artists such as Richard Serra, Eva Hess, and Robert Morris were more interested in the rejection of the stylistic components of formalism while Kosuth, LeWitt, and Lippard rejected formalism on theoretical grounds. Therefore, it would seem that the division amongst the exhibited artists would suggest Szeemann’s curatorial impulse was at odds with distinctions highlighted by Kosuth. However, Szeemann’s success came from his ability to create an exhibition that functioned as a singular experience rather than collection of objects. Alison M. Green makes the case that Szeemann was actually more concerned with creating an avant-garde “experience” rather than the survey exhibition that art critics titled it as. Szeemann invited artists to the museum “to make works, and so it became as much an event of people and activities as a display of objects.”¹⁰ Now looking at *Attitudes* as a singular experience of people and actions, the documentation images that were produced on-site become extremely important.

Rather than traditional documentation of artworks in a visitor-free gallery, many of the documentation images include in the frame the artists in the act of creating their piece. For example, Richard Serra’s famous *Splash Piece*, where the artist would throw molten lead towards where

9 Ibid.

10 Alison M. Green, “When Attitudes Become Form and the Contest over Conceptual Art’s History,” *Conceptual*

Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 123.

the floor and wall met, was not documented in its hardened sculptural state but rather the photograph was taken as Serra vigorously hurled the lead towards the wall. Similarly with Lawrence Weiner's *A 36" x 36" REMOVAL TO THE LATHING OR SUPPORT OF WALL OF PLASTER OR WALLBOARD FROM A WALL*, the documentation showed Weiner meticulously hand carving his 36" x 36" square — into one of the walls in a stairwells at the Kunsthalle Bern. The documentation images featuring the work of both Serra and Weiner speak very clearly to the connection between Conceptual art and the related documentation images, as well as Szeemann's success as curator. The documentation image of Conceptual art joined the artwork as an integral component to its visibility. Unlike the documentation images used by Janson, the images from *Attitudes* provide an additional layer of experience to the exhibition and the work. In the case of both Serra and Weiner, this additional layer is that of the artist's process, or process as performance, which situates the documentation image alongside the art object as a record of an event. Additionally, this duality of experience speaks to Szeemann's success as a curator. As determined above, the selected works in the exhibition were not all linked together by a stylistic (Serra) or theoretical (Weiner) commonality. However, through Szeemann's impulse to invite the artists to make the exhibited works on-site, the exhibition was unified. The artists' actions became in service of the totality of the exhibition, which the viewer was (and continues to) only be able to experience through documentation. After *Attitudes*, artists continued to investigate the structures of the documentation images in their own work.

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INTENTION AND INTENTION AND DOCUMENTATION

In 1980, American artist Louise Lawler began photographing art “as presented in private homes, museums, galleries, auction houses, public buildings and gallery storage areas” in an attempt to examine what happens to the art object after it leaves the artist’s studio, where it goes, how it is displayed, and how it is valued.¹¹ Lawler was aware of the structures that defined art documentation and built her practice around questioning these principles along with notions of value, space, and context. Key to understanding Lawler’s practice are the ideas pioneered by Marcel Duchamp between 1913 and 1921, which “directed people’s attention to the previously unacknowledged fact that works of art always occupy a space, [and] that the literal and institutional space that surrounds a work of art determines its perception and evaluation to a high degree.”¹² Lawler built a typology of photographs that “show locations where art is found. She shows us what is perfectly visible but rarely seen.”¹³ By showing artworks in situ, she used the documentation image, and the structures outlined above, as a tool to investigate how the lens can destroy the boundary of the artwork, and instead focusing on the scene that has been set due to the composition of the photographic frame. This leaves the artwork and surrounding space as equally important compositional elements to Lawler’s final image. While Lawler continued to photograph artworks through the 1980’s and 1990’s, the Global Village¹⁴ that McLuhan wrote about was slowly coming into view. The Internet quickly transitioned from novelty to utility and Network Culture assertively took Postmodernism’s place as the dominant cultural ideology of the time.

11 Louise Lawler. *An Arrangement of Pictures*. (New York: Assouline, 2000), 1.

12 *Ibid.*, 2.

13 *Ibid.*, 4.

14 Marshall McLuhan. *The Medium is the Message*. (New York: Bantam Books,

1967), 63. “We now live in a Global Village... a simultaneous happening. We are back in acoustic space. Electric circuitry profoundly involves men with one another. Information pours upon us, instantaneously and continuously.” McLuhan, Marshall.

POST INTERNET ART

On September 18, 2001 Graydon Carter, the editor of *Vanity Fair*, announced the end of irony in the post-911 era. This period marked the decline of ironic digital art, or Net Art, which celebrated the nostalgia of early computer technologies and aesthetics (glitch, hypertext, steampunk, cyberpunk, etc.). Artists turned their attention instead to the structures and experience of art born out of the Internet. On March 26, 2008, the website *Rhizome* interviewed video artist Guthrie Lonergan¹⁵ about her project *Nasty Nets*, an Internet surfing community site with artists John Michael Boling and Joel Holmberg. Later in the interview Lonergan described her interest “in what the Internet has done to us, how it affects culture and consciousness.”¹⁶ During her parting remarks in the interview, Lonergan told interviewer Thomas Beard that she is working on new, offline work that she calls “Internet Aware Art.” Not two days later, on March 28, 2008 new media¹⁷ artist Marisa Olson was interviewed¹⁸ on *we-make-money-not-art.com*. After being asked a question about the difficulties of curating new-media art, Olson responded that “What is even more interesting is the way in which people are starting to make what I’ve called ‘Post-Internet’ art [...] I think it’s important to address the impacts of the Internet on culture at large, and this can be

15 Thomas Beard. “Interview with Guthrie Lonergan.” *Rhizome*. (March 2008): 1. 2008. <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2008/mar/26/interview-with-guthrie-lonergan>

16 *Ibid.*, 1.

17 Gene McHugh. “Tuesday, December 29, 2009.” *Post Internet* (Brescia: LINK Editions, 2011), 22. “Dissolve the category of ‘new media’ into art in general by creating work that has

one foot in the history of art and the other foot in the experience of network culture.”

18 Regine. “Interview with Marisa Olson.” *We-make-money-not-art.com*. (March 2008): 1. <http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2008/03/how-does-one-become-marisa.php#VF8hn4dp18x>.

done well on networks but can, and should, exist offline as well.”¹⁹ These interviews, only two days apart, were an indication of an emerging ideology among artists that the Internet was not simply a technology or aesthetic, but it should be recognized as a major cultural influence on modern society. Over the next year, artists such as Cory Arcangel, Kari Altmann, Oliver Laric, Harm van den Dorpel, Ed Fornieles, and Bunny Rogers produced new works with a similar pursuit to Lonergan and Olson, and a new type of art, contentiously named Post-Internet art, quietly emerged.

In 2009 the Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant Program gave American writer, Gene McHugh, the Creative Capital grant that funded the creation of a blog (www.122909a.com) called *Post Internet*. From December 2009 to September 2010, McHugh wrote daily blog posts about artists or artworks that participated in the Post-Internet dialogue. As McHugh published post after post, the term Post-Internet became increasingly solidified in its ambitions. To McHugh, Post-Internet art represented the shift of “what we mean when we say ‘art on the Internet’ from a specialized world of nerds and technologically-minded, to a mainstream world for nerds, the technologically minded and painters and sculptors and conceptual artists and agitprop artists and everyone else.”²⁰ Post-Internet art declared that no matter what your preoccupations was as an artist, you had to acknowledge the Internet as a “distribution platform, a machine for altering and re-channeling work.”²¹ This acknowledgment is key, since the artist must now examine “what the Internet is doing to the work — how it distributes the work, how it devalues the work, revalues it,”²² and represents it to the public. As a result of this consideration for multiple layers of experience online and offline, documentation images became a vital component to the production of Post-Internet art.

Documentation images after the Post-Internet era saw a shift from a photographic record, a secondary experience removed from the original, to a glossy experience designed to be a heightened version of the original.²³ Now that the mainstream had arrived online and art on the Internet was no longer only “Internet art,” documentation images became an important layer that the Post-Internet artist had to build into their work. To illustrate this point, I will return to the same set of structures used to analyze documentation in Janson’s *History of Art* — selection, composition, and distribution. The power of selection that Janson

19 Ibid., 1.

20 Gene McHugh. “Introduction.” *Post Internet* (Brescia: LINK Editions, 2011), 12.

21 Ibid., 13.

22 Ibid., 13.

23 That moment when a YouTube video prompts you to watch in 1080pHD — “it gets better I promise.”

possessed was once reserved for a privileged few (curators, museum directors, historians), but Post-Internet art and network culture gave that power to the individual (artist, blogger, teenager, parents). Selection became a process of self-curating. Not only does the artist select which images are displayed online, there is also a good chance they created the images themselves. When examining Janson, and even Lawler, the photographic frame dictated the composition of a documentation image (remember Szarkowski's window metaphor), however, with documentation images born from Post-Internet art, the photographic frame becomes static, turning the documentation image into more of a tableau. This transforms the artworks and surrounding space into malleable compositional elements that are ultimately in service of the impeding image capture. Documentation images are not longer produced; they are fabricated.

American artist Joshua Citerella took the idea of documentation images as photographic tableau to its logical conclusion with his 2013 project titled *Compression Artifacts*. Citerella's project "was conceived and built as a set within which to make photographs, designed to facilitate its own sublimation into digital images. The lighting installation mirrors the physical dimensions of the space, rendering an identical exposure upon each wall."²⁴ As the lighting setup alludes to, the set that Citerella had constructed mimics an empty White Cube gallery that he then populates with some of the most recognized Post-Internet artists of the time (Wyatt Niehaus, Kate Steciw, Brad Troemel, and Artie Vierkant). Citerella's gesture to build a facsimile of a gallery makes it easy to question the border between documentation *of* art and documentation *as* art. Furthermore, the inclusion of an already established cast of artist provides instant legitimization (street cred) for the ideas central to the project. Also important to *Compression Artifacts* is the role of image manipulation software (Adobe Photoshop) in art documentation, and how it "enables image producers to more acutely address the distortions inherent to lens-based photography and the limitations of material production"²⁵ while simultaneously allowing artists to create representations of the world around them in accordance with their subjective experience and desires. As this project grows older and fades from the view of popular art blogs, the documentation images from *Compression Artifacts* not only become the principle "artwork" but they also "represent both the heights of success and inherent failures of photography-with-software to create value through the description and contextualization of an artwork."²⁶

²⁴ "Compressions Artifacts", Joshua Citerella, Accessed September 2, 2014, <http://joshuaciterella.com/artifacts.html>.

²⁵ Ibid., 1.

²⁶ Ibid.

Of the three structures, the distribution and dissemination of art documentation has most obviously shifted from the days of Janson. The Internet has not only widened the scope of an artist's audience, it has also accelerated the rate, speed, and quantity of art that is distributed daily. On March 1, 2014, Karen Archey and Robin Peckham published an exhibition catalogue²⁷ for *Art Post Internet* (March 1 to May 11, 2014), an exhibition that they curated at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing. In a survey of Post-Internet art, Archey and Peckham comment on the impact that documentation images (and their distribution online) have had on Post-Internet art.

In the past 15 years, systems for the production, dissemination, circulation, and reception of new art have experienced seismic shifts and radical reimaginings. The mainstreaming of art blogs, gallery websites, online image clearinghouses, and other vehicles for digital imagery have made screens like computers and smartphones the primary mode by which contemporary art is seen by the vast majority of viewers, handily overwhelming the experiences of paging through a paper catalogue or visiting an exhibition in person. It may be that the most important art of this moment investigates how these changes have affected the status of the work of art, particularly in the tension between object and documentation.²⁸

The exhibition curated by Archey and Peckham is a collection of Post-Internet artworks that addresses the question of how the dissemination of documentation images online affects the status of an artwork. One of the artists included in the exhibition, Artie Vierkant, has built a successful practice around creating art objects that are designed to be viewed both in person and online through documentation. In 2010, Vierkant released *The Image Object*, an essay and extended artist statement for an ongoing project of the same name. Vierkant questions the validity of an original source in a time where objects and artworks lack any kind of fixity online. Furthermore, he rejects the notion that the work of art solely resides in the gallery or museum and that any subsequent representations of the work through the Internet, print publications, bootleg images of the object, or any other variation is somehow a lesser object.²⁹ The artworks from *Image Object* consists of seemingly straightforward digital prints in a colour palate referencing the modern CMYK printing press, moving “seamlessly from physical representation to Internet representation, changing for each context, built with an intention of universality.”³⁰ Vierkant abandons the concept of an original by

27 <http://post-inter.net>
28 Archey and Peckham. “Art Post Internet.” Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing. 12.

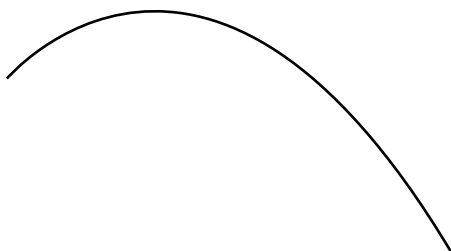
29 “Image Objects,” Artie Vierkant, Accessed September 2, 2014, <http://artievierkant.com/imageobjects.php>. 5.

digitally manipulating the documentation of his exhibited *Image Object* prints, casting off any reference to an original and thus creating a new artwork that solely exists online. The success of Vierkant's project hinges on the continuing separation between the IRL (in real life) *Image Objects* and the online *Image Objects* — if the separation were to end it would be like when an actor breaks the fourth wall and winks at the camera. Vierkant was only one of several artists (Parker Ito, Ben Schumacher, Bunny Rogers, Jaakko Pallasvuori) who used documentation as a component in their studio practice. As this preoccupation became more common, documentation became not only a component to an individual artwork, but entire exhibitions and gallery spaces.

