73rd American Exhibition

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E. Laurence Chalmers, Jr.
President
The 73rd American Exhibition has been planned to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the museum. The form which this exhibition has taken over the last decade would astound its originators. They would be pleased, however, to know that the essential intent of the show still holds. As stated in the foreword to the 30th American Exhibition of 1917-18: "By means of the annual exhibition of oil paintings and sculpture, the Art Institute endeavors to keep the public of this region in touch with the current achievement in American art."

The exhibition as it is conceived today naturally has altered greatly. Originally, the exhibition attempted to bring to Chicago practically everything being done by Americans which might not have been seen in the Midwest that year. As stated in the catalogue preface to the 7th American Exhibition of 1894: "The conservative, the progressive and the advanced radical schools of modern art are all well exemplified . . .", but the major concern of these early shows seems to have been geographical coverage. The preface further states: "The fields of practice chosen by the artists here represented are as varied as their schools. They have sent us pictures painted in France, Spain, Germany, Holland, England, India, Persia, the West Indies, and the whole breadth of our country." At the end of the early catalogues, counts appear in list form of artists according to their birthplaces, as well as their residences. In 1895, for example, twenty-three states of the Union were represented, although one-third of the artists came from Illinois.

Until the 1950s, the American Exhibition was held virtually every year, and some 300-500 works were amassed each time. By present standards these were certainly enormous exhibitions (the exhibition of 1916 had no fewer than 1,066 entries). The shows were selected for the most part by juries in six cities: New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Chicago. A sizeable proportion of works during the 1890s and first decade of this century were chosen by a Miss Sara Hollowell, an agent of the Art Institute residing in Europe, who scanned the salons of Paris and Munich for the best American work.

Sometime before 1917, the Institute decided to include works by artists invited directly by the Museum, along with works selected by the variously located juries, works "which were deemed especially desirable" and which were exempt from jury decision. Then, about thirty years ago, the jury system was abandoned altogether, and since 1941 the exhibitions have consisted solely of works selected by the curatorial staff of the Art Institute.

The main function of the American Exhibition has continued to be to inform the public about some of the best work done by Americans since the preceding exhibition, and with this under-
lying purpose the show has been adapted to its times. Simply with regard to size, for example, the exhibitions have been radically reduced within the last decade. In the 1950s the average show included about 150 works; in the early '60s around 90, but focusing on far fewer artists.

The flexible nature of the American Exhibition has produced variations in the shows over the years. The exhibition of 1947-48, for example, was a “departure from the long series which preceded it” and, under the title Abstract and Surrealist American Art emphasized a prevailing contemporary direction. The work of an individual artist, interestingly enough, has in two instances been given a room to itself. Grant Wood was honored by a memorial exhibition of 48 paintings in 1942, just after his death, and the following year Edward Hopper was given a one-man exhibition in the show.

Although the American Exhibition is not in any way considered competitive, from the show’s inception it has been the custom to award prizes. The jury is composed of three people and a history in itself could be written on the list of artists, critics and other professionals from the art world who have judged these exhibitions. In certain cases, the prize-winning pieces have caused an uproar of dismay, and during the 1930s the disapproval of Mrs. Logan, one of the patrons and prize donors, made headlines.

“To think that when [we] established that award we didn’t reserve the right to say something about the paintings which should get it,” she lamented. One chuckles to think how Mrs. Logan would feel about the use of her prize today. This lady founded a movement for “Sanity in Art” especially to combat “radical” artistic activity and it is ironic that the medal which accompanied her award was redesigned in 1957 by David Smith, the leading avant-garde sculptor of his time.

Response to the exhibition has varied over the years. Considerable controversy was stirred by some of the shows, though others were referred to as “just another American exhibition,” and one was called the “show of a thousand yawns.” The exhibition of 1935, in particular, raised many issues which seemed highly controversial at the time, and for the most part the trustees and the director rallied to the cause of the avant-garde. When one patron withdrew her legacy “as long as trustees have no better sense of true art,” another leading patron, Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson, replied that “Persons are judging it who have no right to judge it until they have studied it. We don't have to like everything . . . and if we say, without trying to understand what the artist wanted to show us, 'I don't like it,' we show our ignorance.”

Unlike the early American Exhibitions, the current show on view in the Morton Wing has by no means attempted the impossible task of being all inclusive, but does continue to stress the Art Institute’s traditional openness to new and changing ideas. Diversity of expression in the arts today has reached a degree which is perhaps even more baffling than usual. It is always difficult to extricate vital manifestations from those of a more superficial and transitory nature, but the purpose of the American Exhibitions at The Art Institute of Chicago is less to discover than to present significant contemporary movements. At the extremes, there are two ways to stage such an exhibition. One is to make it as broad and comprehensive as possible with a diversity of artists and styles; the other is to focus directly on one or several closely related or even sharply contrasted activities. The 73rd American Exhibition has elected the latter. We present only sixteen artists, all but one of whom work within a range of pure and refined expression from the painterly to the concept of verbal images and psychological effects. The maverick in the company, Frank Stella, poses extravagant contrast in the bravura of his formal and chromatic freedom; the presence of his work in the exhibition constitutes in itself an extreme pole. These artists, potent in their reserve, brilliant in their uncompromising statements, present an impressive aspect of contemporary American art.

