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THE AESTHETIC INTELLECT: A METHODOLOGY FOR ITS EVOLUTION

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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THE AESTHETIC INTELLECT: A METHODOLOGY FOR ITS EVOLUTION

by

Thomas Gaul Harris

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

1983
STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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This thesis has been approved on the date shown below:

John M. Wilson
Professor of Physical Education

12 April 1983
My B.F.A. Ceramics exhibition was to a large degree, an exploration of the concepts that are the basis for this thesis. The series of ceramic works I made for the exhibit incorporated the use of criticism on the ceramic works themselves, making the commentary indistinguishable from the ceramic form. It was an exploration of the effect that criticism can have on the works of art, and also the effect that the works have on criticism.

Experienced in both theater and dance, I changed my media from ceramics to dance, and later to performance art, while maintaining a strong interest in art-criticism. My interest in art-criticism merged with the performance work (primarily performance art) to establish the basis for my primary working vocabulary as an artist.

Performance art is distinct from the notion of performing arts (that is, of dance, theater, and music). Performance Art is a term used to identify the work by visual artists which is done in a performance context. Rather than using traditional performing techniques, these artists apply their own methods of working in the visual arts to the performance context. I see my transition from the visual arts to the performing and performance arts as parallel to the choice of many visual artists to use performance as a means of artistic expression.

My concern has been to approach art primarily as a method of self-education. Contemporary art-critical writing has been a consistent
influence on my development as a visual and performing artist. I discovered many ideas in art-criticism which were new to me and stimulated my creative intellect. This interaction has provided me with a dialectical support system which has facilitated my artistic growth by creating a critical nerve in my work. The methodology presented in this paper is the result of this symbiotic relationship I have experienced between my personal vision and contemporary art-critical writing.

* * *

Performance art is a term applied to a body of work in the 1960s, which grew out of such movements as happenings. In discussing performance art, I have chosen the perspective of the visual artists. Since the 1960s, artists working in other media (poetry, dance, music, theater) have also explored performance art to express their ideas. For further discussion of performance art as it is currently understood, refer to Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art.

I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, Dr. John Wilson, Wayne Enstice, and Dr. Harold Dixon, for their invaluable editorial assistance and direction.

I would also like to thank the innumerable people who participated in the series of performances which led to the writing of this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank Tex and Lee Harris for their continued encouragement and support.
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This thesis is directed mainly at artists and those interested in the problems of making and perceiving art. The use of the words "artist" and "art" are broadly applicable. They refer primarily to visual artists, performance artists, choreographers and the work that each produces.

The premise for this thesis states that contemporary art is in a continuous state of redefinition. New approaches to art often raise fundamental questions about current standards in art and art making. The issues stimulated by new art work are reflected in the art critical essay form. By reading art critical essays the developing artist can maintain a conscious understanding of current issues in art. This develops the artist's aesthetic intellect, making him more self-critical. Reading criticism enables the artist to utilize new concepts in his own work. This crystallizes the idea for the artist and leads to a progressive development in his work.
CHAPTER 1
THE NEW ART CRITICISM

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to present art-critical information as the basis for a methodology. This methodology is intended to stimulate developing artists intellectually. When used in this thesis, the word "critical" means a judicious evaluation which follows careful examination. The judgment, whether favorable or unfavorable, is always the fruit of serious thought.

The body of writing that is critical about art will be referred to as "art-critical essays." In this form, the critic can share a keen intellectual vision, depth of discernment and judicious evaluation of art with the artist. Insights gained from reading art-critical essays is a transference of concepts from the essays to the artist. This thesis is the product of considerations given to this transference.

An Adversary View

Concerning art and its criticism, there is the view that opposes the writing of criticism. This view characterizes criticism as a parasitic endeavor. Criticism in this view is referred to as a secondary craft, one that is inferior to the work it discusses. Lucy Lippard recognizes this opposing view when she states that art-criticism is "... at heart a second hand metier, entirely dependent on the works
in question" (Lippard 1971, p. 21). Much of this view is based on the need to question on a fundamental level the critic having placed himself in a position to judge. The point is particularly pertinent when criticism is of the kind which evaluates on the basis of *a priori* rather than empirical criteria.

Criticism which uses *a priori* principles for judgment evaluates primarily from preconception and not perception. In *a priori* criticism the value of current iconography is based on successful art which has preceded it. Such use of universal criteria results in formulas for the making of contemporary art.

In contrast, empirical criticism is mainly based on experience and observation with little regard for the traditional systems of evaluating art. The former view, *a priori* criticism, would be unacceptable to those who feel that the function of art is to expand the definition of art and not to repeat it. While artists and critics benefit from the study of traditions in art, they need not adhere to traditions in their own work.

The latter form of criticism, empirical criticism, represents the new criticism. Contemporary critics have become more concerned with art and its immediate effect on the art audience, rather than simply comparing and judging new art on how well the iconography reflects the formal characteristics of art which has preceded it. The methodology was developed in part, to discuss the issue of empirical criticism. I have concluded that empirical criticism is valuable because it is a response to the artist's work. Free of *a priori*
expectations, it enables the artist to perceive the effect that his work has on his art audience.

The new criticism defines in a new way the relationship between art, those who make it, and those who are confronted by it. In addition to dealing with art ideas, the new criticism incorporates into its discussion a concern for the acceptance and response of audiences to new styles which have no recognizable precedent.

The lack of precedence in new art may be accompanied by feelings of anxiousness by those who struggle to understand it. This anxiousness arises from not being familiar or sympathetic with different points of view. The difference between the point of view of the artist and that of the viewer challenges the viewer's own value structures. It is my view that art-criticism provides the information necessary for understanding the current art process. It enables the anxious viewer to bridge the gap between incomprehension and an understanding of new directions in contemporary art.

Critics themselves describe

... the daily frustration and doubt about the role of criticism itself. On the one hand, the core of the matter, the core at which the artist is working, usually evades elucidation; on the other, attempts at elucidation are clearly necessary, providing the art audience, the artist and the would-be artist with an arena in which to disagree and clarify the issues (Lippard 1971, p. 11).

In discussing the dialogue between the artist and the critic, Lippard states:

Lack of such dialogue creates a highly artificial situation. The best that can be said for criticism ... is that it enables the practitioner to participate in, consider at length, and transmit or articulate the issues brought up by the art itself, rather than dumbly 'appreciating' (or dumbly following the artist's lead either, for that matter) (Lippard 1971, p. 25).
Part of the difficulty in current art education and some criticism is that it is "... geared to 'appreciation', to the formation of its audience's taste which rarely meets the intellectual standards necessary to stimulate ideas of any profundity and endurance, ideas that will prolong and intensify the art experience for the viewer" (Lippard 1971, p. 33). Often the viewer determines aesthetic value on the basis of enjoyment and personal preference. (If I like it, it's art; if I don't it's not.)