As the idea of documentation *as* art rather than documentation *of* art continued to permeate through contemporary art, artists and curators began to apply a post-Internet sensibility to the curation of exhibitions and the establishment of galleries. Within this changing context, the very notion of the gallery also shifted. Contemporary art saw the emergence of the apartment gallery. No longer did a gallery need a commercial lease, street access, or even visitors. And in some cases needed only white walls, a camera, and a website. Exhibitions were being made for the sole purpose of online documentation. Notable apartment galleries or online galleries that were founded during this time include Appendix Space (Portland, OR), Reference Gallery (Richmond, VA), Preteen Gallery (Mexico City), and Butcher Gallery (Toronto, ON). American artist Brad Troemel, co-creator with Lauren Christensen of Scott Projects (Chicago, IL), co-founder of popular Tumblr blog "The Jogging", and media theorist termed these types of galleries "dual sites" because their capacity to welcome local visitors to view exhibitions IRL, and simultaneously attract a large online following through consistent dissemination of documentation images. Troemel further explored this idea in his undergraduate thesis at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in a project titled *An Immaterial Study of our peers*. The project consisted of a large group exhibition that was entirely constructed using Photoshop. Troemel photographed the Sullivan galleries, a large space at the Art Institute of Chicago, and then asked artists from all over the world to email a jpg file of an artwork to be included in the exhibition. Troemel "mounted" the exhibition by assigning the works an arbitrary size in relation to the space, and then skilfully photoshopping them into the documentation images he had already taken. *An Immaterial Study of our peers* pushes the role of documentation as art to an almost comic extreme, in order to investigate the exhibition's capacity to legitimize the artists included — whose art is primarily displayed and distributed online — by forcing the artworks into an institution. Troemel shows a

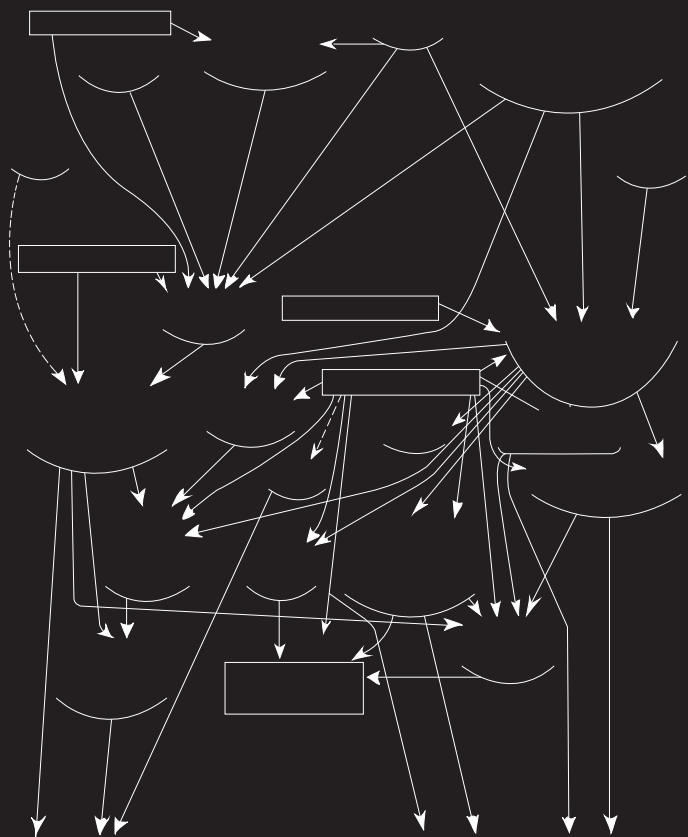
proclivity to Duchampian ideas of space and time similar to Lawler; however, rather than investigating how an artwork's value changes based on its context, Troemel forcefully situates the artwork in whatever context he sees fit.

Art documentation has always been important in terms of how art history is constituted, disseminated and investigated. By investigating the history of art documentation, as well as projects from artists like Louise Lawler, which explicitly examines the broader context of exhibition we can see some early inflections of its significance. However, with the arrival of network culture and the Internet, documentation images have become more and more important within an image-saturated culture. After 2008, and the arrival of Post-Internet art, artists like Guthrie Lonergan, Marisa Olson, Joshua Citerella, Artie Vierkant, and Brad Troemel began to explore what it meant to make art that acknowledges the Internet as a conceptual framework while also being able to move between contexts and mediums freely. Increasingly, artists and the public favour documentation *as* art rather than the documentation *of* art. As Citarella writes, “contemporary culture straddles the threshold of an ontological shift that values the digital image over the actual.”³¹ The effect that art documentation has had on contemporary art continues to permeate how we look at art, how we perceive the artist, and how we imagine the White Cube functions.



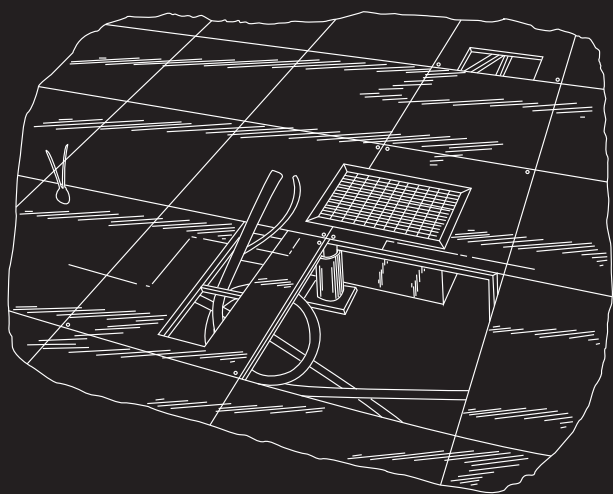
30 Ibid., 10.

31 “Compression Artifacts”, Joshua Citarella, Accessed September 2, 2014, <http://joshuacitarella.com/artifacts.html>.



COMPOSITION 1

Alfred H Barr's diagram for the development
of modern art and a raised floor system

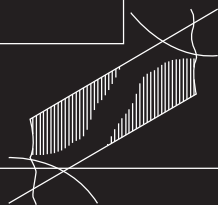
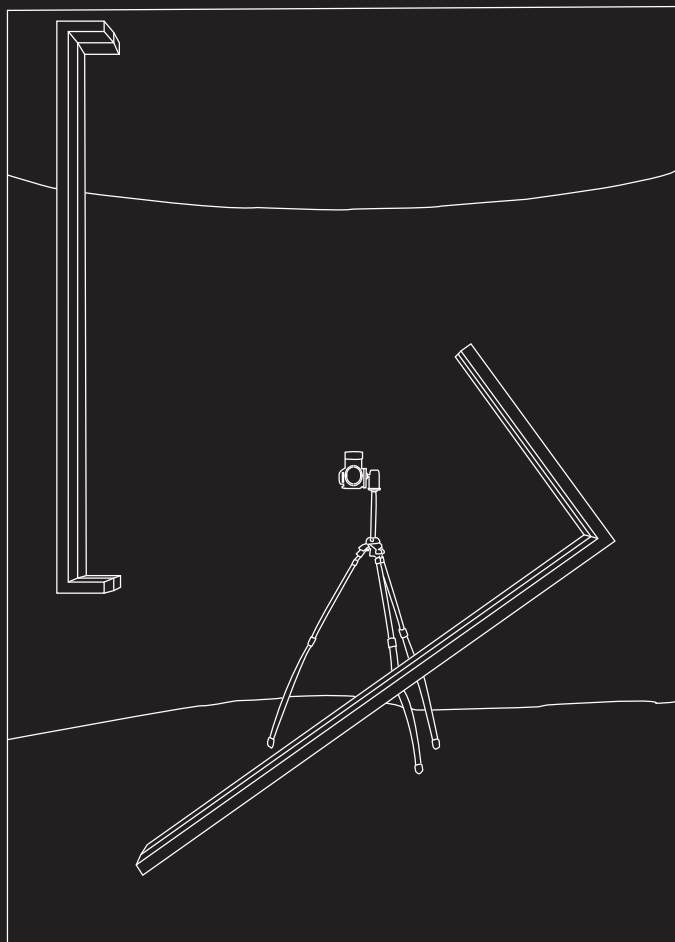


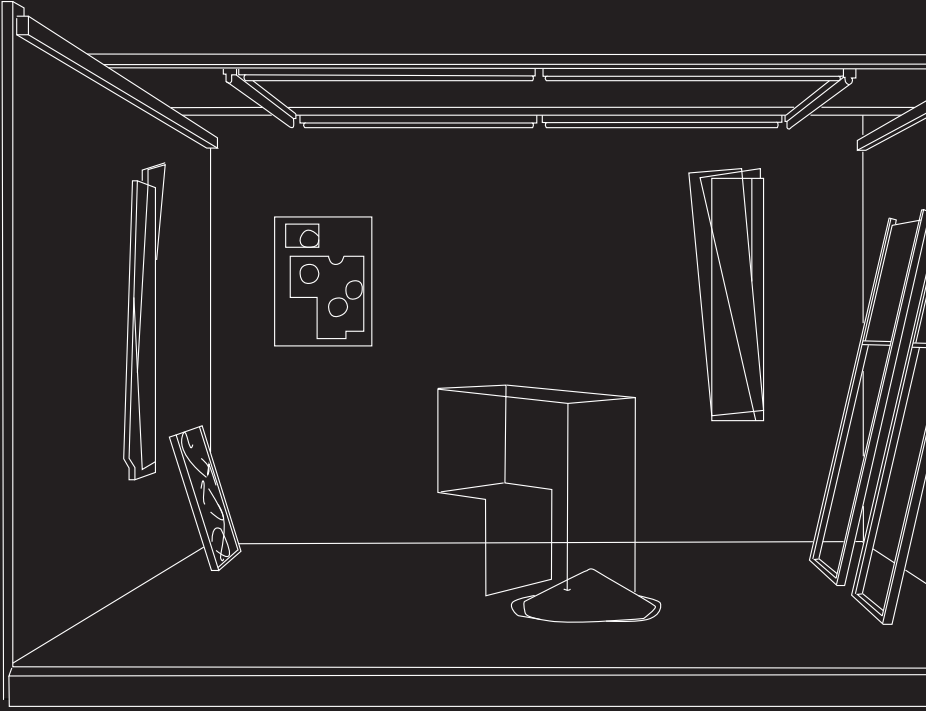


COMPOSITION 2

A woman looking in and Artie Vierkant's

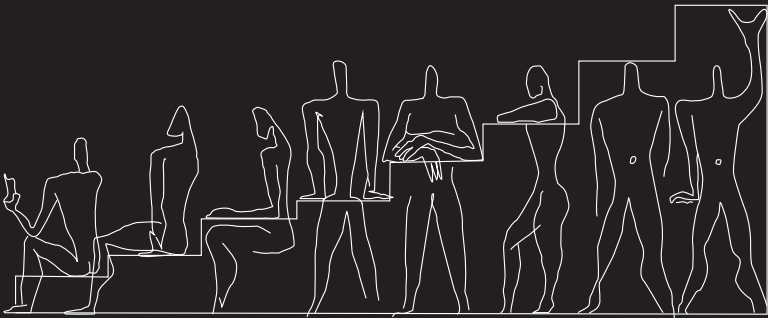
"A Model Release"

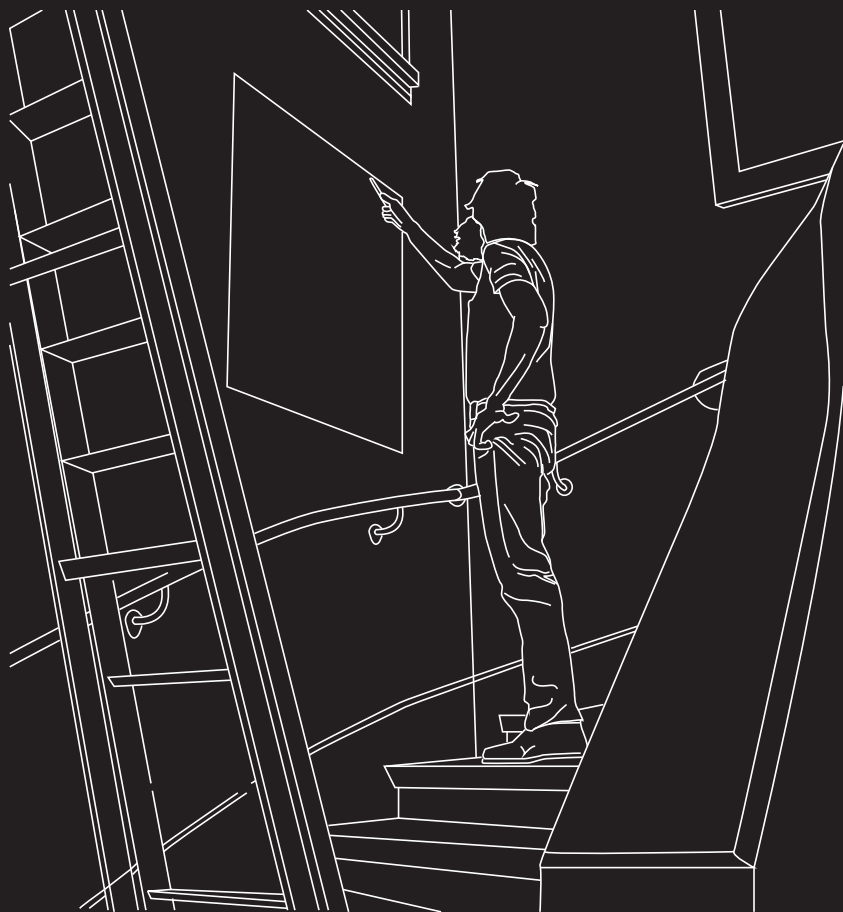




COMPOSITION 3

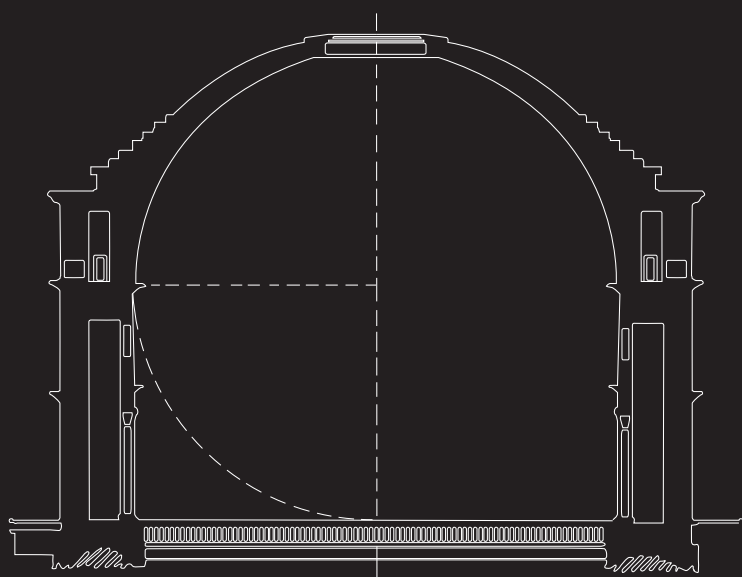
Joshua Citerella's "Compression Artifacts"
and Le Corbusier's Modular Man