A. JAMES SPEYER
Curator
20th Century Painting and Sculpture
In the last two decades we have witnessed the evolution of new artistic means envisioned, in part, some seven decades ago by the Italian Futurist painters and sculptors. The Futurists conveyed their zeal for the spirit of the modern age through manifestos and declarations which even today appear prophetic. In the words of the five artists who composed the *Futurist Painting: Technical Manifesto* of 1910:

The construction of pictures has hitherto been foolishly traditional. Painters have shown us the objects and the people placed before us. We shall henceforth put the spectator at the centre of the picture.¹

And in the words of Gino Severini three years later:

I . . . foresee the end of the painting and of the statue. These forms of art, in spite of our innovatory spirit, curb our creative freedom and contain within them their own fates: museums, collectors, galleries, all equally bogged down in the past. Instead, our *plastic creations must live in the open air and fit into architectural schemes*, with which they will share the active intervention of the outside world, of which they represent the particular essence.²

The Futurist artists sought ways of incorporating their ideas of modern life into their works, identifying reality with new technological discovery. They attempted to render the effect of noise and speed, and to capture the experience of motion and dynamism which they interpreted as the salient qualities of a new age. Although Futurist painting and sculpture is stylistically allied to the Cubist idiom of the period, their writings still seem revolutionary in retrospect. The Futurists' radically espoused goals now exist within the realm of achievement in that artists today have succeeded in creating new perspectives on reality.

The novelist and film-maker Alain Robbe-Grillet,³ in a series of essays written in the late 1950s and early sixties, describes a "new realism"⁴ as opposed to the "prefabricated schemas people are used to, in other words, their ready-made idea of reality."⁵ Referring primarily to literature, his essays nonetheless help to lay the foundations for understanding certain basic assumptions of recent art in general. Robbe-Grillet's explanation for the radical transformation in literary fiction that he deemed necessary for the meaningful survival of the novel can also be applied to parallel changes in the visual arts. As he writes in 1956:

We had thought to control [the world around us] by assigning it a meaning, and the entire art of the novel, in particular, seemed dedicated to this enterprise. But this was merely an illusory simplification: and far from becoming clearer and closer because of it, the world has only, little by little, lost all its life. Since it is chiefly in its presence that the world's reality resides, our task is now to create a literature which takes that presence into account.⁶

As "our relations with the universe" are changing, he continues:
... not only do we no longer consider the world as our own, our private property, designed according to our needs and readily domesticated, ... we no longer even believe in its “depth.” While essentialist conceptions of man met their destruction, the notion of “condition” henceforth replacing that of “nature,” the surface of things has ceased to be for us the mask of their heart, a sentiment that led to every kind of metaphysical transcendence.7

The artists in the 73rd American Exhibition in various ways have contributed to the development of a new “realism” by responding as well to “our real situation in the world today”8 inasmuch as reality is no longer thought to be masked. With nothing to unmask, the artist must investigate reality directly, not for the sake of producing a literal “verisimilitude,”9 but in order to realize relevant artistic ideas.

Frank Stella’s statement of 1964 that “my painting is based on the fact that only what can be seen is there”10 is comparable to Robbe-Grillet’s assertion:

... the work of art contains nothing, in the strict sense of the term (that is, as a box can hold—or be empty of—some object of an alien nature). Art is not a more or less brilliantly colored envelope intended to embellish the author’s “message,” a gilt paper around a package of cookies, a whitewash on a wall, a sauce that makes the fish go down easier. Art endures no servitude of this kind, nor any other pre-established function. It is based on no truth that exists before it; and one may say that it expresses nothing but itself.11

Stella’s remark that “what you see is what you see” in his painting, that there is nothing there “besides the paint on the canvas”12 is often quoted because of the importance of this aspect of his early work. In addition to denying the traditional rectangular format, by 1958 Stella had eliminated the distinction between the background surface of a canvas and whatever could be depicted on it. Fusing the foreground of the painting with the background and removing the confines of the rectangular frame, Stella hoped to avoid the illusion or reference to anything but the work’s own inherent configuration. (Fig. A)

Robert Ryman’s statement in an interview of 1971 that “what painting is, is exactly what people see”13 emphasizes again the desire for the autonomy of the painting as a painting. Since 1957 Ryman has focused on the fundamental process of applying paint to a surface (“I wanted to make a painting getting the paint across”14), leading him to different conclusions and a totally different body of work from Stella. Whereas Stella’s recent paintings have acquired the character of relief sculpture, jutting out three-dimensionally and independently from the wall to which they are anchored, Ryman’s paintings, to the contrary, have come more and more to resemble their support—the white wall. He acknowledges the unavoidable presence of the wall, pointing out:

How does a person perceive a painting? Does a painting consist partly of an image enclosed within a specific space? What could be the size and nature of that space? We have been trained to see painting as “pictures,” with storytelling connotations, abstract or literal, in a space usually limited and enclosed by a frame which isolates the image. It has been shown that there are possibilities other than this manner of “seeing” painting. An image could be said to be “real” if it is not an optical reproduction, if it does not symbolize or describe so as to call up a mental picture. This “real” or “absolute” image is only confined by our limited perception.15

Following from the logic of Stella’s articulation that “any painting is an object, and anyone who gets involved enough in this finally has to face up to the objectness of whatever it is that he is doing,”16 Ryman can ask where such an object begins or ends since it is not a defined (and therefore not a confined) image. Implied as a question in Ryman’s work, the answer lies in the fact that the painted surface—no matter how subdued or subtly textured it may be—exists; the separateness of the painted area from its support is always indicated by Ryman. However close
the painting approximates the wall in color or texture, Ryman maintains the distinction between the two and reinforces the idea that the application of paint is the essence of his work.