This gearing to appreciation, or reliance on taste, is one of the primary reasons for recent art's failure of critical nerve. Education of taste develops artists of taste, and art of taste is characterized by less and less thoughtful application of critical or even self-critical concerns. Taste cannot indicate to the artist the complexity or value of his art: "... for to see art in terms of taste is usually to see it without its power of reference or communication of symbolizing and clarifying. Viewed by taste, art becomes exclusive, but also inarticulate" (Kuspit 1979, p. 116). Furthermore, art of taste could not have been made in the critical spirit, for that would question the very foundations on which art of taste was made on. Utilization of critical consciousness would bring art of taste into direct conflict with its own process and would undermine the artist's previous aesthetic motives.

It is my further observation that the viewer's decline of expertise in determining value in a work of art is directly related to his increasing dependence on taste. Reliance on taste has the effect of masking the observer's lack of expertise.
The artist's work is often found to be incompatible with taste. Cultural forces may manipulate the artist into doing work that would nurture mass appeal. Taste frequently resists the introduction of something new. Yet, the integrity of artistic progress is maintained by continuous innovation. Therefore the artist must work critically, independent of taste, so that his art may continue to develop.

The Critical Spirit

In pursuing the function of the critic, one finds that a great deal of responsibility is placed on him by the viewer. The viewer may either expect the critic to explain what the viewer sees, or he may too easily dismiss the critic as a constituent of the art process. Yet, there is an unexpected and unacknowledged responsibility waiting for the art audience. Frequently viewers do not participate enough in intellectual inquiry when contemplating a work of art. Even the most casual observer of art, or reader of criticism has the responsibility to think about that which he encounters. This responsibility can be met by developing what Donald Kuspit calls the "critical spirit." Art-critical essays may very well be the most effective medium for use in developing the critical spirit. This conception of art-criticism is one that places the critical spirit in the forefront. The critical spirit is the spirit that "Modern Art originated in the first place - the spirit of the Avant-garde, the spirit of protest" (Kuspit 1979, p. 115). Articulation of the critical spirit is something that the art critic seems particularly suited for. Kuspit (1979, p. 113) attributes this to the idea that "... the very nature of art (and its criticism)
shows up all systems by flouting the rules that construct them. . . .

Art also seems to give the lie to system, suggesting its limited, inconclusive character, by making clear the conditions, personal and public, of its creation."

Kuspit proposes that the work of art is conceived in the critical spirit (or that it should be). He characterizes the critical spirit as a dialectical process which is made evident in a work of art, and self evident in art criticism. The critical spirit of art is "... a protest against and (a) threat to all systems." Art made in the critical spirit "seems to introduce (if only as a utopian gesture) an alternative to the known order of things; meant as a criticism of that order - meant to put it on an unpredictable path. . . ." (Kuspit 1979, p. 113).

The critical spirit is an implicit criticism of art that has been reduced to a system. Such art (referred to as 'high art' by Kuspit) surrenders the vitality of the original opposition that it was made in when it becomes systematized. Critical opposition to high art is necessitated as it becomes systematized. Indeed, opposition to high art is an organic part in the development of art.

A great deal of art is made in response to works that have preceded it. A case in point is Jasper Johns' response to illusionistic painting done by Abstract Expressionists and others. Such painters used pigment to make something other than itself seen. Johns brought an end to the exclusive use of paint as a medium of transformation by using pigment to paint only what is flat, like flags, numbers and targets. When a three-dimensional effect was desired (as in Target
(1951), the painted illusion of three-dimensionality was replaced with actual three-dimensional material such as plaster. This literal use of materials brought the concerns of painting away from the realm of transformation and directed the artist's concerns towards a confrontation of the nature and limitations of the painting medium.

Because of the staleness that accompanies systematized art styles, Kuspit feels that the job of the critic "... is to show (high art) the quality of its original opposition ... the task of criticism becomes the development of critical consciousness, not the exposition of art" (Kuspit 1979, p. 114). He continues to say that criticism exposes the original opposition in order to articulate the critical spirit "... as an end in itself, ... permanent safeguard against dogmatic closure of consciousness, premature emptying of wakefulness" (Kuspit 1979, p. 114). Rather than being seen as a 'sycophantic courier of art', criticism is viewed as "... an instrument for the protection and articulation of the critical spirit per se..." (Kuspit 1979, p. 114).

An example of art made in the critical spirit is the work of Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp had constructed some particular works to challenge the institution of art (as in his 'ready made' Fountain, and 'ready made aided' Mona Lisa's Mustache). He had not intended for the constructions to be considered works of art; nonetheless, they were eventually conferred that status by the art world, by virtue of their having challenged the limitations of the institution of art.
Duchamp later allegedly 'quit' making art, and took up chess. It might be said that by terminating his participation in the art process, Duchamp withdrew his support from an institution whose orthodoxy was seldom questioned. But to say that Duchamp 'quit' making art may be a simplistic interpretation. These actions of 'quitting' have developed a tremendous mythology around Duchamp. Duchamp's actions may be viewed as an elaborate staging of events intended to draw attention to the nature and limitations of art. In so doing, Duchamp showed the institution of art as more elastic than it initially seemed to be from an a priori point of view. When examined in terms of artistic intentions this latter interpretation seems more consistent with Duchamp's earlier works. "Quitting art" may have been his consummate art work, in view of the works' effect on the art audience.

Criticism itself must also avoid its own systematization. "One cannot set up critical systems when the recent past is constantly altered by the immediate present" (Lippard 1971, p. 31). Lippard describes the role of the critic as a "descriptive" and not a "prescriptive" one. "Criticism has little to do with consistency; for consistency has logical systems, whereas criticism is or should be dialectical and thrive on contradiction and change" (Lippard 1971, p. 25). Views in opposition to criticism would be welcomed, since opposition induces change and dialectical criticism thrives on change.

The Monograph: A New Aesthetic

Gregory Battcock, in his Preface to The New Art - A Critical Anthology, points out that the breakdown of traditional distinctions
between art forms on the one hand and the need to think in terms of new definitions on the other resulted in a new critical form, the monograph. The monograph form can be dated from a publication on Cezanne by Roger Fry in 1917. A monograph "... presents not only a direct confrontation with the new art in question, but also a confrontation with its cultural, moral and social logic" (Battcock 1973, p. xx).

Works of art previously were defined in terms of their compatibility with established stylistic categories such as Primitivism, Romanticism and Expressionism. This method was not able to encompass the new developments that came with rapid stylistic changes. This practice of codification was replaced with the use of the monograph. Customarily a monograph on a single artist combines an analysis "... of specific art works with a philosophical or theoretical contribution to the new aesthetic" (Battcock 1973, p. xx).

The monograph correlates personal discoveries of different artists, thereby making it possible for each to know about the others' work. "A group of artists may begin to work spontaneously and independently in a certain direction, responding to as yet undefined issues, without any conscious influence between them..." (Lippard 1971, p. 27).

The critic's observations and correlations in the monograph "relies heavily on close and direct contact with the artist and art objects with which it is concerned" (Battcock 1973, p. xxii). From

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1The new aesthetic may be defined as the combination of the efforts of the critic with those of the artist. Battcock states that the monograph "... is perhaps the major vehicle for the presentation of basic ideas in the field of aesthetics today" (Battcock 1973, p. xx).
this experience the critic is able "... to document the emergence of a common sensibility or style. As the style becomes more wide-spread and visible, the difference between the works and intentions becomes more important" (Lippard 1971, p. 27).