COMPOSITION 4

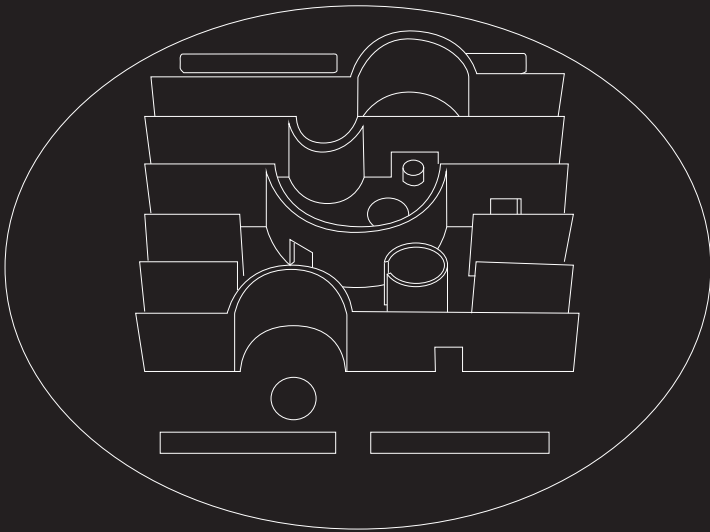
Lawrence Weiner and the Pantheon

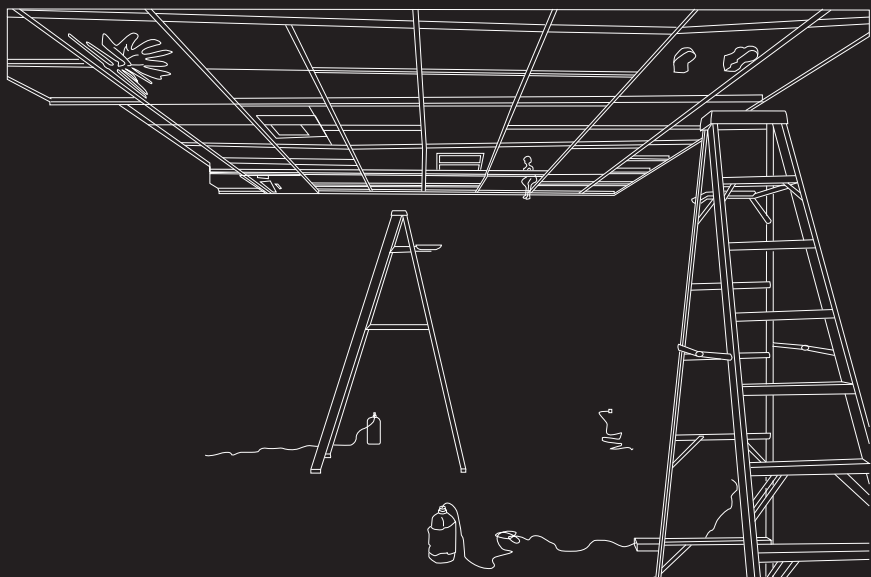
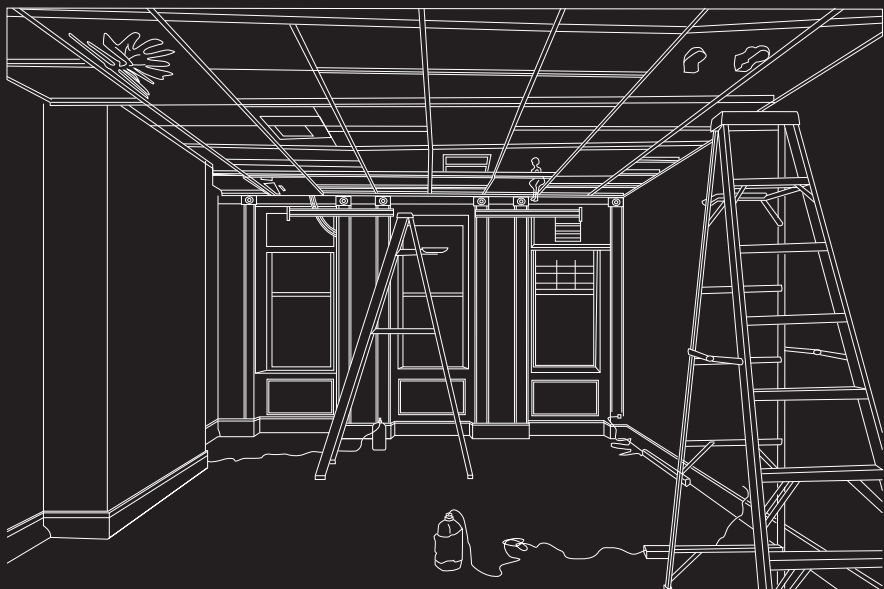




COMPOSITION 5

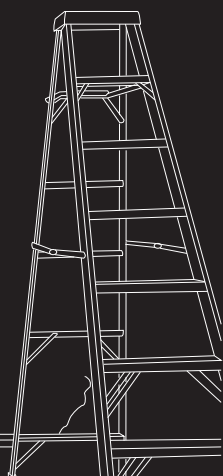
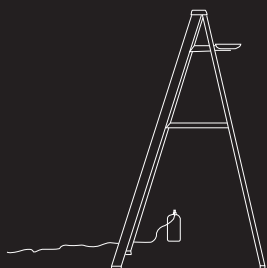
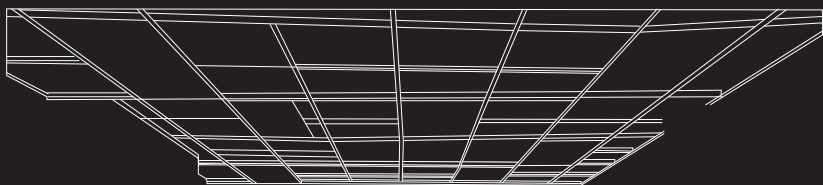
Parker Ito's "The most infamous girl on the Internet"
and Aldo Van Eyck's Sonsbeek Pavillion





COMPOSITION 6

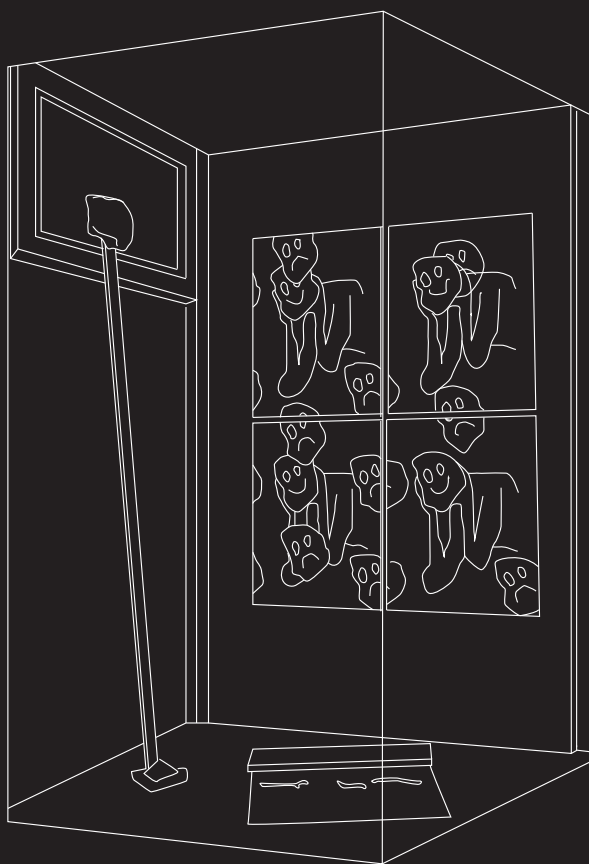
“National Gallery” curated by CHEWDAYS at Grand Century