One of the significant steps in the recent history of art was taken by Sol LeWitt, although he was not the only one to reach similar conclusions, when he decided to make a drawing directly on the wall of the Paula Cooper Gallery for a group exhibition in October 1968. He thereby drew in, so to speak, the entire surrounding support of the work to function as an integral part of the piece. He has continued to record the visual complexities of simple linear systems in terms of the expanse of the wall and spatial enclosures.

In 1969 LeWitt first considered the possibility of making “a total drawing environment” by “treating the whole room as a complete entity—as one idea.”17 Seeking to integrate his work with the environment, LeWitt works directly on the wall so as to infuse a given surface with his drawing. LeWitt superimposes a pre-determined plan for a system of lines on a chosen wall or within a particular area. He evolved a basic series, All Combinations of Arcs from Corners and Sides; Straight Lines, Not-Straight Lines, and Broken Lines in 1973 which “was used for many wall drawing installations.”18 The same work can be recreated any number of times in any number of places. (Fig. B) “No matter how many times the piece is done it is always different visually if done on walls of differing sizes”19 or of differing shapes, according to the artist. For LeWitt “the wall is understood as an absolute space, like the page of a book. One is public, the other private.”20 The wall presents a context for the expression of ideas which due to their life-size scale are read differently from the way they are in a book.

The creation of total environments by drawing or painting directly on the wall runs throughout history. What distinguishes LeWitt’s work, and the work of others of his contemporaries, is the manner in which the surrounding space is interlocked with the work’s final form. In an earlier twentieth-century work such as Mondrian’s Room of 1926, for example, the painting is housed within a three-dimensional area and transforms the space by imposing its form on it. (Fig. C) Whereas the painting by Mondrian is applied within a chosen space, the chosen space of a wall drawing by LeWitt participates in the total conception of the piece. Fictional and factual space in wall drawings by LeWitt are totally interdependent. Space and painting coincide and interrelate in Mondrian’s room, but in LeWitt’s work they are inseparably fused.

As the wall drawings of LeWitt fuse fictional and factual space two-dimensionally, his sculpture three-dimensionally interpene-

Fig. B. Sol LeWitt, All Two-Part Combinations of Arcs from Corners and Sides; Straight, Not-Straight, and Broken Lines, 1978, white chalk on black wall with a pencil grid, installation, Musée D’Art Contemporain, Montréal, Canada

Fig. C. Piet Mondrian, Mondrian’s Room, room executed by Pace Gallery, 1970, from Mondrian’s original open box plan drawing “Salon de Madame B. . . . à Dresden,” 1926, formica on wood, 10 x 12 x 14 feet.
brates and is interpenetrated by its surrounding space. LeWitt's *Nine Part Modular Cube* of 1977 in the exhibition simultaneously contains and displaces the viewer's space, dividing it equally, visually capturing and revealing its many aspects. LeWitt's sculptures are based on a strict modular system which allows multiple visual effects to become manifest, to literally "present" themselves. By the clearcut delineation of actual space, LeWitt's sculpture absorbs spatial reality and transforms it into the reality of the work.

The confrontation and integration of spatial and temporal reality has been a guiding factor in the art of the last ten years. Fred Sandback's work, consisting of lines in space, further exemplifies the aim to discard illusionistic references and to make the work contiguous with actual space. His introductory paragraph to a series of "Notes" articulates an attitude of the late sixties as developed from the implications in the thinking of the early sixties discussed in connection with Stella's work.

My work isn't environmental. It's present in pedestrian space, but is not so strong or elaborate that it obscures its context. It doesn't take over a space, but rather coexists with it. Environmental art makes a new environment and obscures the old one, and that's as far as from what I want as realistic painting is. Most paintings and environmental art are aesthetically discontinuous with ordinary space, which is a quality I don't want in my work.21

The year 1965 marked the beginning of a period of new developments and attitudes toward the possibilities of sculpture. The contributions of Donald Judd and Carl Andre to the re-evaluation of previous notions of sculpture are by now well-known. Where Judd re-emphasized the volumetric nature of sculpture, Andre reduced sculpture to basic flatness in metal floor pieces which cut decisively into space. American artists of the sixties in differing ways have dealt with sculpture in terms of redefining its relationship to its space. During the last fifteen years they have questioned the previous existence of sculpture as a self-contained, three-dimensional object, either figurative or abstract, composed of separate elements compositionally related to each other.