Lucy Lippard sees the art-critical essay and current art as existing in,

A continuous lattice of interrelating unlike elements. The connecting grid consists of the ideas and articulations that a new art can force from a constant observer - a substantiation of the 'ideas in the air' and their relation to the unlike objects - the art. The critical lattice shows not only how the various arts looked when they were first seen, but their interrelationships and possibilities at the time; it can chart the structural growth of these possibilities (Lippard 1971, p. 27).

This form of art-criticism, the monograph, "... constitutes excellent source material for a survey of the new art in all its various forms...", it is "... a direct approach to living art" (Rattcock 1973, p. xxii).

The Role of the Critic

It is often difficult to distinguish the effect of the artist's work from that of critical essays written about the work. It must be recognized that art-critical essays have significantly contributed to the formulation of aesthetic and theoretic foundations of art, especially since the monograph by Fry on Cezanne.

The critic's articulation of the similarities of concepts occurring simultaneously in separate artists is what includes him in the process of defining the new aesthetic. Art can no longer be seen accurately in terms of the past. The previous critical vocabulary,
based on a priori criteria, has changed as the distinctions between the art media have broken down. Composition, style and technique are no longer the primary basis for evaluation. With artists exploring the extensions of the mediums, empirically perceived ideas began to dominate in defining the new aesthetic. The critic recognized the need to think in terms of new definitions of art, ones which are concerned with the nature and limitations of an art object. These new definitions themselves are based on the recognition of the similarities of ideas held by various artists working in different forms and styles.

Gregory Battcock describes the role and effect of the critic "... as essential to the development -- indeed, the identification -- of art as the artist himself ... they are as new as the art they describe. ..." (Battcock 1973, p. xvii). Battcock continues to point out the new role of critics as that of interpreter, and that critics "... do more than simply describe or even define their subject; they are actively and consciously engaged in the preparation of a new aesthetic, so much so that it is often difficult to disassociate their work from the art it purports to evaluate" (Battcock 1973, p. xvii). Battcock proposes that "... art of our time simply could not exist without the efforts of the critic" (Battcock, 1973, p. xviii), and although the critic is not replicating the works of art, he "assumes some of the concern for clarification abandoned by the artist in his effort to leave himself free to experiment. ..." (Battcock 1973, p. xviii).

There are some critics who see criticism as the equivalent to art, or as a substitute which is actually superior to the art it
evaluates. Others feel that criticism has been made obsolete because the artists themselves accomplish the functions of the critic. Lawrence Alloway is an example of the former view, and Joseph Kosuth is an example of the latter. My point of view is that more note should be taken of the critic and his work - not in spite of, but because of these controversial views. Rather than being seen as a definitive view of art and taste in art, art-critical essays should be seen as the arena where a dialectical discussion can occur between the artist and critic. The artist's awareness of this particular form of interaction (that is, of the dialogue which occurs in the art world) can precipitate his own critical development, particularly in formative years. Indeed, like a work of art, the quality of a critical essay may be judged by how effectively it changes or expands our aesthetic values.

Critical Subjectivity

The "new" criticism is subjective in nature. "Just as there is no absolute truth accessible to man's mind, so also is there no objective attitude to a work of art" (Hodin 1956, p. 223). Therefore, it can be seen that "before pronouncing on the work of art, criticism pronounces on the critic himself" (Hodin 1956, p. 230).

This discussion of subjectivity in criticism clarifies for the reader that critical literature (and in particular, art-critical essays) is the writer's individual reflection of thought on his experience of the external stimuli. We, the readers, get the benefit of the critic's attention to his perception, which can help us to understand our perceptions and our reactions to them.
Even formalist criticism, which attempted to "appear impeccably truth like, even quasi-scientific" (Marmer 1979, p. 70) in its dissection of structure and style, cannot be considered entirely free of subjective filtering of information. Formalist analysis "called attention to the individual properties of works, artists and periods, and forced the mind and eye to work together" (Lippard 1971, p. 32): a commendable effort, but one than cannot necessarily be labeled objective. Lippard states; "... objective criteria always boil down to the indefinable subjective prejudices, which plagues the art of writing about the immediate present" (Lippard 1971, p. 12).

Nancy Marmer provides the reminder that criticism is a literary form, which in itself has subjective ramifications. "To recognize that criticism is a literary genre means first of all to acknowledge the fictional character of the critical essay" (Marmer 1979, p. 69). Although criticism is what Marmer terms an "exegetical fiction," it is still a cohesive and satisfying discourse on art. "A discourse ... that in spite of its fictional status, has the power to convince the reader of its validity" (Marmer 1979, p. 70).

If criticism is a literary genre, then there is no reason why it should not utilize all the resources and devices of a complex literary form. This does not mean that criticism adhering to a particular stylistic form is pedantic in nature. Indeed, the form gives the essayist the occasion to find his own characteristic voice. The singularity of the critical genre can be evidenced by how the "distinctive voice and sensibility of the author" (Marmer 1979, p. 71) speaks through this literary format. Although we may not need to go so far as to say that
criticism is the highest form of autobiography (Oscar Wilde), it may be considered "autodidactic, a demonstration of the extent to which the art discussed is stimulating" to oneself (Lippard 1971, p. 27).

The effect of the author's personality on criticism is seen in the wide range of established major critical styles, from formalism to a precursor of modern subjective criticism, The Geneva School of Literary Criticism. Inherent to the Geneva School of Literary Criticism is the idea that "the distinction between the mental universe of the artist, his work, and the subjective reaction of the responding reader/viewer tends to be blurred (or wilfully ignored)" (Marmer 1979, p. 71). Both examples, as well as the continuum between them indicate a subjective interaction with the art work by the critic.

The subjective nature of art-criticism parallels that of the art process. "Criticism is not a purely rational activity; it is a part of the creative process of the art itself" (Hodin 1956, p. 225) and the artist himself must have developed critical capabilities. Nancy Marmer observes that critical discourse is in fact "neither more nor less independent a form than poetry or painting. The critic's relationship to his 'raw material', the art work, roughly parallels the artist's relationship to the undigested experience of life. Each uses his material for his own ends" (Marmer 1979, p. 69).

Marmer sees criticism as an "autotelic performance," where description and interpretation are knit together in the text. "... If description offers the performing critic the widest field in which to demonstrate the shaping power of a personal style, then interpretation permits him to manipulate the necessary freight of the ideology
and cultural information essential to a serious critical essay" (Marmer 1979, p. 71).

Essays on The "Essential Triad"

The interactions between the artist, critic and observer have had a pervasive influence in contemporary art. Gregory Battcock has gathered these constituents under the rubric the "Essential Triad." Several critics have found it necessary and pertinent to write general essays that deal specifically with the "essential triad." Because of the "... different levels of artistic appreciation and commitment" (Battcock 1973, p. xviii) in different individuals, the critic becomes an essential part of the triad. Criticism has an indispensable educational value. It is capable of engendering the "ability and willingness to respond to the art of today" (Battcock 1973, p. xxiii) in the artist and the observer.