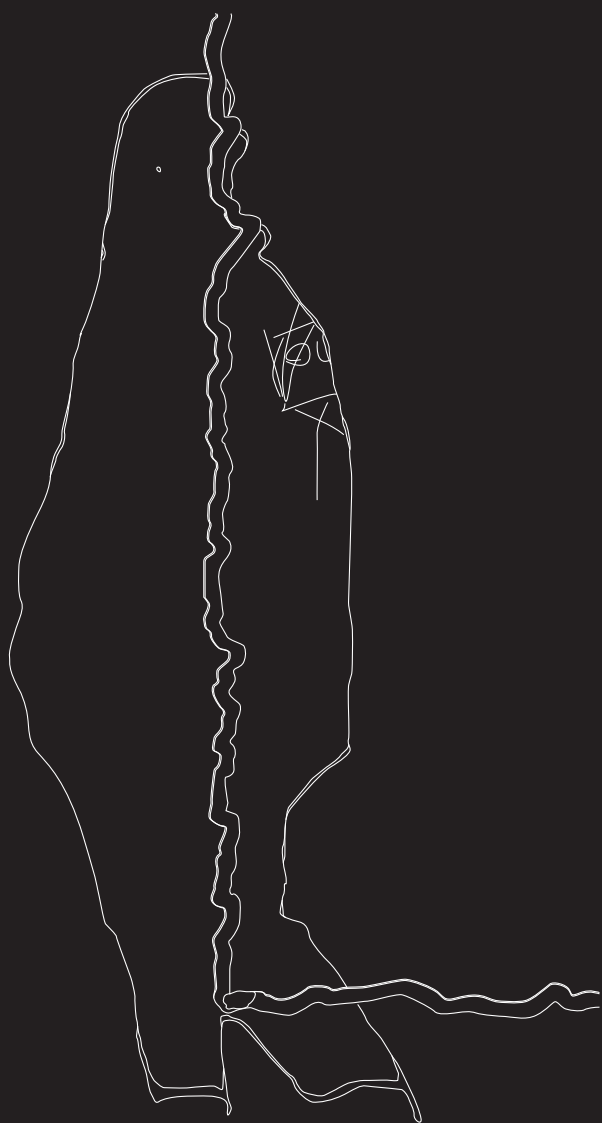


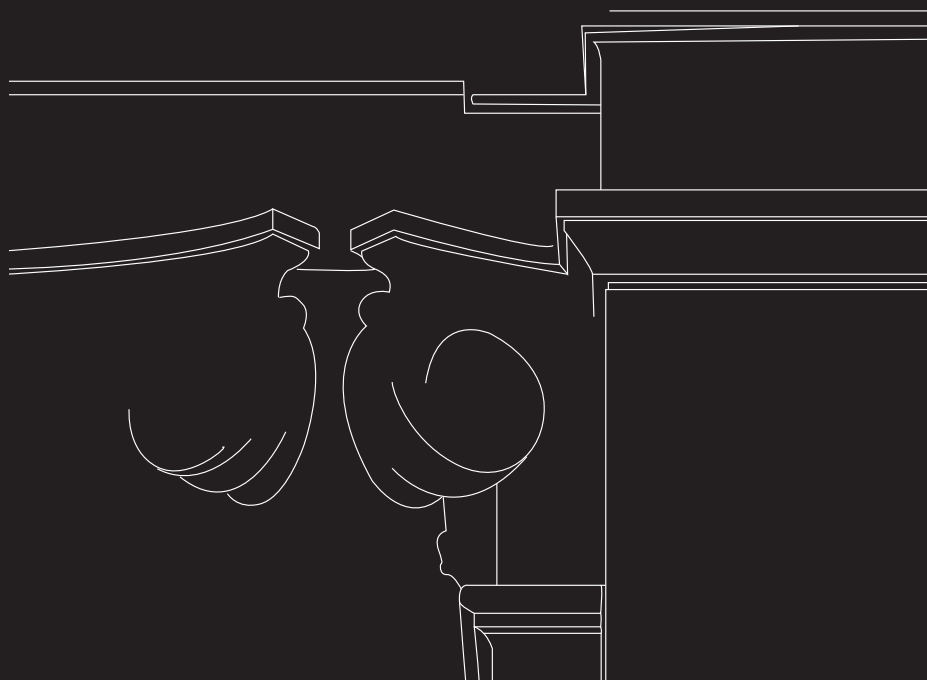
COMPOSITION 7

Cartesian Vision and “WORKSSS” at Jr. Projects

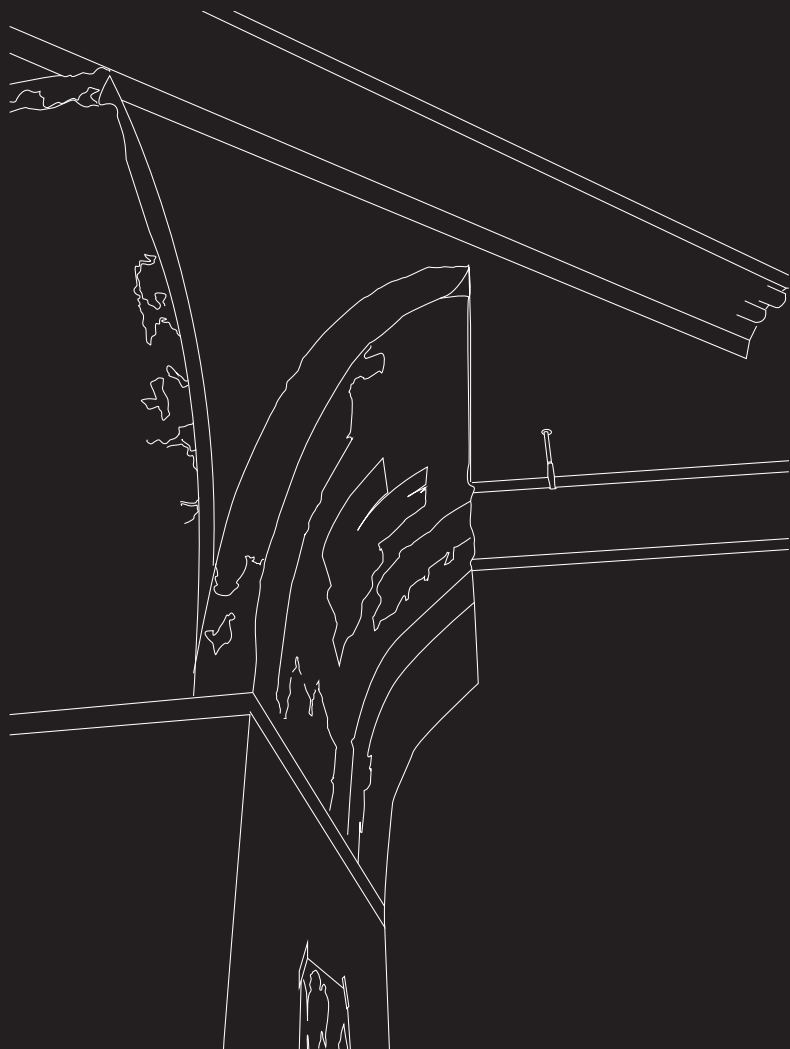








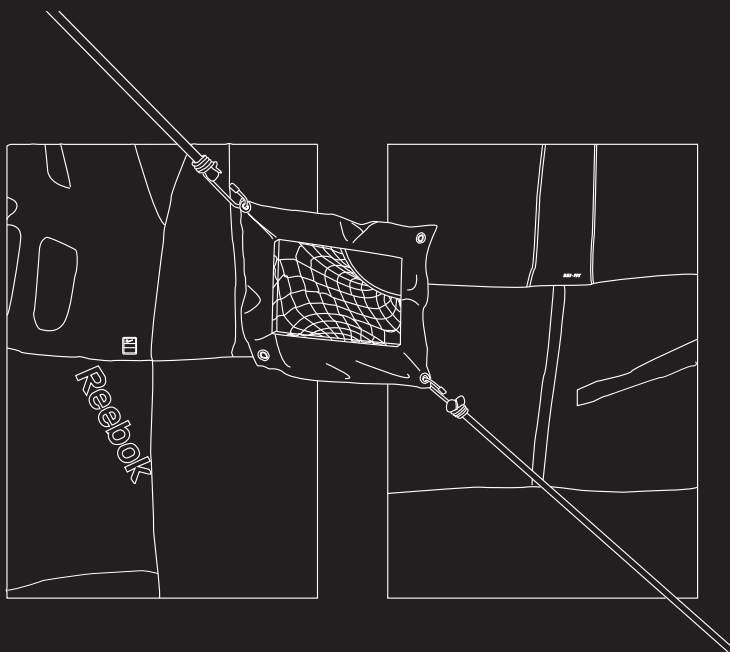
COMPOSITION 8
"Bed Island" by Nadia Belerique and a column detail



COMPOSITION 9

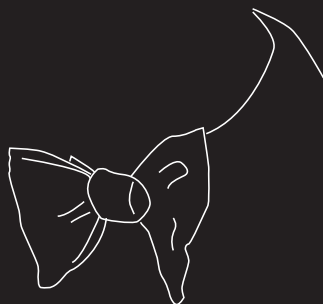
Robert Anthony O'Halloran at Warner Gallery and a man looking out

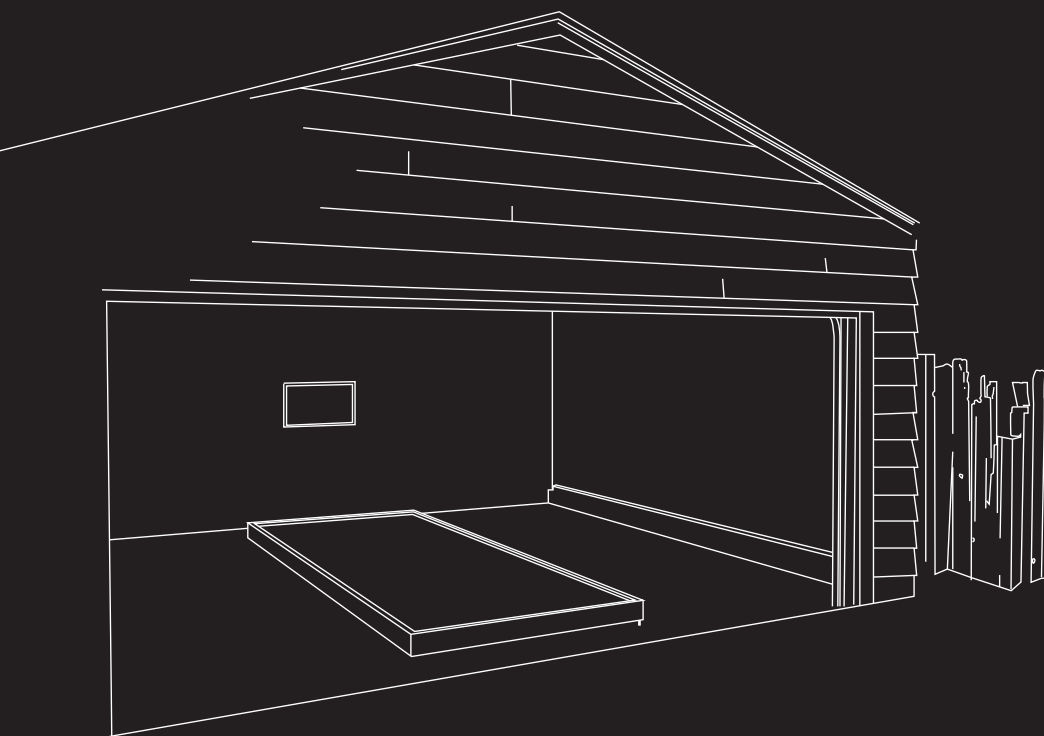




COMPOSITION 10

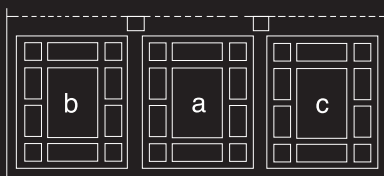
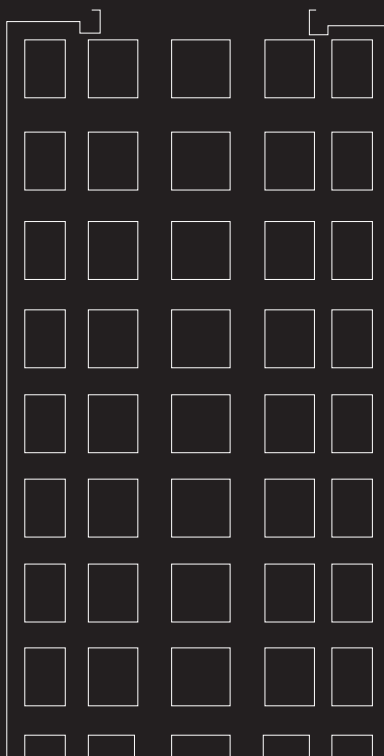
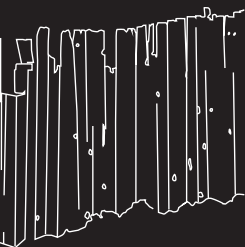
Brad Troemel, Mike Goldby, and Le Corbusier

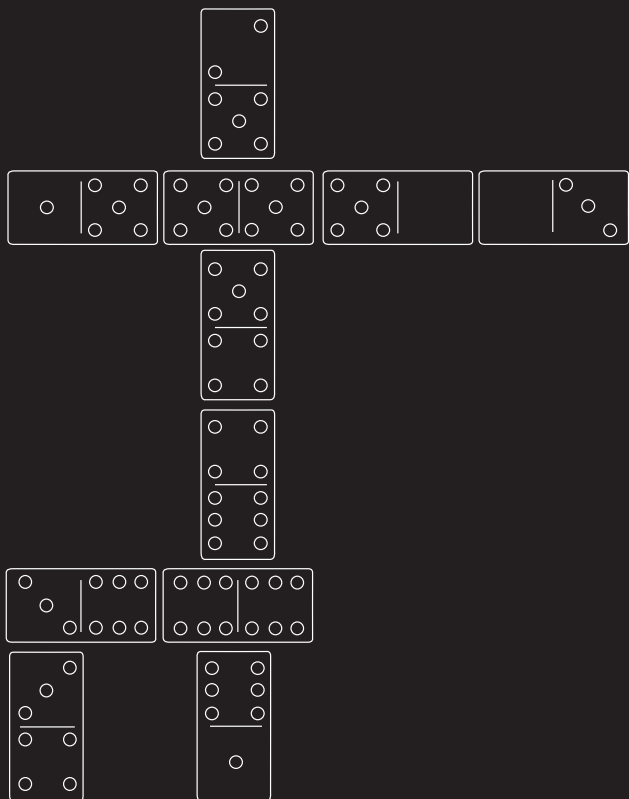




COMPOSITION 11

Appendix Space and a Roman Church floorplan





COMPOSITION 12

Dominoes and “From Whose Ground Heaven and Hell Compare”

by Ben Schumacher



COMPOSITION 13

a decentralized network and “An Immaterial Study
of our peers”



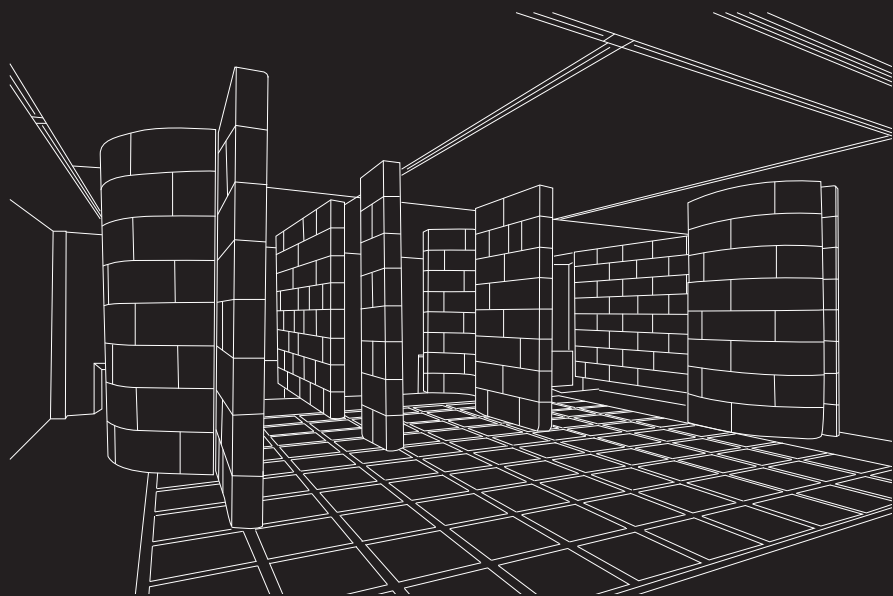




COMPOSITION 14

comics by Carole Conde and Karl Beveridge







COMPOSITION 15
"The Mouth Holds the Tongue" at The Power Plant
and "Dean" carving

PART 2


The Explosion of the White Cube

The Architecture of the White Cube, Time & Space

The old man whispers secretively about the hidden mythical city, Zarzura, which dreams out there somewhere in the heart of the desert.

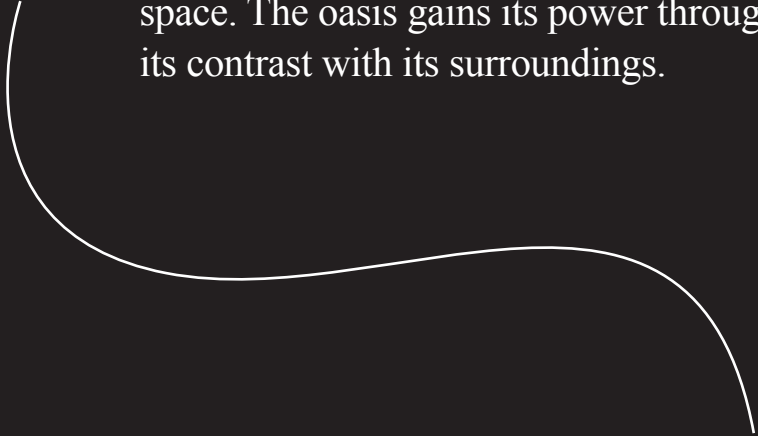
Zarzura! Its name raises the desire in me that also glimmers in the eye of the storyteller. Will I ever have the chance to take my machine into that unreachable realm, which hides the secrets of the Libyan Desert? ³²

32 László Almásy, *The Unknown Sahara*, (Budapest: Hungarian Geographical Society Library, 1934)



Zarzura, the legend of *The White City* oasis, was said to lie in the unmapped corners of the Sahara desert. For centuries its location was a mystery. It was not until March 1933 that an explorer, László Almásy, discovered the oasis. To Almásy's disappointment, Zarzura was no longer a fertile spring as the legend told. However, Almásy discovered a series of rock paintings in nearby caves that not only proved the existence of human settlement, but also made reference to the presence of water through the depiction of figures swimming.

As demonstrated by Almásy's search for The White City, an oasis exists more as an ideal (or dream) than a physical space. The oasis gains its power through its contrast with its surroundings.



The thirsty desert wanderer hallucinates the shade of palm trees and drinking from tropical springs because of the sun on his back and the taste of sand in his mouth. As a result of a post Industrial Revolution society, and the development of urban cities, the oasis saw an inversion. The city wanderer differs from the desert wanderer in that the city wanderer seeks stillness in empty space amongst the chaos of the modern city, while the desert wanderer seeks life and movement (ie. flora and fauna) amongst the stillness and solitude of the desert. Within the modern city the gallery (or White Cube) becomes a primary location for the oasis.