In an attempt to "reform" traditional concepts of sculpture, Bruce Nauman in 1965 created attenuated shapes out of fiber glass whose forms were derived from positive and negative shapes of the human body. Depending on the wall for their support, they tend to lean, push or mold themselves against it. Nauman's work since 1965 has been many-faceted, but cohesive in its concern for inventing new kinds of sculptural form. In the last five years he has greatly enlarged the scale of his work. These recent pieces are to be understood as scale models for huge outdoor works. Enlarged forty times, they would offer the possibility of walking into them rather than around them, according to the artist. "If these plaster works were built full-scale and you walked down into the space, you would be inside looking out rather than outside looking in."22

A consistent theme throughout Nauman's work is his investigation of the relationship of inside to outside. On the most obvious level, these works are installed indoors, although conceived for outdoors. On a visual level, interior and exterior shapes echo each other or interrelate. Of the first pieces in this recent series of sculptures having to do with shapes buried in the ground, Nauman has said, "my intention was to deal with the relationship of public space to private space."23 The eternal dichotomy between interior and exterior is not only built into the form of the work, but refers as well to the quality of our own kinesthetic experience of space. This experience relies on the mental and physical coordination of our own inner and outer selves. Nauman's sculpture rhetorically asks us to consider whether the work is part of our space or whether it belong to its space.

The work of Lawrence Weiner, Robert Barry, On Kawara, Dan Graham and Michael Asher, developing in the latter half of the sixties, is distinct from the work of those artists whose careers began earlier in the decade. Each of these artists for diverse reasons and with diverse results has discovered alternatives to traditional painting and to traditional object sculpture. Each has thus further expanded the possibilities for the visual communication of ideas about art in its continuously changing relationship to reality.

Lawrence Weiner and Robert Barry, both of whom had become dissatisfied with painting by 1968, turned to the possibilities of language instead. Their use of language has evolved in response to the specific demands of their individual inquiries. Prior to 1968 Weiner found himself faced with the dilemma of the artwork's uniqueness, situated as any physical thing must be in time and place. If Stella's early work freed painting from being a reference to a reality other than its own, Weiner's use of language frees the work of art from an arbitrary existence in a reality separate from that of art. As Weiner himself commented in a radio symposium in 1969, "... the picture frame convention was a very real thing. The painting stopped at the edge. When you are dealing with language, there is no edge that the picture drops off. You are dealing with something completely infinite. Language, because it is the most nonobjective thing we have ever developed in this world, never stops."24 "Real" space for Weiner is "the entire cultural context. It's a real space rather than an aesthetically contracted space."25

Any of Weiner's pieces can be realized—visualized or material-
ized—in any number of ways, (in any “manner”), as well as at any time or in any place. A work by Weiner is extremely specific in its allusion to particular activities or elements which could comprise a work of art and yet totally unspecified in the terms of actual application. A piece may consist solely of one participle such as “Displaced,” it can present alternative prepositions such as “Without or Within,” or like the work in the exhibition, it can constitute a more complex and detailed phrase. The length of the row of objects, how many objects, what size, what colors they might be, where they are placed, and so on are infinitely variable. The possible manifestations of Weiner's pieces are open-ended but their verbal components directly connect with the elements or processes of creating art. Weiner translates verbal language into the language of art and stipulates with regard to each of his works that “the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.” (page 50 of this catalogue) Based on the stipulation of the piece, that is, it is in the viewer's mind where ultimately—as in any work of art—the given elements are registered and construed.

The adoption of words for Robert Barry as for Weiner offered a means for circumventing the production of concrete objects and opened alternative avenues of artistic expression. “For years people have been concerned with what goes on inside the frame. Maybe there's something going on outside the frame that could be considered an artistic idea,” Barry suggested at a symposium held in 1968. Paintings by Barry exhibited between 1964 and 1966 refer to the outside limits of their canvas. Alternate circles and squares are indicated at regular intervals over a canvas, leaving a margin of space at the outer edges, for example; or, the edges of an expanse of canvas are specifically treated as the subject of the painting. Barry’s first works after giving up painting were wires stretched across spaces between buildings, works which entailed marking physical enclosures. These pieces led to the use of nylon cord, “a material which is invisible,” instead of wire. Subsequently Barry devised a method for defining limitless space. A description for a work from the Inert gas series of 1969 reads “Sometime during the morning of March 5, 1969, 2 cubic feet of Helium will be released into the atmosphere.” This allowed a measured volume of a substance to expand indefinitely, according to the artist.

Barry’s word drawings—presented in small scale on sheets of paper or in large scale on walls—and his slide projection pieces continue the preoccupations of these earlier works which were “made of various kinds of energy which exist outside the narrow arbitrary limits of our own senses.” The substitution of words for invisible materials in the early 1970s proffered Barry the possibility of probing and articulating existing space. “Why the void and not the created space?” Barry has asked. “There is something about void and emptiness which I am personally very concerned with . . . Just emptiness, Nothing seems to me the most potent thing in the world.”

Words in Barry's drawings punctuate the spatial confines of a given page or wall, and in his slide projection pieces, words intersect themselves one by one into a darkened circumscribed room. Sequential, discursive connection among words (or images) is removed, increasing the weight of each word’s possible meanings in isolation. Missing the expected links of meaning and searching for them or for others, activates an experience of space based on our awareness of the gaps and on our ability and need to define something in between. Space itself has no limits save the ones assigned to it by the mind. Like a mental net cast into infinity, Barry’s work reaches for what can be grasped in order to prescribe human boundaries. In Barry’s words:

My work is about the elusive ness of anything, the absurdity of trying to understand or grasp anything which doesn't seem obvious. Well, it's all there until we really try and get hold of it. Like St. Augustine said, I understood what time was until I started to think about it. It's about—the irony of the fact of trying to hold on to something which really can't be held on to—so you don't try to fight that—you simply go with it. Use that aspect of reality, if you will, and accept it and it's really kind of a beautiful thing.