The relationship of the critic to the artist and observer is a sympathetic one. Roger Fry states, in "An Essay on Aesthetics," that "in our reaction to a work of art there is something more - there is the consciousness of purpose, the consciousness of a peculiar relation of sympathy with the man who made this thing in order to arouse precisely the sensations of experience" (Fry 1924, p. 20). The critic takes his subjective experience and understanding of the artist and transfers that information to the viewer in a sympathetic manner. "Sympathy is the education of the spectator from the point of view of the artist" (Kandinsky 1977, p. 4). This education is based on the critic's direct contact with the artist. "... The critic becomes
close enough to the art-making experience to understand and tolerate as well as admire the whole complex situation in which the artist operates" (Lippard 1971, p. 25).

The critic is a disseminator of information. He helps the viewer to experience meaning by "... naming the concepts experienced in works of art" (Wilson 1973, p. 247) when they are not self evident.

J. P. Hodin states that "The art critic is dependent on the problems which encounter the artist in this work. ... Only living contact with the artist can establish unequivocally what he had in mind" (Hodin 1956, p. 222). This direct contact, which as Hodin has said, results in "living criticism" between the art critic and the artist, "makes possible a critical confrontation of the intentions of the artist with the work in which he has realized them" (Hodin 1956, p. 221). He further comments that "Every critical question can penetrate to the essentials of the problems of art" (Hodin 1956, p. 222).

New Art and Public Understanding

In the face of rapid and radical change, the art critic's major preoccupation must be "to establish criteria flexible enough to encompass. ..." that change (Lippard 1971, p. 23). Rapid change has become, in its own right, a tradition in art and is very likely the reason behind the rift between the new art and the public's understanding of it. Leo Steinberg points out that artists, when confronted with other artists' work, are at that moment part of the perceiving public (the artist-observer). They may also have difficulty in comprehending the new art, especially if it does not coincide with any previous experience of art.
The difficulty in comprehending the new art has become the topic of several essays. Steinberg in "Contemporary Art and the Plight of its Public," describes "the shock of discomfort or bewilderment, or the anger or the boredom which some people always feel and all people sometimes feel, when confronted with an unfamiliar new style" (Steinberg 1973, p. 209). Georges Braque epitomized the feeling of aesthetic sacrifice that people experience when he confronted Picasso's _Demoiselles d'Avignon_ in 1908: "It was... as though we were supposed to exchange our usual diet for one of tow and paraffin" (Steinberg 1973, p. 211). Speaking for an uninitiated audience confronting a new work, Steinberg says, "I am challenged to estimate the aesthetic value of the artwork but nothing I've ever seen can teach me how this is to be done. I am alone with this thing and it's up to me to evaluate it in the absence of available standards. The value which I shall put on this painting tests my personal courage. Here I can discover whether I am prepared to sustain the collision with a novel experience...." (Steinberg 1973, p. 223).

By personally confronting novel art, the viewer develops ideas empirically. In this way he fulfills his responsibility as a viewer; the viewer takes an active role in defining the new aesthetic. If he were applying previously established standards, he could not have made the contribution.

The "collision with a novel experience" has its effect on the self; "Trying to formulate certain meanings seen in this art... is a kind of self-analysis that a new image can throw you into" (Steinberg 1973, p. 224). One must come into conflict with the work in order for...
the work's effect to be most fully realized. This necessitates that a degree of sacrifice of treasured aesthetic values occurs in confronting a new work. This sacrifice of aesthetic values leads the viewer to confront new art in the "critical spirit" described by Kuspit. He says, "It is only when the public experiences the work in critical opposition to it - as a criticism of - that the work will have and make its point" (Kuspit 1979, p. 115). The artist-viewer's coming to grips with his reactions to new works of art may be the first step in extending his own consciousness.

Attention to works of art not to one's liking, and attention to one's patterns of attention, is to focus one's critical consciousness on the work and also on one's reaction to the work. This attention to one's patterns of attention allows the observer to evaluate his reaction to a work of art and to see the significance of the work in spite of personal taste. It is this critical confrontation with one's awareness that effects change. The work of art and the art-critical essay may both operate as the catalyst for that result.

The Critical Impulse

Lippard states that in each essay there is "... the invitation to dialogue implicit in good criticism" (Lippard 1971, p. 33). The critical dialogue provides the "... active pleasure of participation in intellectual pleasures" (Lippard 1971, p. 33). Lippard adds that critical information is a communication shared, a dialectic in which the critic "... supplies an arena, in which my own and others' opinions can meet" (Lippard 1971, p. 33).
Lippard states that the critic, like the artist, is involved in a basically self-indulgent activity. The artist's first responsibility is to himself: "the artist does not set out to change the visible world or reform taste; his expansion of how people see or his comments on the world are by-products of the initial impulse to make art. . . . Difficult art generates ideas and issues difficult to articulate. If criticism really comes to grips with these ideas, it is not likely to be particularly entertaining" (Lippard 1971, p. 34).

The critic's impulse, then, is to serve the ends of the critical spirit in general rather than art itself. It is my view that criticism serves the critical spirit of opposition which in turn supports art. "The health of the critical spirit is more important than the health of art - or rather is responsible for the health of art" (Kuspit 1979, p. 117). Critical consciousness then, is vital to the artist. This is the main justification for developing an awareness of art-critical essays.

In the next chapter, the methodology I propose is intended to make use of the critic's intellectual encounter with the ideas provoked by difficult new art. The interaction with art-critical information is intended to make the reader a well informed, committed audience of the critic and of art, so that he will be capable of agreeing or disagreeing with any stated position critically, and therefore intelligently.
A METHODOLOGY FOR THE EVOLUTION OF AESTHETIC INTELLECT

One might observe that any phenomenon beyond one's own experience is beyond one's image-making ability. The individual's vision of life, therefore, might be limited by his self-image. If the individual's self image does not evolve, his vision of life does not expand, and a condition of stasis occurs.

The static condition in the work of an artist is particularly evident because such works reflect the extent to which the artist has maintained an unchanged self-image, even when confronted with new experiences. This can be particularly noticeable when viewing, in retrospect, a substantial portion of an artist's work.

In the following discussion, a methodology is presented which uses art-critical essays as a source for supporting and expanding the artist's vision of life and therefore his manner of expression. The methodology is a mechanism by which change in the artist can be effected.

The methodology is constructed of three elements: (1) conscious perception; (2) determination of significance; (3) utilization of critical information. It is suggested that this methodology, by which critical information is processed, is an efficient manner of approaching the process of change. This methodology, understood in its basic structure, will now be explained more fully in terms of its implications.
Conscious Perception

Conscious perception is the process of becoming aware of critical information and its symbolic potential in various contexts. Conscious perception is experience, and experience induces change.

Conscious perception involves the artist's intellectual engagement with art-critical essays. Ideally, the more art-critical essays read by the artist, the more intellectual engagement there will be. The critical essays serve as the whetstone for making more acute observations about art and art-criticism.

Determination of Significance

Determination of Significance is the second step in this methodology; it is intended to enable the reader to comprehend the relationship between the critic's point of view and that of the artist.

Determination of significance provides the artist with an ability to assign meaning to perceived phenomena, such as art-critical essays and works of art. This ability grows and changes relative to the artist's experience of art-critical essays. From this experience, the artist is able to interpret what he currently perceives.