DECEMBER 15, 2010:

Google launches the Ngram Viewer, an online interface that queries the Google Books database (30 million books as of April 2013) for any word, or short sentence, using yearly n-grams³³ found between the years 1800 to 2014. With a simple search for the phrase “white cube” the Ngram Viewer produces a graph that instantly displays the history of the term. It begins with an early comparison of a building’s likeness to a white cube in 1894³⁴, to the use of white cubes floating in space to describe the fourth dimension in 1906³⁵, but it wasn’t until 1976 that the White Cube emerged as a term to describe an exhibition space dominated by Modernist ideology and whitewashed walls. For the better part of the twentieth century, and now into the twenty-first century, the White Cube gallery has dictated the narrative of contemporary exhibition design. This essay examines the Modernist White Cube ideology, from Le Corbusier (1926) to O’Doherty (1976), in order to contextualize network culture and the proliferation of documentation images online, and to understand how the architecture of the White Cube shifts from an ideology to artistic medium. Applying theories such as Deleuze’s *actual* and *virtual*³⁶ (1977), Duchamp’s *time and space*³⁷ (1942), and Celant,

33 N-gram: a sequence of variable characters that stands for a word or string of words in a corpus.

34 *The Monthly Illustrator, Volume 2* (Harry C. Jones, 1894) 196.

35 Charles Howard Hinton, *The Fourth Dimension* (United States: S. Sonnenschein & Company, 1906) 143.

36 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*. (Flammarion: Paris, 1977).

37 Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installation* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001).

Demand, and Koolhaas' *double occupancy*³⁸ (2013) will help provide a theoretical framework to support this claim. Moreover, in order to properly understand the ongoing influence of the White Cube on contemporary artists, curators, and gallerists I will draw on projects by, but not limited to, Canadian artist Ben Schumacher, Tobias Czudej of CHEW-DAYS, and Appendix Space. The twenty-first century gallery operates within a very specific architectural vocabulary. This vocabulary centres around the notion of the White Cube, which appears initially as a gallery dominated by white walls. However, the White Cube is more than this: it is also an ideal. By "subtract[ing] from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is "art," the work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself."³⁹ In order to find significance within this seemingly empty chamber, "one must look to other classes of chambers that have been constructed on similar principles."⁴⁰ Functionally comparable spaces include painted caves, like those found by Almásy in the *White City*, and Egyptian burial tombs, which also displayed paintings and sculptures that were difficult to access and set off from the outside world.⁴¹ Although evidence of related techniques have been used for hundreds — if not thousands — of years it was not until 1976 that the "White Cube" was coined, and introduced as a concept, in three articles published in *Artforum* by Brian O'Doherty. He observed that the architectural features of the White Cube emerged in galleries and museums at the beginning of the twentieth century, and noted that the White Cube did not conclude a linear progression from the salon style⁴² galleries of the nineteenth century but rather was born out of the Modernist condition of the twentieth century. Art during "the nineteenth century looked at a subject — not at its edge. Studying not the field but its limits, and defining these limits for the purpose of extending them, is a twentieth-century habit."⁴³ Key to understanding the influence of limits and edges on the White Cube, one must look to the development of modern architecture, the aesthetics of surface, exhibition design, and Modern photography.

38 Fondazione Prada, Press Release: When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013. 2013

39 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 14.

40 Ibid., 14.

41 Ibid.

42 Whyte, Ryan. Exhibiting Enlightenment: Chardin as Tapissier. Eighteenth-Century Studies, Volume 46, Number 4, Summer 2013, pp. 531-554 (Article) The John Hopkins

University Press. Date Accessed: 23 Mar 2015. "Chardin's efforts merited an observation that treated the Salon both a totality and a collection of parts, recognition that the effect of the Salon arrangement was based on a unified design."

43 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 20.



MODERNIST MANIFESTOS

In 1926, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, better known as the architect Le Corbusier, published *Five Points Towards a New Architecture*, a manifesto proposing how architecture could change the world. The five points that Le Corbusier cites as essential to any modernist building are: the supports, the roof garden, the free designing of the ground plan, the horizontal window, and the free design of the façade.⁴⁴ Le Corbusier became known for his simplified designs that followed the idea that a house was “a machine for living in [...] without any ornament or frills.”⁴⁵ As modern architecture began to grow in popularity, its own aesthetics were adopted into other contexts. The color white, and its connotation of limitless space, started to influence conversations that converged at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in the 1920s and ‘30s. In 1929, founders Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lillie P. Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan appointed Alfred H. Barr the director of the newly formed Museum of Modern Art. In the former Rockefeller townhouse on 11 West 53rd Street that now serves as MoMA’s home, Barr was able to pioneer his defining style. The exhibition titled *Cubism and Abstract Art* signified the beginnings of the White Cube aesthetic when Barr made the gallery as austere as possible.⁴⁶ The walls were painted white to provide the greatest possible contrast to the artworks, and rugs were removed, exposing hardwood or tiled flooring.

44 Le Corbusier. *Towards a New Architecture*. Translated by John Goodman. Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2007.

45 Ibid.

46 Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 138.

Le Corbusier's ideas on the flexible ground plan and moveable wall were adopted in order to create a more versatile space as temporary exhibitions became increasingly popular.⁴⁷ However, it wasn't until 1960 when William C. Seitz, a visiting director at the MoMA,⁴⁸ took off the frames for his great Monet exhibition that the edges of the paintings appeared transcendent when mounted on the infinite space of the white walls.

The Monet exhibition, titled *Seasons and Moments*, was an important turning point in the development of the White Cube because of Seitz's impulse to remove the ornamental excess of the nineteenth-century frame. Seitz chose to not only mount Monet's canvases directly to the wall but also inset canvases so they appeared flush with the wall. This curatorial gesture was a reflection of the shift in the aesthetics of surface. Since the Renaissance and the invention of linear perspective, the easel, a mobile and affordable platform that embraced the inherent illusions within the medium, dominated painting. An easel painting acted as a window into a new reality. Alternatively, the mural painting "tends to be quite frank with its means — illusionism breaks down in a babble of method."⁴⁹ Hans Feibusch, a twentieth-century German painter and sculptor, favours the mural painting because of the artist's ability to "control all conditions under which it is exhibited" and because painting "has everything to gain from an intimate collaboration with architecture."⁵⁰ However, it seems that Modernism's revival of the mural painting comes from its denial of illusion and confident assertion that the painting ends at the wall. Seitz's decision to remove the frame now seems like a logical conclusion considering that "the inch of the stretcher's width [must] amount to a formal abyss"⁵¹ within the modernist condition. In O'Doherty's own evaluation of *Season's and Moments*, he likens Monet's undressed, wall-mounted, canvasses to photographic reproductions; a recognition of how the new technology served as a catalyst to the modernist rejection of illusion.

In 1966, one year after Le Corbusier's death, John Szarkowski, the director of photography at the MoMA, published *The Photographer's Eye*, a rallying cry to establish photography's place as a justifiable art form

47 Niklas Maak, Charlotte Klonk, and Thomas Demand, "The White Cube and Beyond: Museum Display," *Tate Modern*, last modified January 1, 2011, <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/white-cube-and-beyond>. 3.

48 William Seitz, "Seasons and Moments," *Museum of Modern Art, New York* (1960).

49 Niklas Maak, Charlotte Klonk, and Thomas Demand, "The White Cube

and Beyond: Museum Display," *Tate Modern*, last modified January 1, 2011, <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/white-cube-and-beyond>. 18.

50 H.R. "The Literature of Art," *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 89, No. 537 (Burlington: The Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd, 1947) 357.

51 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 25.

alongside painting and sculpture. As any good Modernist would, Szarkowski devised five points that outline the inherent qualities of the medium and make it comparable to other, more traditional visual practices. Szarkowski cites concepts such as the thing itself, the detail, the frame, time, and vantage point as aesthetic attributes that the artist-photographer has over the amateur enthusiast, casual snap-shooter, or commercial photographer. Szarkowski's five points popularized the works of American photographers such as Lee Friedlander, Walker Evans, and Paul Strand; however, Szarkowski's theory of the frame reached beyond photography and added to Seitz's impulse to investigate the boundaries of a work of art.

The act of choosing and eliminating, forces a concentration on the picture edge [...] These relationships of the edges, in all directions, reflect the intentional visual and conceptual concerns in how photographic meaning is considered. What is contained within the frame is either energized or passive depending on how these edges are considered, allowing the picture to resonate within the edges and/or beyond them.⁵²

After Szarkowski curated successful exhibitions such as *New Documents*⁵³ (1967), which not only exemplified his five points but also employed minimal framing techniques and whitewashed walls, photography joined painting and sculpture in the gallery of modernism.

With photography in place, the White Cube included all mediums, and therefore, became the ubiquitous presentation format for exhibition design. In light of this progression, the White Cube confidently shuts itself off from the outside world. Like an ancient burial tomb, it secludes itself in an effort to preserve the purity of its contents. Sunlight is discarded in exchange for track-lighting, mounted to the ceiling. There is little distraction for the gallery wanderer other than a distant memory of the modern city beyond the seemingly infinite white walls and open modernist ground plan.

52 John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye*, (Garden Day: Double Day, 1966).

53 *New Documents* (1967) Museum

of Modern Art. Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander, Garry Winogrand

THE [] [] AESTHETICIZING [] OF THE [] WALL [] []

*The Modernist was mummified
inside the White Cube.*

As the White Cube developed into the gallery standard, it started to drift away from the neutral, pure, container that it claimed in its infancy and instead became visible as a historical construct of Modernism.⁵⁴ After the gap between the white walls and the artwork disappeared, the wall became as strong of an aesthetic force as the artwork that it supported. “The White Cube became a cipher for institutional officiousness, fortifying the ultimate tautology: An artwork belongs there because it is there.”⁵⁵ The White Cube’s ability to turn anything inside of it into a work of art is largely due to its academic and institutional value. Key figures such as Barr and Seitz, who both studied at Princeton, approached modern art from an academic starting point. Their educational routes made it easier for them to not only push Modernist ideology further but also the notion of art as institutional theory. George Dickie, an American philosopher, enforced the theory that art rested on the institution in *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (1971). Dickie claimed “a work of art in the classificatory sense is (1) an artifact (2) a set of the aspects of which has

54 Simon Sheikh, “Positively White Cube Revisited,” e-flux journal #3 (Online: e-flux.com, 2009) <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/positively-white-cube-revisited/>.

55 Elena Filipovic, “The Global White

Cube,” *Politics of Display, Issue 22* (Online: oncurating.org, 2014) 56. <http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-22-43/the-global-white-cube.html#.VS2QKEJp18w>

held conferred upon in the status of candidate for appreciation by some person or some persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the art world).”⁵⁶ Therefore, as members acting on behalf of the institution, and/or privileged elite, Barr and Seitz were able to redistribute the existing power relationships of the art world towards their own curatorial vision — a product of modernist ideology. This created a class divide between the curator and the audience. Even during Modernism’s heyday, art critics criticized the White Cube’s elitist tendencies of “portraying the curators as the ultimate purveyors of knowledge and visitors as lowly consumer peons.”⁵⁷ Barr even went as far as using the term “pretty” to discredit works of art that were too readily understandable.⁵⁸ Moreover, during the 1960s, with the rise of abstract artists such as Frank Stella, Barnett Newman, and Jasper Johns, the audience relied on the institution to explain why these abstracted colour field paintings were to be considered art. Ultimately, the strong-willed ideological fingerprints that Le Corbusier, Barr, Seitz, and Szarkowski left on the pristine white walls of the gallery were both the reason for the White Cube’s meteoric rise and the cause of its ideological fall.

Despite its Modernist ideology drifting away, the White Cube gallery has endured as one of the primary signifiers of contemporary art; its history and philosophy has been explored in numerous important books, essays, and theses. I have already referenced, at length, O’Doherty’s (1976)⁵⁹ central argument, which is focused on the relationship between the viewing subject and the viewed object. Also relevant are Whitney Fehl Birkett’s (2012)⁶⁰ critiques of the aesthetics of the White Cube through an in depth analysis of the role of Alfred H. Barr and the Museum of Modern Art. There is also Elena Filipovic’s (2014)⁶¹ observation of the dissemination of White Cube philosophy through global biennials and large art festivals such as Documenta and Manifesta. For the most part these investigations deal with the White Cube as ideology. Even Kevin Hetherington (2010)⁶², who has called for a systematic analysis of

56 George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (New York: Pegasus, 1971) 101.

57 Whitney B. Birkett, “To Infinty and Beyond – A critique of the aesthetic white cube,” *eRepository @ Seton Hall, Spring 5-2012*, (2012): 40, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=theses>.

58 Ibid., 42.

59 Brian O’Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

60 Whitney B. Birkett, “To Infinty and

Beyond – A critique of the aesthetic white cube,” *eRepository @ Seton Hall, Spring 5-2012*, (2012): 40, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://scholarship.shu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1211&context=theses>.

61 Elena Filipovic, “The Global White Cube,” *Politics of Display, Issue 22* (Online: oncurating.org, 2014) 53. <http://www.on-curating.org/index.php/issue-22-43/the-global-white-cube.html#.VS2QKEJp18w>

62 Kevin Hetherington, “The Empty Gallery? Issues of subjects, objects, and space,” (Online: The Open University, 2010).

the gallery itself, is more interested in the gallery as social space than as architectural space. What I am proposing is an investigation of the influence of the architectural features of the White Cube on artistic production — in other words, a consideration of the White Cube as medium, not ideology.

WHITE CUBE AS MEDIUM

The White Cube's current place in contemporary art is interesting. It has managed to survive the evolution of exhibition practices of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The Black Cube (film/video/projection inside the gallery) and the Naught Cube (online/interactive/virtual exhibition spaces) both made valiant efforts to stage their respective *coup d'états*⁶³; however, the White Cube remains the clear victor. During the White Cube's conception, the ideology of Modernism was both what allowed for its creation and what was at the forefront of the discussion. The ideological fervor of Modernism has since receded and what remains of the White Cube's institutional ability to transform its contents into art has become so ingrained in contemporary society that its magic is almost subconscious to the young artist today. Today, the White Cube, though of course still operating as ideology, has focused our attention towards its more formal qualities, which has resulted in its emergence as medium. Just as László Almásy's oasis turned out to be more of an ideal than physical space, the ideology White Cube has seen a similar transformation.