Whereas Barry’s work is mainly involved with space, the work of On Kawara is essentially involved with time, which like space is endless and unspecified until shaped by the mind. How do we demarcate time? By days and years. By events. In relation to people, to places. Through the knowledge of history and by the consciousness of our own lifetime.

A painting by On Kawara is strangely moving with its stark, impersonal presentation of the date—month, day, year—on the day the painting was actually done. Kawara began his “TODAY” Series paintings on January 4, 1966. The sizes of the paintings vary from the smallest which can be 8” x 10”, to the largest which is 61” x 89”. The background color is generally black, although Kawara also uses other colors. The month is written in capital letters, abbreviated when necessary, the remainder in numerals. Although so skilfully rendered as to appear stencilled, the dates are applied by hand in white acrylic to a thickly coated canvas. Each painting has a subtitle, those for earlier works being more varied and longer than the more recent ones which have been limited to the name of the day of the week. The “TODAY” paintings can be read on many levels. They can be seen simply in all their visual physicality as painted figuration.
A date is unavoidably blank and yet meaningful. On the one hand it is an immutable and indisputable fact, the symbol for a span of time. On the other hand, events—of the most universal or of the most personal import, subsumed in the passage of time—occur on specific dates.

In addition to making paintings, On Kawara, each day of his life, draws his course through the streets on a map of the place where he is. Each day has a page in a series of notebook volumes organized by year which he has kept uninterruptedly since 1968, and his record for each day is incorporated into a series called “I Went.” The same is true for people he meets, which he types on a notebook page every day to form a series entitled “I Met.” Moreover, Kawara sends a postcard every day to two selected persons, stamped with “I GOT UP AT [an exact time].” intermittently he sends a telegram to someone with the message “I AM STILL ALIVE.” The “I Went” and “I Met” series, the postcards and paintings from September 1975 shown in the exhibition, relate specifically to the artist’s visit to Chicago. These, along with the other “TODAY” paintings, indicate the complexities of his artistic method which deals with the visualization of time and place.

On January 15, 1910, Leo Tolstoy wrote the following in his journal:

I have keenly experienced consciousness of myself today, at 81 years, exactly as I was conscious of myself at 5 or 6 years. Consciousness is motionless. And it is only because of its motionlessness that we are able to see the motion of that which we call time. If time passes, it is necessary that there should be something which remains static. And it is consciousness of self which is static.35

On Kawara's work brings the knowledge of our consciousness to our attention, reminding us, in fact, that we are “still alive.” The innovations in the work of Dan Graham further help to differentiate major artistic concerns of the present decade from those of the previous one. Graham’s view of Dan Flavin’s contribution to the evolution of recent art as expressed in his latest published article, “Art in Relation to Architecture, Architecture in Relation to Art,” indicates the nature of his own particular contribution. In connection with Flavin’s fluorescent light installations, Graham explains, “the gallery functioned literally as part of the art.”36 The work of Flavin transforms its surrounding space by means of colored light structured according to the artist’s placement of commercially available fluorescent fixtures. (Fig. D) Graham emphasizes the fact that the resulting work is dependent on the given interior space. “Flavin’s arrangement of light fixtures... depend contextually for significance upon the function of the gallery, and the socially determined architectural use of electric lighting.”37 Furthermore, “they function in situ and upon completion of the exhibition cease to function artistically.”38 Relying on the exhibition space for their existence as a complete art work, Flavin’s installations of fluorescent light are nonetheless physically contained and totally self-sufficient. Proceeding from Flavin’s integration of light produced by commercial fixtures installed within the gallery context, Graham opens the purely physical, spatial confines of the exhibition area to question as the ultimate frame of reference for art.

Public Space/Two Audiences, 1976, explicates the inherent ideas of Graham’s work as distinct from those of Flavin, for example, or from those of Richard Serra as represented in the exhibition by his piece entitled Blank. In Serra’s designated space replicating a separate room, two canvases thickly covered with oilstick, each 112 square, are stapled flush against the wall to the viewer’s left and right. These black, dense, impasto rectangles interrupt their allotted enclosures, appearing to replace the walls, although unquestionably dependent upon them. The power of the work is derived from the imposing aspect of the large black rectangles rising up in front of and confronting the viewer like two impenetrable barriers.

Contrary to the piece by Serra, transparent and reflecting barriers are central to the conception of Public Space/Two Audiences. This work, a rectangular closed-off room, divided in half by soundproof glass and displaying a mirrored wall at one end, is entered by one of two doors. The surfaces of the glass and
mirror bespeak realities that exist behind or before them. As Graham describes in his “Notes” (page 24 of this catalogue), the observer activates the work by his/her presence and in coordination with the presence of other viewers. The spectators’ participation and ensuing behavior are inseparable from the functioning of the work which otherwise stands empty. The viewers are as much a factor of the piece as are the mirror and glass. Upon entering, the participant becomes an object in the piece and thus the subject of it, too.