Such perceived phenomena are understood on many different levels. The artist can struggle to understand what the ideas expressed are, or he might find that his interpretation exceeds what the writer had intended. This means that the critic's intention and the artist-observer's interpretation are independent processes. As in works of art, meaning is not determined solely by what the critic intended, but also by what the reader interprets. Indeed, meanings could multiply by the number of people reading the essay.
The artist's level of understanding increases as more experience is attained. By active inquiry into art-critical essays, the artist increases his ability to interpret successfully the artists and art works the critics refer to. The artist-observer is able to discover content that he was previously unaware of.

In order to determine the significance of an art-critical essay the artist must: approach the essay with an awareness that the essay might have the potential for changing his thinking; endeavor to understand the essay's content in terms of the critic's point of view; and consider his own point of view in relationship to the critic's.

The readers' point of view is established by digesting one or several essays on a particular subject. His point of view alters and becomes more defined with more exposure to art-critical essays. When reading a new essay, the artist-observer's accumulated point of view is challenged by the critic, who gives the artist other points of view to consider. Therefore, determination of significance is the process of understanding the critic's expressed point of view in relationship to the effect it has on the artist's developing point of view on that subject.

Utilization of Critical Information

There are two ways that the artist may utilize the critical information derived from art-critical essays. First, there may be an unconscious reflection of change in the artist's work. Change is a productive result which enables the artist to expand his self image and therefore his image-making ability. This process has the potential for
creating the opposition that induces change in the artist's conceptual capacity. Since conceptual capacity influences the shaping and understanding of ideas and their expressive forms, this change will also affect the artist's art-making process.

Second, the artist may deliberately use ideas derived from the reading of essays as the conceptual framework for his own creative work. The resulting effort combines the artist's expressive capabilities with the ideas derived from the critical essay. Both the derived idea and the artist's vocabulary alter to meet the demands of their assimilation in expressive form. The resulting expression reflects the conceptual synthesis of the artist and his reading. The next chapter will serve to illustrate the use of critical information in this manner.

The continual exposure to critical information allows the artist to understand several points of view. This becomes imperative if he wishes to develop critically in his own work, or in viewing others' work. Art-critical essays provide the artist with multiple perspectives on recent art. This increases the artist's understanding; increased understanding improves the quality of the artist's own work.

In the following chapter, two performance works, which I directed-choreographed, will be discussed according to the methodology that has been presented. The works were performed in the Dance Studio theater of The University of Arizona. "Contrapuntal Structures" was produced September 26, 1981, and "Experiential Icons" was produced on November 21, 1981. Videotapes of the productions are in the possession of the choreographer-author.
CHAPTER 3

APPLICATION OF METHODOLOGY

This chapter will serve to describe my use of art-critical essays in the hope that it will provide a basis for action by other artists.

Contrapuntal Structures

Contrapuntal structures is the initial performance in which I used information from art-critical essays. I shall discuss the ideas which I derived from essays by Barbara Rose, Frantisek Deak, and Bonnie Marranca in the context of my synthesizing them in performance.

The Use of Critical Reactions to Art as the Subject Matter for the Artists' Work

My critical reactions to art were used for my performance of "Contrapuntal Structures" in the following way. Three layers of plastic were hung across the stage, parallel to the proscenium. One in front of the other, they were separated by four-foot open passageways. As performers moved in between these layers, others wrote critical commentaries on the plastic using the bodies of the moving performers as supports to write on. The texts for the written commentary were taken from essays by Barbara Rose, Mel Bochner, Lucy Lippard, Michael Fried, Robert Morris, and others. An additional performer began to cut the plastic and the criticism written on it by tracing
the shapes of the moving performers as they progressed across stage.

This continued until all the plastic was cut from the stage.

My use of critical commentary parallels that of the Minimalist approach. In discussing Minimalism, Barbara Rose states that "the painters and sculptors I am discussing here (Flavin, Andre, Judd, Lewitt, and Morris) are aware not only of the cycle of styles, but of levels of meaning, of influences, of movements, and of critical judgments . . . the apparent simplicity of these artists' work was arrived at through a series of complicated, highly informed decisions, each involving the elimination of whatever was felt to be non-essential (Rose 1968, p. 285).

Rose uses Morris's work to exemplify the Minimalist sensibility. She observes that Morris's performance works "seem to represent a running commentary on his sculpture as well as a running criticism of art interpretation" (Rose 1968, p. 284). Of the artists discussed by her, Robert Morris is considered the most "overtly didactic."

The use of critical writing in "Contrapuntal Structures" is a literal statement about criticism's effects on performance. Indeed, the plastic sheets and the criticism written on them became the prominent visual element as they both obscured and revealed the performance occurring behind them. It was my intention to draw attention to the prominent role criticism has in determining the audience's perception of works of art.
The Use of the Artist's Own Thinking Process as Subject Matter in His Art

The use of the thinking process as subject matter has been extensively used by Richard Foreman. Foreman, the director, writer and performer for the Ontological Hysterical Theater, is described as a philosopher who uses theater performance to dramatize his thinking processes.

In the introduction to "The Theater of Images" Bonnie Marranca states that "Foreman's focal point is the dual subject of art and the audience's perception of it. He challenges the popular notion of the acquisition of knowledge about an art object in a dialectical framework that is highly personal" (Marranca 1977, p. 1). By focusing on the creation of art and the audience's perception of it, Foreman shifts the dialogue from its normal, fixed position behind the proscenium arch to a dialogue between the audience and stage.

In "Contrapuntal Structures" the dialogue moved from its traditional position on stage to between the audience and the stage. The intention here was to present both my intention and formulation of intention as the subject matter.

In "Contrapuntal Structures" I attempted to present my thought processes and intentions about the performance at the same time the performance was occurring. During the performance, I wrote continuously on a blackboard situated downstage left of the proscenium. I expressed my intentions and thoughts about the performance as it progressed.
The Treatment of Information in an Objective Manner

The objectification of the art process in "Contrapuntal Structures" was accomplished by using theatrical devices in a way which drew attention to their identity as devices. The devices were derived from performances by Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman, and were consciously used to achieve a more non-theatrical, objective effect. The devices used were horizontally zoned layers of space, slow motion, and framing devices.

The Use of Horizontally Zoned Layers of Space. I attempted to achieve a juxtaposition and assemblage of performed images by using the notion of horizontally zoned layers of activity (see Fig. 1). As one activity overlapped with another, the images became more complex visually. Through accretion, as many as five layers of activity occurred simultaneously on stage.

Frantisek Deak describes the use of zoned lanes of space (which run parallel to the proscenium) as the prominent spatial device in Robert Wilson's work. Wilson, an experimental theatre practitioner, uses this zoned layering of space to produce a juxtaposition and assemblage of images which move as separate activities across stage.

It seemed to me that by the use of such a device I would be able to objectify the expressive meaning in each of the nine independent works which were overlapped in "Contrapuntal Structures." Wilson's use of zoned space allowed me to deal with the material in a factual manner. The audience's attention was directed to the effect that the overlapped
Figure 1. Contrapuntal structures. -- Floor plan: seven layers of activity.