The generations that were born into a post-modern and, more recently, a network culture, society never felt the alienation and elitism that came

63 Coup d'état: a sudden, decisive exercise of force in politics; especially : the violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group

64 Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of*

Building in Ten Books (1486), trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998) 194.

in the wake of the Modernist White Cube. Therefore, the ideology of the White Cube has become an ideal for the young artist today. The contemporary White Cube represents safety and survival. Once the artist arrives in the White Cube, there is the relief of a space that is both representative of a certain caliber of artistic professionalism as well as the possibility of financial gain, and therefore, survival. If the pure, Modernist, empty-container White Cube is comparable to a cave, or an Egyptian burial tomb, then the contemporary White Cube is comparable to a church. Both spaces represent the manifestation of an ideal. Historically, the programmatic design of a church has been to silently use specific architectural features (columns, corridors, colonnades, niches, vaulted ceilings), not to attract attention to the building, but rather to create a total environment that communicates idealistic feelings or virtues. As early as 1486, in *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, author Leon Battista Alberti states that, “there is no doubt that a temple that delights the mind wonderfully, captivates it with grace and admiration will greatly encourage piety.”⁶⁴ In sixteenth-century Italy, Jesuit brother and architect Andrea Pozzo designed the Church of Sant’Ignazio in Rome. Working during the Baroque period, Pozzo used rows of Corinthian columns to contain visitors in the main nave so they would observe the grandeur of the vaulted ceilings and Pozzo’s *trompe l’oeil*⁶⁵ fresco. These features worked to communicate awe and spectacle — a strategy to keep faith in the church. Pozzo’s spatial strategy of using physical (in this case architectural) structures in order to project an ideal is similar to the Deleuzian notion of the *actual* and the *virtual*.

Gilles Deleuze, a French philosopher who rose to prominence in the 1960s, developed the notion that an object has both an *actual* and *virtual* meaning. In his 1977 text, *Dialogues II*, Deleuze explains that “every *actual* [object] surrounds itself with a cloud of *virtual* images. This cloud is composed of a series of more or less extensive coexisting circuits, along which the *virtual* images are distributed, and around which they run.”⁶⁶ An object, perhaps a Corinthian column, has an actual meaning which is its ability to be identified as a column. The object’s *column-ness* allows for a cloud of *virtual* images to project out from it and display notions, ideals, memories, and interpretations of columns. For example, the reason that Andrea Pozzo used the Corinthian column in Sant’Ignazio

65 Trompe l’oeil: a style of painting in which objects are depicted with photographically realistic detail; something that misleads or deceives the senses.

66 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*. (Flammarion: Paris, 1977) 112.

was because of the Romans' success in using it as means of civic control. The greatest example of this can be seen in Agrippa's (and then Hadrian's) design of the Pantheon. The 16 columns that line the exterior of the main entrance of the Pantheon provide the illusion of a fluidity of line and space — not only in a visual sense but also in a way that implied a freedom of action (which it in fact denied).⁶⁷ Pozzo believed that by using the column he could guide visitors towards piety rather than civic obedience. Moreover, those who sat in the expanse of Sant' Ignazio's main nave when it was consecrated in 1722 were surrounded by a vast cloud of virtual images that simultaneously projected Pozzo's ambitions of piety, Agrippa's strategies of control, and of course the culmination of it all — the Jesuit faith. This distinction between the virtual and the actual "corresponds to the most fundamental split in time, that is to say, the differentiation of its passage into two great jets: the passing of the present, and the preservation of the past."⁶⁸

The White Cube operates in parallel. The ideology that has been cemented into contemporary art (largely thanks to O'Doherty) now floats just below the florescent track lighting inside the White Cube; invisible to the eye, but subconsciously present, it is both activated and reinforced by the physical construction of this canonical space. However, an important distinction to be made is the different ways in which a church and the White Cube provide access to the experience of the actual and the virtual. In a church, the main entry point is by physically being present in the space. The awe and spectacle felt upon entering is reliant on the human scale being dwarfed by the monumental scale of the church. Moreover, with the exception of Televangelism shows that draw millions of viewers on TV like *The Hour of Power*, generally any form of photography is prohibited within holy sites around the world. Conversely, within the last 10 years the act of visiting the White Cube has moved beyond the physical, due to the proliferation of documentation images online. As the Internet became ubiquitous and more people started to experience exhibitions via online documentation rather than through magazines, catalogues, or even in person, the architectural structures of the White Cube began to change. Due to the rate, and quantity, of online documentation images that depict art installed within the White Cube, it became more common to observe the presence of the wall, the floor, and the ceiling as screen-based images rather than architectural structures. This fracturing of physical space due to the proliferation of virtual space has resulted in the explosion of the White Cube.

67 William Lloyd Macdonald, *The Architecture of the Roman Empire*. (New York: Yale University Press, 1982) 179.

68 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*. (Flammarion: Paris, 1977) 114.

THE EX PLO SI ON OF THE W HI TE CU BE

*Today's city streets, buildings, and homes are not merely a collection of sidewalks, walls, floors, and roofs [...] The visual communications giving life to our cities and homes happen through light and images.*⁶⁹

As established in part 1, the rise of network culture saw the Internet move from a novelty to a utility. Artists started to understand how their work would be distributed online in an array of versions that would result in the creation of additional layers of experience. Chief among these versions was that of the documentation image. The effect of the online documentation image on artistic production has been made clear; however, in the wake of the shift from documentation *of* art to documentation *as* art, the White Cube has also been altered. Among the countless images of contemporary artworks that appear on popular blogs like Contemporary

69 Daniela Bertol, *Architecture of Images: An Investigation of Architectural Representations and the Visual*

Perception of Three-Dimensional Space. Leonardo, Vol. 29, No.2, pp. 87-94 (New York: The MIT Press, 1996) 2.

Art Daily and Art Blog Art Blog (no longer active as of March 30, 2015, 2:51 PM) the White Cube is on perpetual display. The rate and speed at which this type of visual scrutiny operates online has resulted in an explosion of the White Cube's component parts. By explosion, I don't mean to suggest a literal explosion, or even an explosion to dismantle ideology, but rather a fragmentation that separates the White Cube's various architectural features and suspends them in limbo in order to be properly examined. Digital image capture, together with the Internet, has resulted in a "reduction of architectural [and exhibition] space to a series of images."⁷⁰ Here the effects of network culture and ubiquitous computing become quite evident. The White Cube has developed into a post-physical space; this is not to say that it only exists online, but, more interestingly, its very fabric has been altered by the duality of our current culture and consciousness. Furthermore, this explosion is the main impetus to explore the White Cube as medium — an approach that examines how the production of contemporary art has been influenced by, and relates to, the architectural features of the White Cube gallery. In order to unpack this notion, it is important to understand the two main qualities that define the White cube as medium — time and space.

TIME AND SPACE

Marcel Duchamp, one of the most important artists of the twentieth century, was among the first to be interested in representing *time* as the fourth dimension alongside the pre-existing three-dimensional Cartesian plane. Duchamp's first success with the pictorial representation of the fourth dimension came in 1912 with the Cubist work of art *Nude*

Descending Staircase, No. 2. However, when Duchamp filled the Whitelaw Reid Mansion with white twine⁷¹ in 1942, he brought the theory of the fourth dimension into the physical exhibition space. With Duchamp's *String Piece*, he introduced the concept of the gallery as immersive space (not a linear progression) by asserting that "vision's condition of possibility is the approach of the body [therefore making] vision decidedly *corporeal*."⁷² The tangled mesh that filled the Whitelaw Reid Mansion did not cut off vision completely but rather frustrated vision, in an attempt to make the body aware of its presence in the space. Duchamp underlined this distinction in a 1953 interview, saying of the string: "You can always see through a window, through a curtain, thick or not thick, you can see always [all the way] though if you want to, same thing there."⁷³ Not only does *String Piece* disembodiment the Surrealist preoccupation with the corporeal, it also subverts ownership of the traditional art object. By installing the string through, around, above, and below the other works in *First Papers of Surrealism*, he [Duchamp] undermined traditional notions of unique authorship. Amelia Jones terms this "slippages of the authorial *I*."⁷⁴ Therefore, by suggesting that vision is under the control of the body and renouncing the art object, in favor of a total installation, Duchamp calls for a fusion of *time* and *space*. Similarly, in 1966, the same year Duchamp finished his last major work *Étant donnés*, American minimalist artist Robert Morris indicated a lack of interest in the object itself in favour of control of the entire situation. "Control is necessary if the variables of object, light, space, body, are to function. The object itself has not become less important. It has merely becoming less *self-important*."⁷⁵ Furthermore, Morris' model of "presentness" sought to bring together "the intimate inseparability of the experience of physical space and that of an ongoing immediate present." Morris goes on to say that "real space is not experienced except in real time. The Body is in motion."⁷⁶ Duchamp and Morris suggest that by connecting *time* and *space* to each other, a totality of experience is created and the entire space becomes activated for the gallery visitor or museum-goer. But how does this relationship change when "our sense of

71 *First Papers of Surrealism exhibition*, New York, 1942.

72 Filipovic, Elena. "A Museum That is Not." *e-flux journal* #4 (online, e-flux.com, 2009), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/a-museum-that-is-not/>

73 Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installation* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001) 183.

74 Ibid.

75 Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum*, no. 2 (February 1966) 234.

76 Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space" *Art in America* 66, no. 1 (January-February 1978); republished in *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993) 177.

space and time is not determined as much by the physical space we occupy as by the remote places connected to us by the web of communications?”⁷⁷

Since the explosion of the White Cube, and its emergence as medium, the bond that Marcel Duchamp forged between *time* and *space* inside the gallery has shifted considerably. In terms of *time*, there are two scenarios. On the one hand, physical exhibitions are still open to the public and can still possess the totality of experience that Duchamp pioneered. On the other hand, there is a great drama that plays out in the White Cube when the physical exhibition is essentially waiting for the inevitability of death to come in the form of documentation, where it will then live forever through its dissemination online. As Barthes would say, “the subject that is photographed is rendered object, dispossessed of itself, thus becoming, ‘death in person.’”⁷⁸ In the November 2014 issue of *Art in America*, Brian Droitcour wrote an article titled *The Perils of Post-Internet Art*, a cynical look at the genre’s apparent shortcomings mainly due to its over-reliance on documentation. Droitcour opens with the claim that “Post-Internet art does to art what porn does to sex — renders it lurid.” Droitcour’s comment, which is clearly meant to entertain, more than inform, infers that the art that emerged out of a Post-Internet ideology operates purely on the surface — lacking actual skill or craft. Droitcour elaborates on his definition:

I know Post-Internet art when I see art made for its own installation shots, or installation shots presented as art. Post-Internet art is about creating objects that look good online: photographed under bright light in the gallery’s purifying white cube (a double for the white field of the browser window that supports the documentation), filtered for high contrast and colors that pop.⁷⁹

Although one of the defining qualities of Post-Internet art might be the desire to produce an object for the end goal of producing a documentation image, Droitcour’s article fails to recognize the value of the Post-Internet philosophy — or what I call the “White Cube as medium.” Returning to Duchamp’s notion of *space*, the documentation image compresses the physical space of the White Cube, as well as the artwork displayed within it, into a single flat plane. This compression is the result of the photographic apparatus as well as the backlit screen that will eventually display it. As a result of the aforementioned explosion, the flattening of

77 Daniela Bertol, “Architecture of Images: An Investigation of Architectural Representations and the Visual Perception of Three-Dimensional Space,” *Leonardo*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 87–94 (New York: The MIT Press, 1996) 2.
78 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*:

Reflections on Photography, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 14.

79 Brian Droitcour, *The Perils of Post-Internet Art*, *Art in America*, November 2014, October 30 2014.

the exhibition space brings the artwork and the architecture of the White Cube together. Upon first glance, this could be perceived as a collision; however, it would be more appropriate to call it a synthesis — a levelling of sorts. In 15th century Italy the mural painting was an “interaction between the painting, the configuration on the wall, and the visualizing activity of the public mind.”⁸⁰ Similar to the mural painting, the Post-Internet object shares an intimate collaboration with architecture through the synthesis between it and the White Cube as well as a similar “visualizing activity of the public mind” through its life online. According to Robert Morris, sculpture and architecture have always endured a polarity based on the assertion that architectural space *surrounds*, while a sculpture is *surrounded*.⁸¹ Therefore, in the context of the White Cube as medium, the value of the Post-Internet object does not come from its innate desire to be documented, or its value as an object on the market, but rather its ability, through documentation, to eliminate the gap between exhibition and exhibition space, architecture and sculpture, and object and White Cube. In an essay published on the occasion of the Media Art Festival in Rome (February 25 to March 1, 2015), Domenico Quaranta arrives at a similar conclusion: the Post-Internet object functions best as a representation of an idea or concept rather than a vapid art-market fad.

What's important is not the piece in there [the gallery], but the idea out there [in the world]. This idea does not manifest itself as a single object, but is most effectively exemplified by the digital image. It is free, it travels, it gathers metadata along the way, it can be appropriated, used, abused, perused, and further developed. It can show up in different contexts, it's ephemeral, but it can survive.⁸²

In examining Post-Internet as philosophy through the architectural guise of the White Cube as medium, it is clear that the art that developed out of this genre is actually more in line with Conceptual art than its predecessor, Net Art, or even the profit-driven commercial art that it had been accused of being. In 2013, similar notions of the collaboration between art and architecture (time and space) were seen in the re-staging of Harald Szeemann's exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) for the Venice Architectural Biennale.

80 Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) 48.

81 Robert Morris, “The Present Tense of Space” *Art in America* 66, no. 1 (January-February 1978); republished in

Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993) 182.

82 Domenico Quaranta, “Situating Post Internet,” *Media Art. Toward a New Definition of Art in the Age of Technology*, (Rome: Gli Ori, 2015), 9.