Mark Francis in a concise essay about this work suggests the implications of our being both viewer and viewed:

As soon as someone wanders into either of the rooms . . . they are implicated in the act of looking, in that combination of narcissism, fragmentation and alienation which is produced both by engagement with the work of art . . . and in a different context, by wandering through the modern shopping arcade. These two rooms divide people from each other in the way that glass showcase windows separate the consumer from the goods inside a shop . . . It is not difficult to see the analogy which can be made here with the way personal relationships are established and reinforced by processes of socialization.39

Unlike the piece by Serra or an installation by Flavin, Public Space/Two Audiences conveys more than the immediate visual experience of its physical space. Graham contends with psychological and social reality by, in short, reflecting (on) it.

The art of Michael Asher does not involve the fabrication of objects or spaces but raises issues concerning the total context of art. For this exhibition the bronze casting of George Washington executed in 1788 by Jean Antoine Houdon,40 which has stood outside the main entrance of The Art Institute of Chicago since 1925, has been moved to a location inside the museum. The removal and relocation of this sculpture has engendered both spatial and contextual changes. An interior space is occupied by a new object while the exterior space is vacated, a sculptural idea in itself, emphasized by means of a sculpture. Transferred to the galleries of the museum, George Washington loses his prowess as the central entrance figure directly facing Adams Street. In light of its new context, the sculpture must be viewed strictly as a work of art rather than as a decorative object or historical commemoration.

For practical and logistical reasons, Asher’s first proposal for the exhibition could not be implemented. Were this work to have been carried out, the positions of the two over life-size bronze lions by the sculptor, Edward L. Kemeys, standing at the left and right of the main façade of The Art Institute of Chicago, would have been reversed. Since their installation in 1894 when they were donated by Mrs. Henry Field to complement the architecture of the building, they have looked away from the entrance in opposite directions. The proposed reversal, causing the lions to face each other, would have redefined the span of space between them—however subtly—and questioned the nature of their visual and symbolic function in relation to the building. Should one of the lions have been removed and placed on the first floor of the Morton Wing with other works in the exhibition—also proposed by Asher—the one lion in this case would have been considered solely in its sculptural capacity as a large animal rendering of the nineteenth century, instead of in its vital role as an extension of the museum’s Neo-Renaissance architecture, and, along with the other lion, as a bastion of institutional security and power.

Unlike the lions which reinforce the architecture of the museum, the sculpture by Houdon is not so irrevocably linked with the façade. George Washington’s removal is not disturbing in the way the removal of one lion would have been. The statue can function independently of the museum’s architecture and it is equally natural for it to be there or not. The presence of George Washington on his pedestal, as with the unquestioned presence of the lions, is taken for granted if not even generally ignored. In 1924 the critic, Roger Fry, observed how little we register and how little we therefore actually see what is in front of us.

In his words:

The needs of our actual life are so imperative, that the sense of vision becomes highly specialized in their service. With an admirable economy we see only so much as is needful for our purposes; but this is in fact very little, just enough to recognize and identify each object or person; that done, they go into our mental catalogue and are no more really seen. In actual life the normal person really only reads the labels as it were on the objects around him and troubles no further. Almost all the things which are useful in any way put on more or less this cap of invisibility.41

A work by Asher removes this “cap of invisibility.” When some feature of the surroundings or of a particular situation is removed or repositioned, reversed or restructured in accordance with the syntax of its given reality, essential meanings are bared.

The present exhibition reflects a variety of artistic methods. The grids of Agnes Martin, for example, suggest a universal abstract mental space while Maria Nordman appropriates natural elements toward the delineation of concrete physical space. In their comparable concern for language in relation to their art, Edward Ruscha and Allen Ruppersberg demonstrate opposite intents. Ruscha on the one hand converts written words into painted objects and refers to the immediate mundane environment. Rup-
persberg on the other hand reminds us of past literary achievement whose content belongs to an inaccessible though idolized era. Within his own oeuvre Michael Heizer has varied his approach, creating both paintings and giant earthwork structures. Rolling paint onto canvas offers another aspect of mechanical human gesture.

The end of painting and sculpture as formerly known, the placement of “the spectator at the centre of the picture,” and the elimination of the literal division between real and illusionistic space harks back to the rhetoric of the Futurists. They themselves, of course, could not have predicted the developments in art as suggested by the works in this exhibition or the degree to which artists today have enriched and changed our visual comprehension.

ANNE RORIMER
Associate Curator
20th Century Painting and Sculpture

NOTES

2. Ibid., p. 125.
3. Robbe-Grillet wrote the screen play for Last Year at Marienbad, 1961, and directed the film TransEurope Express, 1974.
5. Ibid., p. 31.
6. Ibid., p. 23.
8. Ibid., p. 9.
9. Ibid., p. 163.
14. Ibid., p. 49.
15. Wall Painting, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1979, p. 16.
19. Ibid., p. 130.
20. Ibid., p. 139.
23. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
34. White, op. cit., p. 9.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
40. The original, marble sculpture of which this is a copy is in the State Capitol, Richmond, Virginia.
Selected Bibliography

The following represents a selection of recent catalogues for the artists represented in this exhibition. In general these catalogues contain more extensive bibliography.