1. **Sand** — Directed by Della Davidson (30')

2. **ReQ** — (by Ronn Smith) Directed by Thom Harris, Della Davidson, Gail Chodera (10')

3. **Mathematics** — (by Hrant Hianak) Directed by Karen Hegyi, Marceline Wray (15')

4. **Pronouns** — (by Jackson Maclow) Directed by Thom Harris (14')

5. **Big Welling** — (by Paul P-ups) Directed by Thom Harris (5')

6. **Lessness** — (by Samuell Beckett) Directed by Grace Fryberger (2')

7. **Act without words** — (Samuell Beckett) Directed by Thom Harris (12')
use of space had on their ability to perceive imagery and expressive meaning.

By increasing the complexity of the visual scene I hoped to direct the audience's attention to their own patterns of attention. These patterns of attention began to break down as the complexity of the images increased. Use of such a device enabled the audience to perceive in a more objective, less expressive manner. In so doing, it prompted a change in their habits of perception.

I also found that by proposing the use of Wilson's zoned spatial structure, I had to take on more objective concerns as a choreographer. Since the imagery was primarily determined by the arbitrary juxtaposition of layers of activity, I had to relinquish my control of directorial focus, which I had routinely used before.

Use of Slow Motion. In a particular zone of activity in "Contrapuntal Structures" slow motion was employed for a period of thirty minutes. The motion was slow enough that movement was difficult to see occurring.

Slow motion is a prominent characteristic of Wilson's theater. The reasons why slow motion is used by Wilson is described by Deak: "... it changes the perceptual habits of the spectators by creating a tension between the speed of our perception and the speed of the action. In extremely slow movement, the image is not grasped in continuity, but is contemplated as a continuous present. ... It creates a specific state of mind among the performers as well as altering their relationship to the audience" (Deak 1974, p. 71).
The result of using slow motion in "Contrapuntal Structures" was that the viewer often did not realize when movement was occurring. It only became evident when the viewer would look away, and later referred back to find that the positions of the performers moving in slow motion had changed. The viewer was prompted to re-evaluate his ability to perceive the unexpected occurrence of change.

The Use of Framing Devices. A video camera and monitor were used in "Contrapuntal Structures" to frame arbitrarily actions on stage. The images of the framed actions were presented to the audience by a monitor placed downstage right of the proscenium. The camera was placed upstage right of the performing area, and was situated on a 20-foot high scaffolding. The point of view of the video monitor was dramatically different than that of the audience. Certain actions were shown in close-up, isolating them from others that were taking place. This made the other parts of the performance recede in perceptual importance.

The images taped by the video camera were simultaneously viewed by the audience. This direct feedback allowed the audience to view the documentation of the performance in the context of the performance, rather than as an independent activity.

In Foreman's performances, Marranca states, the events on stage were bracketed. Foreman used picture frames to direct focus to a particular place on stage. Foreman also used a tableau as a background which enabled a single, minute action to be focused on by the audience.

These techniques achieved a focus similar to close-ups in film. Of Foreman's cinematic use of space Marranca says, "Time is experienced
in terms of changing spatial relationships . . . the continual rearticulation of space . . . complicates perception of movement and disorients the audience, which must accordingly change its field of vision to accommodate the variety of spatial configurations" (Marranca 1977, p. 3).

Implicit in the use of video as a framing device is the redefining of the use of space between the audience and the subject of the video. The aesthetic distance can be expanded and contracted, by altering the audience's perception of the fixed position between themselves and the performance. As Marranca points out, this added variable complicates the audience's perception of the performance.

The select scope of the video monitor contributes a directorial focus to viewers who may be confused about where to look. The video monitor directs the audience's attention to a particular point on stage, but the monitor's point of view is a contradictory one, because it is from a drastically different perspective. The monitor actually draws attention to the position of the camera as well as to the action it is focused on, creating a triangular relationship between the audience, camera, and performance.

At the end of "Contrapuntal Structures," I wrote the following on the blackboard: "I hereby certify that this performance has no aesthetic value whatsoever. Signed, Thom Harris - after Robert Morris." (Morris had provided a similar denial of status in one of his works.) By certifying my work, I hoped to bring certain ideas to the audience's attention. First, if indeed an artist's work is art because he has conferred that status upon it, then would the inverse also be true? This would, then, question whether the artist can negate the aesthetic
significance of his work by declaration. Furthermore, the Minimalists were not so much concerned with beauty, as they were with meaning and the elements essential to a work of art.

Minimalists such as Morris explored the difference between factual and expressive meaning in their art work. Rose comments that it is this kind of objectified content that preoccupies many of the artists she discusses. These concerns were those which also concerned critics and aestheticians. Morris's work exemplifies the artist's shift from the use of artistic conventions to facilitate expressive meaning, to their approaching art more in the manner of a philosophical proposition. The artist rejects the subjective and the personal in favor of his treatment of content in a more factual and objective manner.

Experiential Icons

The primary influences on my performance, "Experiential Icons, #'s 1-6," were essays by Robert Morris and Rosalind Krauss, and works by Steve Paxton, Alan Kaprow and Chris Burden. The ideas in "Experiential Icons, #'s 1-6" stem from my researching these sources and finding their similarities.

In "The Present Tense of Space," Morris proposes a sculptural form based on the experience of physical space, as opposed to traditional sculpture which is based on the perception of an image-oriented object.

Morris notes that each type of sculpture corresponds to one of two fundamental types of perception: "... that of temporal space
and that of static, immediately present objects - the I or extant experience\(^1\), which is essentially imageless, corresponds to the perception of space unfolding in the continuous present. The me, a retrospective constituent parallels the mode of object perception" (Morris 1978, p. 72).

Extant experience, then, can only be experienced in the time which is taken to perceive space. Morris comments that "the focus had to shift from objects to space to confront the kind of being which is conscious but prior to the reconstituted consciousness of mental space" (Morris 1978, p. 80).

The Synthesis of Sculptural and Architectural Form

I had two intentions in creating "Experiential Icons." The first was to define the architectural effect of human presence on space. Several performers used bricks to build a circular enclosure around a particular performer. The performer used sign language to communicate her thoughts. The brick structure was constructed during the performance and allowed only enough space for the performer to continue her gestures. As the building of the columnar structure progressed, it concealed the performer's gesturing from the audience's view. By observing the structure being built, the audience was aware of the performer's presence even when the bricks obscured her from their view.

The density and angularity of the bricks was contrasted with the roundness of the human form. The bricks were stacked upon each

\(^1\) Extant is defined by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as "currently or actually existing" G. & C. Merriam Webster, Springfield, Massachusetts 1973, p. 405.
other, but were not cemented in place. The close proximity of the gesturing performer to the wall prompted the audience to feel anxious about the bricks falling and injuring the performer.²

My decision to use bricks was based on the need to correlate the space used by the performer with a constructed object which concretely defines human presence. This activity was prompted by assimilating some of Morris and Krauss's views on sculpture and architecture.