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On June 1st 2013, eight years after Harald Szeemann's death, Germano Celant (in collaboration with Thomas Demand and Rem Koolhaas) curated *When Attitudes Become Form* at Ca' Corner della Regina for the Venice Architecture Biennale. The motivation to recreate this ground-breaking exhibition came from a debate about the original's meaning from an artistic, architectural, and curatorial perspective. In a brave — and daring — effort to satisfy questions of all three perspectives the curatorial team “decided to graft the [original] exhibition in its totality — walls, floors, installations and art objects” from the original Bern exhibition “including their relative positions — onto the historical architectural and environmental structure of Ca' Corner della Regina, thereby inserting — on a full-size scale — the modern rooms of the Kunsthalle, delimited by white wall surfaces, into the ancient frescoed and decorated halls of the Venetian palazzo.”⁸³ This architectural gesture was termed *double occupancy* in the exhibition press release; which is a reference to both the original occupation of the Kunsthalle by the artists in 1969, as well as the invasion of the Kunsthalle's twentieth-century rooms on the richly decorated rooms of the Ca' Corner della Regina. Although these two forms of occupation may have been the original impetus for such a term, *double occupancy* is also a strong framework to describe the various other dualities that are present within this exhibition. First, in terms of *space*, Szeemann's original *Attitudes* show has already been cited as an important mark in the development of the documentation image for its ability to capture not only the physical gallery space, and objects, but more importantly the people and their actions within that space. The iconic images of Serra and Weiner surely influenced Celant, Demand, and Koolhaas to make the staging of their exhibition an attempt to “avoid the necessity for photographs and films of the past event, and to be able to experience and analyze it literally.”⁸⁴ Here the duality becomes the documentation of exhibition space (1969 *Attitudes*) and exhibition space as documentation (2013 *Attitudes*). Similarly, in terms of *time*, an interesting duality emerged out of the 44-year gap between the two *Attitudes* exhibitions. In a review published in *The Guardian*, author Adrian Searle equates the resemblances between the original and the restaged to that of a strange yet magical dislocated double-take — a weird feeling of time-slip and dislocation.⁸⁵ Searle goes on to say that this double-take has also shown how things have changed

83 Fondazione Prada [Press release]: *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*. 2013

84 Ibid.

85 Adrian Searle, “From Prada to povera: the Venice Biennale recaptures the

spirit of the 60's,” *The Guardian*, last modified May 31, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2013/may/31/prada-venice-biennale-2013>.

86 Ibid.

in the art world: “Artists used to have lives and conversations. Now they just have careers and networks.”⁸⁶ Although Searle was comparing his romantic notions of the original exhibition to the business of contemporary art, he stumbles upon an interesting observation. Like all media today, the re-staging of *When Attitudes Become Form* joins the global network — the Internet — through its dissemination online. Consequently, through a simple Google search both the original and re-staged *Attitudes* are presented alongside each other as versions where the original is unclear — effectively — levelling the two exhibitions. This compression of time is more a function of the Internet than it is unique to *Attitudes*; however, what is unique to the 2013 exhibition is its physical manifestation of this compression of time, via network culture, through the architectural collision of Bern 1969 and Venice 2013.

A CUBE HAS SIX SIDES

As a result of the explosion of the White Cube, we are provided a context within which to examine its structures as a medium. The wall, the floor, the ceiling, the light, the window, and the doorway are all unique systems and structures that operate within the White Cube and constitute not only its architectural but also its philosophical identity.

- 1. The Wall**
- 2. The Floor**
- 3. The Ceiling**
- 4. The Light**
- 5. The Window**
- 6. The Doorway**

1. The Wall

The wall is arguably the defining structure of the White Cube. Its capacity to both legitimize and aestheticize artworks is clear. However, for the most part, this is mainly due to the ideology of the White Cube and not because of the wall itself. “The [architectural] meaning of the wall is just as diverse as the uses of vertical surface can be, but there is at least two essential functions: providing structure and dividing space.”⁸⁷ In *Play-Doh*, the inaugural exhibition that opened on March 17, 2015 at the Toronto-based Warner Gallery, artist Robert Anthony O’Halloran engages with the wall as structure and sculpture directly. In a piece titled *Trajectories of becoming*, O’Halloran uses Sheetrock, spruce wood, latex paint, drywall tape, drywall compound, and the titular material *Play-Doh* in order to construct an arching extension to the gallery wall that reaches towards the ceiling. What is interesting about this piece is that O’Halloran doesn’t fall into a minimalist dialogue with his formal sculpture due to the unabashed messiness in the display of the wall’s guts. O’Halloran seems to exhibit both an interest in the line between architecture and art object as well as not being afraid to let his work ambiguously sit between the

two. If O’Halloran’s work constituted an addition to the wall, then Nadia Belerique’s drywall cut-outs represent a complimentary subtraction. In Belerique’s 2016 solo exhibition at Daniel Faria Gallery, titled *Bed Island*, the artist cut the silhouette of a body out of the gallery wall, removing the drywall, and exposing the plywood beneath. Within the exhibition space, the body, or record of a body, stands quietly behind a large water-jet cut steel frame meant to mimic the dimensions of bed sheets. Belerique’s addition of this material subtraction hints at the potential collapse between exhibition space and exhibited works. The simple gesture to remove a layer shifts your perception away from the wall as structure, and instead encourages an intimate collaboration between content (art object) and context (White Cube).

The second architectural function of a wall — dividing space — has seen an interesting division in the wake of the explosion of the White Cube. As a result of the compression of physical space by way of the proliferation of digital space the architecture of, and the objects in, the White Cube have experienced a turn towards theatricality. The

87 Rem Koolhaas et al, “Wall,” in *Elements of Architecture* – 14. (Italy: Marsilio, 2012), 3.

gallery becomes synonymous with a movie set or theatre stage, when its main function is that of a documentation studio. Not only does the built wall become a part of a flattened stage, it also becomes in service of another wall — the fourth wall. “The first use of the theatrical term the ‘fourth wall,’ referring to the invisible plane separating stage and audience, is attributed to the philosopher Denis Diderot”⁸⁸ in nineteenth-century France. On November 22, 2014, an exhibition titled *Theatre Objects: A stage for Architecture and Art* opened at the LUMA Westbau (Zurich) and investigated the connections between art, architecture, and theatricality. Starting from an architectural context, the curators of *Theatre Objects*, Fredi Foschli and Niels Olsen, acknowledge the difficulty of exhibiting architecture through the assertion that it either functions through representation, by referring to a situation outside the gallery, or imitation, by mimicking architecture through the creation of an atmospheric installation.⁸⁹ However, despite its challenges Foschli and Niels set out to create an exhibition that uses the theatrical stage as an interface for the in-between areas of art and architecture.⁹⁰ As indicated by the exhibitions title, the key to the success of *Theatre Objects* is through the transformation of both the art object and the

architectural object into props/set pieces in service of a theatrical spatial totality. The theatricality of art and architecture’s intimate collaboration results in not only a leveling of both mediums, but it also begs the questions of the narrative in which these set pieces operate in. On December 19, one month after the opening of *Theatre Objects*, *Seau Banco Carbon* opened at Tomorrow Gallery⁹¹ (New York). In contrast to Foschli and Niels, *Bed-Stuy Love Affair* and Bobby Jesus approached the curation of *Seau Banco Carbon* from a fine-art context first. While *Theatre Objects* set out to articulate the connection between art, architecture, and theatricality, *Seau Banco Carbon* embodies this connection through its installation. The resulting exhibition amounted to works that consisted of tree branches, taxidermy birds, wall text, light fixtures, sliced apples in a casserole dish, and numerous traditional wall-mounted works. Furthermore, like the gap between art object and architectural object, the 35 exhibited artists’ work overlapped and intertwined in service of the totality of the exhibition. The theatricality that emerged from *Seau Banco Carbon*, similar to Morris’ notion of the entire situation, is the result of the works unfinished, dirty, almost found-on-the-street quality, which Brandon Taylor describes as “Slack

88 Ibid., 80.

89 Fredi Foschli and Niels Olsen, *Theatre Objects*, 2014

90 Ibid.

91 In 2011, *Tomorrow Gallery* was established in Toronto by Tara Downs, Aleksander Hardashnakov, and Hugh Scott-Douglas. In 2014, Downs moved *Tomorrow* to New York and Hardashnakov and Scott-Douglas became involved in more of an advisory capacity.

Art." Slack Art is to acknowledge that theatricality - the *bête noire* of formalist modernism in the 1960's — which has developed to the point at which narrative is constructed explicitly as illusion, as in the theatre, but with all the iconographical richness that a static tableau allows.⁹² Furthermore, Slack Art in its generality works against idealization. Given its preoccupation with the unfinished and the second-hand, it can also be construed as a reworking of the mechanism of viewer expectation. For Slack Art works on the basis of a twin strategy of fascination and disappointment: fascination at the prospect of observing someone else's deserted projects or their personal junk (that most intimate of residues), but simultaneously disappointment at the realization that as artistic spectacle it is degraded or incomplete.⁹³

2. The Floor

The floor is a customary technology that mediates gravity and the upright body; every step is magnetized to its surface. It is the architectural element that is almost

always touching the body; its presence operates silently, idling beneath us.⁹⁴ Historically, artists like Jackson Pollock brought the mural painting from the wall to floor in order to use the horizontality as a means of conveying the gravity of his action paintings in a revolutionary way. In 1956, the same year Jackson Pollack died in a car accident, J.H. Benton patented the raised floor, a response to the success of the drop-ceiling. The raised floor acts as a threshold between the underlying system of cables, ventilation ducts, and the upright body — it became increasingly popular with the rise of Le Corbusier's open ground plan.

"The floor as elevated platform has been a universal technology for separating the clean from the dirty, the sacred from the profane, and the ruling from the ruled." ⁹⁵

Canadian artist Ben Schumacher organized an exhibition at the Berlin-based gallery Croy Nielsen titled *From Whose Ground Heaven and Hell Compare* that explicitly interrogated the system of the raised floor by making it a figurative threshold between the proverbial heaven and hell. Schumacher uses the floor as a distinction between "positive and negative, 1 and 0," which allowed for Jared Madere's piece (a raised bed of sand) to "become the medium."⁹⁶

92 Brandon Taylor, *Avant-Garde and After*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995) 153.

93 Ibid.

94 Rem Koolhaas et al, "Floor," in *Elements of Architecture – 14*. (Italy: Marsilio, 2012), 6.

95 Ibid., 24.

This exhibition, similar to grafting the original *Attitudes show* into the Ca' Corner della Regina in Venice, provides a duality of experience. By raising the floor, Schumacher simultaneously exposes the floor as an architectural feature of the gallery while also using it as a means to pull back the curtain, so that a visitor can essentially look into the centre of the earth.

3. The Ceiling

If the aforementioned exhibition *From Whose Ground Heaven and Hell Compare* used the gallery floor as a means to divide the exhibition space into two separate viewing experiences that Schumacher equated to heaven and hell, then the exhibition at New York's Grand Century gallery titled *National Gallery* divides the gallery into heaven and earth. Curated by the London-based entity CHEWDAYS (Tobias Czudej), *National Gallery* was installed above and within the pre-existing drop-ceiling at Grand Century. Some of the work in this exhibition required the viewer to look directly up at the work facing down at them, simulating the placement of the original ceiling

panels, while other pieces prompted viewers to climb one of two ladders in the space to get above the drop-ceiling. By placing these ladders throughout the gallery, CHEWDAYS is effectively allowing the viewer to view the exhibition from above the clouds. In the press release for *National Gallery*, which came in the form of an email exchange between artist and curator, CHEWDAYS presents the possibility that the horizontal format of the exhibition is "more relevant to the contemporary condition" and then goes on to say that by engaging with this unconventional format, the exhibition will "lead to a heightened physical awareness [of the body] that serves to explore the idea of vision as corporeal."⁹⁷ Beyond the reference to the Duchampian notions of *corporeal vision* and *time* and *space*, what is most interesting about this exhibition is the use of horizontality, not only within an architectural context but also within a social context.

"Life is horizontal, just one thing after another, a conveyor belt shuffling us toward the horizon."⁹⁸

Horizontality in social practice is a concept that is borrowed from architecture. The horizontal line represents the horizon and extends to mapping and schematics of space in relation to the body. Emerging

96 Ben Schumacher, Interview by Parker Kay, March 2-22, 2015, transcript.

97 CHEWDAYS [Press release]: *from jutta koether sep 28: National Gallery Press Release*, 2014.

98 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 13.

from architecture as a social practice in 2001⁹⁹, the horizontal line can also act as a metaphor for an artistic practice that nurtures strong social connections between artists in order to create an equality of power through collaboration between peers. *National Gallery* alludes to intentions of social practice through the interest in how this shift towards *horizontality* can act “as a means to undermine/ collapse the power of conventional display,”¹⁰⁰ a clear reference to the vertical hierarchies of power that currently dominate the art world. On November 23, 2015 CHEWDAYS mounted the sequel to *National Gallery* in the newly founded permanent gallery location in London’s Lambeth neighbourhood. On November 23, 2015 CHEWDAYS mounted the sequel to *National Gallery* in the newly founded permanent gallery location in London’s Lambeth neighbourhood. *National Gallery 2: Empire* builds upon the philosophy of the original exhibition, while furthering its ideological ambitions through a clear reference to Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt’s post-Marxist text *Empire*.

Between June 20 and September 7, 2015, Toronto’s Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery exhibited a collaborative project by Nadia

Belerique, Laurie Kang, and Lili Huston-Herterich. The project, titled *The Mouth Holds the Tongue*, was commissioned and curated by The Power Plant’s associate curator Julia Paoli. The exhibition engaged with concepts of horizontality as social practice in both theory and practice. Paoli’s gesture to commission a collaborative project from three artists who had a loose history of collaboration but were defined as a group by their social connection to each other encouraged the very parameters of the collaboration to be social, as apposed to starting from an aesthetic commonality. The exhibition took the form of a large-scale architectural installation inspired by the Aldo Van Eyck’s temporary Sonsbeek Pavillion (1966). Through close collaboration, Belerique, Kang, and Huston-Herterich set out to redistribute institutional forms of power through the architectural structure’s capacity to render fluid the roles of all those involved in the exhibition — as well as those of the artworks and walls that bear them — as they begin to meld and fold into one another.¹⁰¹ The walls of the installation, which hung from the ceiling, were built to promote “playful and fluid interactions” while also turning the gallery “up-side-down,”¹⁰² effectively trans-

99 Marina Sitrin, “Ruptures in imagination: Horizontalism, autogestion and affective politics in Argentina,” *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, Vol. 5, Autumn, (Lisburn: The Centre for Global Education, 2007) 43-53. “This article will consider some of the stirring and enduring changes that have taken in place in Argentina in recent years, particularly in the period after December 2001 when a total economic collapse precipitated millions of people taking to the streets. Within two weeks, this popular response to macro-economic mismanagement resulted in the collapse of five consecutive governments, while simultaneously creating new horizontal assemblies designed to meet local community needs.”