**Michael Asher**

**Robert Barry**

**Dan Graham**

**Michael Heizer**
In preparation: catalogue for retrospective exhibition at Folkwangmuseum, Essen and Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo.

**On Kawara**

**Sol LeWitt**

**Agnes Martin**

**Bruce Nauman**

**Maria Nordman**

**Allen Ruppersberg**

**Edward Ruscha**

**Robert Ryman**

**Fred Sandback**

**Richard Serra**

**Frank Stella**

**Lawrence Weiner**
Michael Asher
Born in Los Angeles, California, 1943.
Lives in Venice, California.
The bronze casting of George Washington, 1788, by Jean Antoine Houdon, originally located at the Michigan Avenue Entrance, has been installed in the galleries during the exhibition.

Robert Barry
Born in New York City, 1936.
Lives in Teaneck, New Jersey.
Wall drawing to be done in situ by the artist
grey felt tip pen on panel
15 x 15 feet
Lent by the artist
Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
After All, 1979
slide projection
Lent by the artist
Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

Dan Graham
Born in Urbana, Illinois, 1942.
Lives in New York City.
Public Space/ Two Audiences, 1976
constructed room: plywood, mirror,
Acousto-Pane
8 x 20 x 10 feet
Courtesy Konrad Fischer Gallery,
Düsseldorf
Laminated sound controlling Acousto-Pane
40 courtesy Globe Amerada Glass Co.,
Elk Grove Village, Illinois. Mirror and
Acousto-Pane installed by Trainor Glass Co.,
Alsip, Illinois.

Michael Heizer
Born in Berkeley, California, 1944.
Lives in New York City.
Indian Red #1, 1979
oil on canvas
111 x 70¾ inches
Lent by Xavier Fourcade, Inc., New York
Indian Red #2, 1979
oil on canvas
111¾ x 76¼ inches
Lent by Xavier Fourcade, Inc., New York
Indian Red #3, 1979
oil on canvas
108 x 70¾ inches
Lent by Xavier Fourcade, Inc., New York

On Kawara
16,968 days (June 9, 1979)
"A baby crying through history."
acrylic on canvas
10 x 13 inches
Lent by the artist
"The Greek passenger ship, 8900-ton
Heraklion, sank today in the Aegean sea."
acrylic on canvas
10 x 13 inches
Lent by the artist
"The temperature sank to 54 degrees below
zero in Canada's Yukon Territory and
Eastern Alaska today."
acrylic on canvas
10 x 13 inches
Lent by the artist
"The Empire State Building."
acrylic on canvas
10 x 13 inches
Lent by the artist
"British yachtman Francis Chichester, 65,
arrived in Sydney today from Plymouth,
England, in his 53-foot ketch, Gypsy Moth IV,
after a 107-day solo sea voyage."
acrylic on canvas
10 x 13 inches
Lent by the artist

"Neil Armstrong, Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr.,
Michael Collins."
acrylic on canvas
61 x 89 inches
Lent by the artist
"Tuesday."
acrylic on canvas
61 x 89 inches
Lent by the artist

Works related to the artist's visit to Chicago:
"Wednesday"
acrylic on canvas
8 x 10 inches
Lent by Gian Enzo Sperone, Turin, Italy
"Thursday"
acrylic on canvas
8 x 10 inches
Lent by Gian Enzo Sperone, Turin, Italy
"Thursday."
acrylic on canvas
10 x 13 inches
Lent by the artist
1 Met, 1975
ink on paper
8 pages, each 11 x 8 inches
Lent by the artist
1 Went (Note), 1975
ink and pencil on paper
8 pages, each 11 x 8 inches
Lent by the artist
6 postcards to Frank Donegan, 1975
Lent by Jacqueline and Frank Donegan,
New York
6 postcards to Judy de Voss, 1975
Lent by Judy de Voss, Columbus, Ohio
Sol LeWitt
Born in Hartford, Connecticut, 1928.
Lives in New York City.

Nine Part Modular Cube, 1977
baked enamel on aluminum
7 feet 2½ inches x 7 feet 2½ inches x
7 feet 2½ inches
The Art Institute of Chicago
Ada Turnbull Hertle Fund

Agnes Martin
Born in Maklin, Saskatchewan, Canada, 1912.
Lives in Cuba, New Mexico.

Untitled #3, 1975
acrylic, graphite and gesso on canvas
72 x 72 inches
Private Collection, Chicago

Untitled #11, 1977
india ink, graphite and gesso on canvas
72 x 72 inches
Lent by the Whitney Museum of American Art
Gift of the American Art Foundation

Untitled #12, 1977
graphite, ink and gesso on canvas
72 x 72 inches
Lent by the Mayor Gallery, London

Bruce Nauman
Born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1941.
Lives in Pecos, New Mexico.