In "John Mason and Post-modernist Sculpture," Rosalind Krauss observes that in the use of brick there "... is the undeniable connection of the material to building and hence, to the architectural. It becomes a medium, that is, in which it is possible to think the sculptural in relation to architecture without any conflict" (Krauss 1979, p. 125). Krauss discusses both sculptural and architectural experience. She states that "sculpture has conventionally been seen within the logic of the monument. It was used for the ritual marking of the site, whether sacred or secular, and its form was representational" (Krauss 1979, p. 121). She also notes that sculpture employed human figures or abstract symbolic forms, and was set off from its surroundings due to its verticality and mass.

Krauss describes architectural experience as "... the possible occupation of an interior, a center from which the purposeful arrangement or organization of spaces can be initiated and read." Architecture, then, evokes immediate spatial experience. Sculpture is related to imagery, and elicits a detached, reflective experience. An

²The use of peril in performance will be discussed later in relation to Chris Burden's work.
art work which adheres to the logic of both these conventions (architecture and sculpture) creates a polarity which stimulates the audience's perception.

My second objective was to explore the enduring polarity between spatial experience and remembered imagery. Sign Language was used because it seemed to be the consummate synthesis of gesture and linguistics. Sign language allows mental space to be articulated in actual space. It was also a visual gestural notation of the philosophical attitude held by the signing performer. These thoughts also coincided with the ideas I was exploring in the performance.

The shared element of extant and reflective experience is duration. Both are operations; the experience, whether spatial or mental, happens in the time it takes for the operation to occur.

Morris describes reflective experience (that is, imagery) as the past tense of reality. It is my view that images are representative of, and refer to a past tense of, reality; but that the perception of imagery occurs in the present tense of experience.

In "Experiential Icons" my intention was to present the performer signing as extant experience, and the building of the architectural form as reflective as well as extant experience. These operations reflect mental activity articulated in the present tense of space. Both operations are real and representative presentations of the relationship between human activity and reflection on human activity.
The Historical Signification of Space and Human Action

For "Experiential Icons" I used a Polaroid camera to record the action. The performers were instructed to execute a series of "real" and "imagined" movements while a photographer photographed them individually, and taped the photo to the spot where the action occurred. The performers left the space as their photo replaced them on stage. In this manner the site used by the performer was marked as well as the action he was executing at the time. The performance concluded with a photograph being taken of the audience.

In an introduction to his interview with Alan Kaprow, Robert C. Morgan says, "Performance art is an area that literally 'seeks' imagery in order to be recalled and to communicate a sense of being in 'real time' to the viewer. Hence, photographs are used to crystallize the components of the performance into a documentary presentation" (Morgan 1979, p. 52).

Polaroid photographs are image-oriented, memory-inducing objects normally used for the purpose of documentation. For "Experiential Icons" the action of photographing and the photographs themselves were presented as iconographical elements integral to the performance. Photographing the performers presents an image of documenting in "real time" or in the present tense of activity.

Being photographed and the photograph enlarges the performer's field of awareness. The performer is aware of being photographed.

Imagined movement; movement which is caused only by thinking about executing certain actions. The performer forms a mental image of certain movements, but does not execute them.
This influences his thinking and his performance. The documentation occurs at the same time and is a significant part of the performance. In addition, the photograph left in the performers' place represents the performer, the action he was executing, and the time in which it happened.

In "Pose," a performance work by Kaprow, photographs were taken of various actions and attached to the spot where the action took place. In this way, Kaprow used the photograph as a sculptural element. The image of the photograph provides a surrogate human presence frozen in time and space, and its placement gives the photograph the sculptural function of the "ritual marking of a site" (Krauss 1979, p. 121).

The photographs left in "Pose" and "Experiential Icons" possess historical significance; they exist as artifacts of past human actions, which reflect thought. The photograph provides significance for the spot it occupies; significance that the spot would not have had were the photo not present. This makes the viewer look at the site more in terms of human presence and less in terms of the site independent of human action. The photo refers to the past tense of reality, and therefore refers to the absence of action. It is as if the action depicted in the photograph should be occurring at the time the photo is viewed. The photograph refers to the present tense of experience only at the moment it is taken. After that moment, it evokes a memory of the action. This is the primary reason for photographs being taken during the performance of "Experiential Icons."

The final photograph taken of the audience served two functions. First, it was an indication that the performance had ended, and that
they could leave. Second, the photograph linked the spectators to the piece in the same way the performers were linked.

The Use of Mental Activity to Stimulate Movement and Heighten Spatial Perception

In an attempt to visualize mental activity, or the operation of mental space, I contrasted actual movement with imagined movement. The performers were instructed to imagine themselves executing a movement when the number "one" was called. They were to imagine themselves doing another movement when "two" was called. When "three" was called, they were to execute a specified movement.

In using this structure, I found that the first two instructions caused subtle shifts of weight with minute body adjustments that probably corresponded directly to the imagined movements. This was contrasted with the third instruction, which was more overt and served to release the tension created by the first two commands.

This structure was initially used by Steve Paxton in "Untitled" which is described by Don Mcdonnagh:

It was performed in three movements... The first instruction to the performers was to imagine that they were going to step forward on the one leg and then to imagine that they were going to step forward on the other leg. The second movement was to imagine the preparations for the smallest jump that they could do and the third was to move the arms straight up from their normal relaxed length to the waist and then to lower them again slowly (Mcdonnagh (Mcdonnagh 1970, p. 128).

The instructions elicited intense concentration from the performers. The minuteness of action created a tension in the audience's perception. This tension was caused by the seeming lack of evidence that movement was taking place. The strength of the performer's focus
contradicted this initial perception by indicating that something was going on and had not been perceived yet. The audience was prompted to look at the performance more intently to determine what was happening.

The motion stimulated by imagining movement was more detectable in the space around the performers than in the performers themselves. The bodies of the performers served to exert a kind of visible pressure on the space. What was most evident was the expansion and contraction of the space between the performers. The motion itself was seen in the space in-between the performers.

Although some actions were imagined and some consciously executed, both had actual manifestations. The difference lay in how the movement was perceived; either as actions transpiring in the body of the performer, or as movement in the space between the performers. I was able to see that imagined movement elicits its own kind of motion, as well as a specific kind of movement perception in the audience.

The Replacement of Representative Actions with Literal Actions and Peril

The final constituent to be discussed was influenced by the concepts of Chris Burden. Much of Burden's early work involved a degree of danger and pain when he performed them. Burden says, "my art is an examination of reality. By setting up aberrant situations, my art functions on a higher reality, in a different state" (Burden and Butterfield 1975, p. 68). Indeed, it is the real danger and pain in Burden's performance works which creates tension and effectiveness in performance. Jan Butterfield states that "pain and the possibility of death exacerbate the conditions of aesthetic invention" (Burden and
For Burden, danger and pain are used as a catalyst to provoke controversy about aesthetic conditions.

Viewing art is often considered as a leisurely activity -- a patron may go to an art gallery in his free time to relax and appreciate the art work there. His admiration of art would be interrupted if something more urgent caught his attention -- for example, should the patron notice someone in peril, he would most probably stop to help. Therefore, the exigency of danger took precedence over the patron's aesthetic reflection.

Burden uses the aesthetics of peril to incorporate into art life and death urgency. Use of peril in an aesthetic situation provokes an immediate response from the audience. The audience experiences a loss of aesthetic concern in the presence of real potential injury to the performer. This stimulates contention over whether the work ought to have maintained only the appearance of reality so as to retain aesthetic distance.