100 CHEWDAYS, *from jutta koether sep 28: National Gallery Press Release*. 2014.

101 Julia Paoli, “*The Mouth Holds the Tongue*” *Press Release* (Toronto: The Power Plant, 2015).

forming the ceiling into the floor and the floor into the ceiling. This architectural gesture may seem aesthetically driven at first; however, the ceiling, an extra surface often liberated from structural duties,¹⁰³ is a far more conducive — and free — surface to (in collaboration with the upright body) propose a more *horizontal* approach to interaction than that of the floor.

"The opaque wall is vertical. Only a vertical wall corresponds to the verticality of a mobile human being, erect, with a frontal gaze."¹⁰⁴

It bares mention that throughout the duration of the exhibition, the manifestation of this horizontal social network between the public, the institution, and the artists came, most significantly, from the suspended walls made of floral foam.¹⁰⁵ From a theoretical standpoint the decision to use floral foam, a malleable and penetrable material, is consistent with Paoli's curatorial statement, which states that "the artists' choice of construction materials themselves evoke possibilities for growth and activity to occur."¹⁰⁶ The reality of this material decision was a physical

collision between the public, the artwork, and the institution. Messages like "Bob + Sue-Ann", "Shhh...", and a love heart circled "Dean" were just a few of the dozens of messages that were carved, by hand, into the surface of the floral foam walls. Some critics, such as Rebecca Travis, seem to have missed the significance of such markings and deemed them to be "graffiti." Instead, I propose an alternate reading of these markings that recall the carved figures inside the caves that László Almásy discovered in his dried oasis. The figures swimming represented in the remote Saharan caves are not dissimilar from Bob and Sue-Ann; both markings represent self-expression — a message that states: "I'm here." As a result, the exhibition becomes a record of human occasions in a time and place. Even *Oasis*, the floral foam manufacturer for the exhibition, seem to have similar intentions by describing their products as representing a "local market — reflecting cultural preferences and traditions."¹⁰⁸ Within the history of art, the activity of marking walls seems to be one of the most instinctually human forms of expression, which becomes one the artists' primary victories in their

102 Ibid.

103 Rem Koolhaas et al., "Ceiling," in *Elements of Architecture* 14. (Italy: Marsilio, 2012), 32.

104 Remy Zaugg, *The Art Museum of My Dreams or A Place for the Work and the Human Being* (Zurich: Sternberg Press, 2013), 16.

105 Floral foam: a rigid, deformable, sponge-like plastic used in floral arrangements to secure the stems of flowers.

106 Julia Paoli, "The Mouth Holds the Tongue" Press Release (Toronto: The Power Plant, 2015).

107 Travis, Rebecca. "The Power Plant's White-Cube Subversion Falls Short," *Canadian Art*, Last Modified: July 27, 2015. <http://canadianart.ca/reviews/the-power-plants-white-cube-subversion-falls-short/>.

108 "About Smithers-Oasis," *Oasis Floral Products*, <http://oasisfloralproducts.com/Ideas/about-smithers-oasis/?parentId=3100002984>.

ability to cultivate an environment (and experience) that, while being at odds with its institutional container, still allows “opportunities for those navigating their space to connect in varying degrees of reciprocity.”¹⁰⁹

4. The Light

Light is provided by certain spherical fruits that bear the name bulbs.¹¹⁰

The lights inside the White Cube are as indicative of its ideology as the walls, floor, or ceiling. The quality of light in a space can tell a great deal of its intentions. Historically, the White Cube used spotlights in order to focus the attention of the viewer only towards the exhibited artwork. However, with the rise of the documentation image, the spotlight was cast aside in favor of the fluorescent tube due to its capacity to provide even lighting for the inevitable image-capture. A dual-site gallery like Appendix Project Space is a good example of the strategy of light. Appendix Space was a Portland-based artist-run gallery

and residency program that ran from summer 2008 to winter 2013. The gallery space double as a “well-lit garage attached to the rear face of a residence. The walls [were] painted stark white, the cement floor a cool grey.” The chosen light bulbs were, of course, fluorescent. “All signs point to a level of seriousness and sophistication reminiscent of institution.”¹¹¹ When Josh Pavlacky and Zachary Davis (original founders of Appendix Space) moved to Portland, they developed an online following fairly quickly by adhering to the architectural grammar of the White Cube in order to obtain its institutional power. David Knowles elaborates on the role of light in Appendix Space by affirming “there’s a coolness and intensity to this light that makes it feel new or distinctly twenty-first century, which is to say distinctly contemporary.”¹¹² It’s a light that uses the power of the White Cube and endows its authority and stability “to the objects and spaces it illuminates, that elevates architecture to post-human status — a glistening and impenetrable world of surfaces created by humans but antagonistic to their presence.”¹¹³ Of course the strategy implemented by Appendix Space is by no means an isolated case, rather it is meant to illustrate the characteristics and specific use of lighting in the White Cube.

109 Julia Paoli, “*The Mouth Holds the Tongue*” Press Release (Toronto: The Power Plant, 2015).

110 Jorge Luis Borges, *The Library of Babel*, (Jaffrey: David R. Godine, 2000), 19.

111 David Knowles, “Full Spectrum,” *Appendix*, (Portland: Conatiner Corps, 2013), 86.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

5. The Window

Although the physical window has been referenced as a structure that is sealed off from the White Cube (so as to not let any of the outside world seep in), the influence that the Internet (a window full of windows) and photography (a medium of windows and mirrors) have had on the White Cube has resulted in a surge of micro galleries. In Toronto alone, there has been a significant rise in micro galleries located in window spaces that face onto sidewalks and streets throughout the city. Starting with Whippersnapper Gallery (est. 2004), then the Howard Park Institute (est. 2010), and most recently Jr. Projects (est. 2014). Manden Murphy, the founder of Jr. Projects, pinpoints his interest in the establishment of a window gallery to “it being the closest a private gallery can be to a public sculpture.”¹¹⁴ Murphy goes on to explain that “the nature of the space flattens the exhibition

because you can’t [...] view it from 360 degrees, you only get 180 [degrees] with Jr. Projects.”¹¹⁵ Key to understanding the influence of the window on contemporary art is the flattened experience Murphy refers to. The experience of approaching the Jr. Projects window at 1446 Dundas Street West was both reminiscent, and a product of, viewing art online. Similar to scrolling through a blog, a window gallery is a mediated experience through a panel of glass that will typically present a singular work to a viewer before they move on to the next activity — be it a Tumblr post or catching the bus. Gene McHugh’s online stream¹¹⁶ seems to be at work again; however, this time the window gallery has decidedly made the act of scrolling, to borrow a term from Duchamp, *corporeal*. After a year of programming, Murphy reimaged Jr. Projects as Roberta Pelan and moved out of his west-end window space into a small White Cube in Toronto’s financial district (320-263 Adelaide Street West). Murphy has leveraged the relocation of his gallery to a space that is more in line with the architectural grammar of the White Cube, in order to increase the perceived legitimacy of his business. As a result, Roberta

114 Manden Murphy, Interview by Parker Kay, April 10, 2015, transcript.

115 Ibid.

116 Gene McHugh. “Wednesday, March 31, 2010.” *Post Internet* (Brescia: LINK Editions, 2011), 111. “The exhibition READY OR NOT IT’S 2010, organized by the Jogging collective and virally announced just one day ago (March 30, 2010), is an open call for artists to post work or link to themselves *en masse* through the stream of the Lost Angeles County Museum of Art’s Facebook Wall right now (today – March 31st, 2010) [...] The art occurring on the LACMA wall right now is not found in the individual posts (as interesting as many of them are), but rather in the visibility of the stream of posts itself – the curatorial gesture by the Jogging.”

Pelan was accepted to exhibit the works of Toronto-born, Los Angeles-based painter Hanna Hur at the 2016 New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA) in New York. Murphy describes the art-fair model to be similar to the experience of the window gallery or the scroll:

"I went to the London art fair Frieze this past winter. And I was kind of getting ready to hate it, but because of how I was educated and raised to view art — which is this experience of scrolling through Contemporary Art Daily,¹¹⁷ scrolling through Mousse¹¹⁸ — that when I was there it was like walking through a scroll, you are walking through these booths; it is immediate and quick, the same as scrolling."¹¹⁹

Not only does this model satisfy the impulse that the contemporary art viewer has to consume works and identify trends with speed, but more importantly it is an economic model that is freed from the physical location of the professional gallery. Gallerists and/or art dealers like Murphy no longer need a large space to legitimize their business when their mass audience is satisfied by the documentation of exhibitions online, and their clientele are satisfied by being able to acquire works quickly and easily at an art fair before moving on to the next booth. This model represents a space that functions

primarily online, like the dual-site galleries; however, unlike the dual-site galleries like Reference Gallery, Preteen Gallery, and Butcher Gallery, which largely remained artist-run, galleries like Roberta Pelan aggressively engage with capital and are able to survive because of the narrowing gap between the individual and the global market.

6. The Doorway

Similar to the window, the doorway, although a necessary architectural feature of the White Cube, is representative of a metaphor for new developments in exhibition design. Today, the doorway represents the artist's and/or curator's desire to exit the confines of the White Cube. It would be irresponsible not to acknowledge the rise in independent curatorial projects that do not seek the institutional, canonizing, walls of the White Cube, but rather engage with a variety of sites as part of a curatorial premise. For instance, Ben Schumacher's curatorial entity Odx.org has held exhibitions on the frozen Saint Lawrence River (2011), at the Leslie Street Spit (2013), and in Celtic pubs (2015),

117 <http://www.contemporaryartdaily.com>

118 <http://moussmagazine.it>

119 Manden Murphy, Interview by Parker Kay, April 10, 2015, transcript.

among other places. Schumacher explains that “most galleries are commercial [...] and the architecture tends to be homogenous and congruent with certain showroom display trends.”¹²⁰ Therefore, when Schumacher “move[s] outside of a commercial gallery, the choice of a space — say a chicken-packaging plant — would become part of the work and reflect on any object that is introduced to that environment.”

¹²¹ In other words, Schumacher uses the space as a material in sculpture. Similarly, the artist-run curatorial project Carrier Arts aims to “re-contextualize art with experimental programming in private, public and online spaces.”

¹²² Without a permanent location and established by Michael Freeman Badour, Matt Sperdakos, Stephanie Hier, Sarah Rose Turner, and Emily Wagnine, Carrier Arts has installed exhibitions in an abandoned massage parlor (2014), a vacant mini-mall unit (2015), and an entirely blue apartment (2015). Exhibitions like *In a Haystack* (2015), organized by Pool House

¹²³ (Connor Crawford), not only go beyond the walls of the White Cube but also, in the construction of the curatorial premise, are aware of how the exhibition will be disseminated and consumed. *In a Haystack* “explores the exhibition as a network, moving each node further and further away until the connect-

ing strings are pulled taught and become visible.”¹²⁴ In what amounted to an exhibition of public artworks installed around Toronto, the only unifying factor, and way to find the exhibited artworks, was through a series of Google Map pins (GPS co-ordinates) dropped at the location that each artist installed their work. Gathered and displayed on a website along with the documentation of each work, the distance between pins becomes compressed online and as a result a cohesive exhibition is created; however, “over time returning to the pinned locations would likely only yield disappointment until only the connecting strings remain.”¹²⁵ These self-organized artist initiatives are an illustration of the fragmentation of the physical architecture of the White Cube; however, with this fragmentation comes distribution. Network culture, both in social, distributive, and technological terms, provides an access point for independent curatorial projects to thrive both in non-traditional exhibition spaces and online.

120 Ben Schumacher, Interview by Parker Kay, March 2-22, 2015, transcript.

121 Ibid.

122 “About.” *Carrier Arts*. Accessed April 8, 2015. <http://carrierarts.org/ABOUT.html>.

123 www.pool-house.org


124 Connor Crawford. “In a Haystack,” *Pool House*, <http://www.pool-house.org/haystack/HaystackText.pdf>.

125 Ibid.

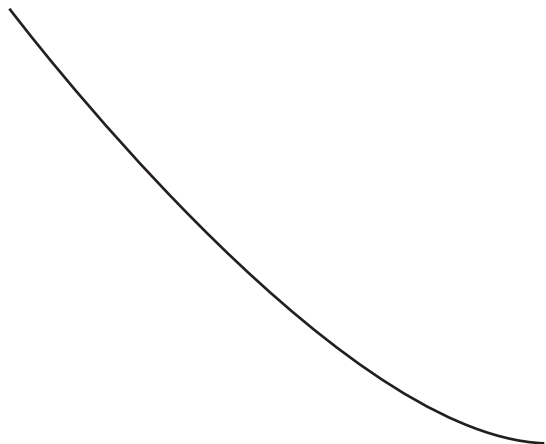
TOTALITY OF EXPERIENCE

By tracing the White Cube's history, through the lens of a Post-Internet condition, it is clear that the ideology that O'Doherty defined in 1976 provided a framework that would endure through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. As the Modernist White Cube began to fade away, the ideology put in place by Le Corbusier (1926), Barr (1936), Seitz (1960), and Szarkowski (1966) began to transform into an ideal. Operating as such, the ideology of the White Cube invited the evaluation of the architectural features of the gallery space and called for the White Cube to emerge as an artistic medium. Through the examination of theories like Deleuze's *actual* and *virtual* (1977), Duchamp's *time and space* (1942), and Celant's *double occupancy* (2013),

the influence of the White Cube on artistic production is clear. Furthermore, the result of this investigation is the compression of physical space through the proliferation of digital space. Largely due to the flattening of the documentation image, the art object and the architectural structure of the White Cube have redeveloped an intimate collaboration — similar to that of the mural painting pre-Renaissance. This collaboration indicates the importance of rendering the effects of network culture corporeally in contemporary art through what Morris called a “totality of experience.”¹²⁶



126 Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture,”
Artforum, no. 2 (February 1966) 234.



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