Descriptions of two of his works, "Through the Night Softly," and "Shoot" will show how Burden used danger and pain in an aesthetic context.

Butterfield describes "Through the Night Softly" as follows: "Across the black asphalt pavement of a parking lot, Burden, virtually naked and in the dark of night, crawled his way painfully and tortuously across the tiny twinkling fragments of glass, breathing with great difficulty and bleeding from numerous small cuts" (Burden and Butterfield 1975, p. 71).
Burden describes "Shoot" as follows: "At 7:45 pm, I was shot in the left arm by a friend. The bullet was a copper jacket 22 long rifle. My friend was standing about 15 feet from me" (Loeffler 1980, p. 396, Performance Anthology).

In discussing these events, Burden says that "I wanted them to really be there, instead of making an illusion about them" (Loeffler 1980, p. 396, Performance Anthology). Linda Fry Burnham says "It is apparent that Burden has narrowed his work down to a literal examination of the real, practical concerns of his life as an artist" (Loeffler 1980, p. 399, Performance Anthology). Burden has become identified with the themes of melodrama, violence, risk, control and threat within the performer-spectator situation.

In "Experiential Icons," a performer was taped to a chair prior to the performance. The performer was wearing only gym shorts. Several rolls of tape were adhered directly to the performer's skin, covering the body from ankles to shoulders. The tape also encircled the chair on which the performer was sitting. When the performance started, the taped performer was carried on stage. A mask was fashioned on his face. When this was accomplished, the masking tape was pulled from the performer's skin. The performer then removed the mask and cut it in half, and encircled half the mask with brick.

Burden's work stimulated the action of pulling tape off the performer's skin. Even though the action occurs within the proscenium, it produces real pain in the performer and not an illusion of pain. The proscenium itself suggests the convention of representation upon which traditional theater is based. By incorporating real pain and
real danger (as in the brick structure which is discussed on pages 33-4) in the performance, I hoped to counteract the idea of presenting actions which merely have the appearance of reality. The use of real pain confronts and questions the use of theater as a medium of transformation. Cutting the mask in half was a symbolic rejection of the use of theater in this manner.

Each of the above described actions in "Experiential Icons" was an attempt to contrast the real and immediately present with the various representations of reality, whether by means of memory, imagination, or object-imagery which evokes memory. I hoped to differentiate the idea of the immediate present from the several different manifestations of remembered indices, and to define the relationship between them in a performance situation.

"Experiential Icons" can be seen as an exploration of the scope of performance. It is a visualization of the relationship of action in art to the objects which represent those actions. The performance medium possesses the greatest potential for verisimilitude in art, since the medium shares with daily living the constituents of duration, space and human activity. Because of the similar characteristics of performance to daily living, "Experiential Icons" also served as an analogue of an individual's existential parameters. Indeed, the performer is his own metaphor.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS

In the past two years, I have used the methodology presented in this thesis in a series of eight performance works. By using critical essays as source material, I have been exposed to new styles of thinking. The incorporation of new styles of thinking in my performances generated new kinds of art for me. I found that reading critical essays provided me with the intellectual atmosphere to create new works and to be aware of its effect on my development as an artist. Each performance reflects the idea stimulated by the critical reading, the model developed to explore the idea, and the new information induced by the process. With each performance I was able to attain new levels of knowledge. I discovered that perceptual manifestation of ideas in performance increased my intellectual development. This intellectual development transformed my perceptual abilities. All this happened in a geometric progression. It is my hope that by incorporating this methodology, other artists may achieve a similar progression.

The methodology I have proposed in this discourse generates a progression towards the idea (thought processes and concepts) determining aesthetic structure. In performance, the idea becomes a series of coordinated actions which have been structured and organized by the intellect. The performance is particularly significant to the process of intellectual development. The actions enrich ideas with
characteristics they did not have by themselves. Gablik states that "... it is only by being acted upon in a mental operation that perceptual data become objects of knowledge" (Gablik 1977, p. 27). Performance allows the actions to be internalized as operations of thought.

Suzi Gablik presents a view of art based on the model developed by Jean Piaget. In discussing cognitive progression, Gablik says "the word 'cognitive' refers to the way in which our picture of reality -- what we actually perceive -- changes as both perception and representation become progressively more structured by thought processes and concepts" (Gablik 1977, p. 11). Gablik argues that developments in art are a result of a progression towards more complex "... perceptual and logical schemata which lead to mental organizations increasingly dominated by scientific, rationalistic and conceptual modes of thinking" (Gablik 1977, p. 12).

Gablik uses Piaget's cognitive model to delineate the evolution of art. She states that there has been a

... gradual shift in art from iconic modes of representation (which are essentially figurative and are linked to immediate perceptual experience, where the image closely resembles the concrete objects to which it refers) towards non-representational non-mimetic modes which are conceptual in organization and exhibit linguistic and syntactic features. Language, unlike imagery, is non-representational: its structure is determined by the internal relationships which prevail among its component parts and by generative rules, not by iconic resemblances (Gablik 1977, p. 12).

The progress of intelligence leads to the development of logical and abstract concepts, making a developmental transition from the structures of perception to those of intelligence. "Intelligence transforms perception" (Gablik 1977, p. 30).
The aesthetic and intellectual developments stemming from my performances concur with the progression stated by Gablik. My performance works have been shaped more and more by language and less by imagery. My earlier performance works reflect iconic and linguistic influences, and in particular the tensions created between them. Later performances reflect the primary influence of language in developing and executing performance structures.

I have felt a sense of loss as I have made the transition away from iconographical works. The feeling is based on habit and was replaced with a stronger need for expanding aesthetic understanding and parameters. I have found that the evolution towards more objective language-oriented aesthetic structures is a logical progression in my development as an artist.

The artist's mental structure is dynamic, and not static. Gablik states that "we do not inherit cognitive structures as such: it is through functioning, and only through functioning that cognitive structures are formed. Functioning not only creates structures, but it causes them to change continually" (Gablik 1977, p. 38).

It follows that if the nature of functioning is such that it is constantly changing and developing complex cognitive structures, then change becomes a desirable characteristic. It is my hope that this thesis will stimulate a heuristic progression in the intellectual evolution of the artist.

"The mind . . . is viewed as the as yet unfinished product of continual self-construction" (Piaget 1970, p. 114).
In the 1980s, performance art is being ever more widely practiced. It cannot be categorically bound. Like criticism itself, it is an anxious endeavor because it constantly creates new criteria. Accordingly, the practitioner experiences a degree of uncertainty with each new work produced. Constant rearticulation of criteria makes it difficult for the performance artist to ascertain value and efficacy in his work.

I am aware that members of the audience attending my performances have experienced a similar anxiousness. By associating remembered sensations with the iconography presented, the audience might arrive at an image of the performance that was not intended by the artist. This raises questions about communication in performance, and the relationship of meaning to evolving criteria.

It is my hope that a visual artist's perspective, as presented in this thesis, can clarify for the audience the flux of performance art. This perspective can also clarify for the audience the responses they may have to the new criteria that performance art cultivates.
REFERENCES


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