Untitled (Model for Large-Scale Work), 1977
plaster and fiber glass
65 inches high, outer diameter 30 feet, inner diameter 16 feet
Lent by the artist

Maria Nordman
Born in Goerlitz, Silesia, East Germany, 1943.
Lives in Santa Monica, California

Public Proposal For An Open Place, 1978
pencil, colored pencil and ink on paper
recto: 15 x 37½ inches
verso: 37½ x 15 inches
Lent by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles

Public Proposal For An Open Place, 1978
pencil and ink on paper
recto: 15 x 37½ inches
verso: 37½ x 15 inches
Lent by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles

Public Proposal For An Open Place, 1978
pencil, colored pencil and ink on paper
recto: 15 x 37½ inches
verso: 37½ x 15 inches
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Public Proposal For An Open Place, 1978
pencil, colored pencil and ink on paper
recto: 15 x 37½ inches
verso: 37½ x 15 inches
Lent by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles

Public Proposal For An Open Place, 1979
to be determined by the artist at time and place of exhibition

Allen Ruppersberg
Born in Cleveland, Ohio, 1944.
Lives in Santa Monica, California.

Play on Words/A Collection of Rare Books
(Charles Baudelaire), 1978
wooden box containing drawing (ink on paper) and book
26 x 25 x 22 inches
Lent by Ed Moses, Venice, California

Play on Words/A Collection of Rare Books
(Charles Dickens), 1978
wooden box containing drawing (ink on paper) and book
25½ x 19 x 21 inches
Lent by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles

Play on Words/A Collection of Rare Books
(Edgar Allen Poe), 1978
wooden box containing drawing (ink on paper) and book
25⅛ x 22 x 20½ inches
Lent by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles

Men talking (about) etc., 1979
black & white photograph and 14 drawings
(pencil on paper)
overall: 95 inches x 12 feet 8½ inches
Lent by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles
Edward Ruscha
Born in Omaha, Nebraska, 1937.
Lives in Hollywood, California.

*The Sixties and Seventies, 1979*
- oil on canvas
- 22 x 80 inches
- Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

*Days of the Week, 1979*
- oil on canvas
- 22 x 80 inches
- Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

*Your Love Stories, Your Comedies, 1979*
- oil on canvas
- 22 x 80 inches
- Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

*Who Am I?, 1979*
- oil on canvas
- 22 x 80 inches
- Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery, New York

Fred Sandback
Born in Bronxville, New York, 1943.
Lives in New York City.

Installation to be determined by the artist at time and place of exhibition.
Courtesy Heiner Friedrich, Inc., New York

Richard Serra
Born in San Francisco, California, 1939.
Lives in New York City.

*Blank, 1978*
- paintstick on linen
- two pieces, each 112 x 112 inches
- Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery and Blum/Helman Gallery, New York

Robert Ryman
Born in Nashville, Tennessee, 1930.
Lives in New York City

*Pilot, 1978*
- oil on linen with metal
- 69 x 66 inches
- Lent by Mme. Monique Barbier, Geneva, Switzerland

*Register, 1978*
- oil on linen with metal
- 62½ x 60 inches
- Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Morton G. Neumann, Chicago

*Summit, 1978*
- oil on linen with metal
- 75½ x 72 inches
- Lent by Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Manilow, Chicago

Frank Stella
Born in Malden, Massachusetts, 1936.
Lives in New York City.

*Jungli-Kowwa, 1978*
- mixed media on metal relief
- 86 x 102 x 38 inches

Lawrence Weiner
Born in Bronx, New York, 1940.
Lives in New York City.

*Many Colored Objects Placed Side by Side To Form a Row of Many Colored Objects, 1979*
- Courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
  (Stencilled on the wall by Vince Cicchirillo)
Illustrations of Artists' Works
Michigan Avenue entrance, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1979
Robert Barry

Plan for possible wall piece

Untitled, 1979
NOTES ON ‘PUBLIC SPACE/TWO AUDIENCES’

The art-work ‘placed on display by this environment’ is the architectural container, as its own material structure; at the same time it is also designed to be a display container for the viewers inside, observing themselves, the container’s structure and what effects the specific materials employed in its construction had on their perceptions. A first effect for the spectators might be to see the structure and materials in purely aesthetic terms; after a time in the space, and only if other people are present in the space as well, the psychological and social aspects of the materials and structure become evident. Within the art context it is often only the aesthetic effects of glass and mirror which are noticed; where as outside of the exhibition frame these same materials are employed to control a person or a group’s social reality. Glass partitions in the customs area of many international airports are acoustically sealed, insulating legal residents of the country from those passengers arrived but not ‘cleared’.

Unlike examples of ‘Minimal’ art environments, ‘West-Coast, USA’ perceptual-environments using physiological effects of natural light or post-Bauhaus architectural use of pure materials or the material elements of its construction, ‘Public Space/Two Audiences’ is not entirely abstract or materialistic. ‘Minimal’ art as well as environmental/perceptual art would reduce the individual spectator’s perception of the materials, structure or sense-data to a purely phenomenological presence. Ultimately, this work depends upon the construction of a privileged position for the single viewer’s perception. The difference between the two forms is that where in ‘Minimal’ art the art object is objectified and factually material, environmental art constructs the spectator as transcendentially subjective. Both forms depend upon perceptual immediacy: a phenomenological consciousness which connects the perceiving subject to what is perceived. Both ‘Minimal’ art and environmental art deny connotative, social meanings; the art experience is pure; there is no acknowledgement of social or historical mediation or temporality. (Especially in the case of environmental art), this is a restatement of Kantian idealism which separates the experience of the purely aesthetic from the socially utilitarian. In this new form of Kantian idealism the isolated spectator’s ‘subjective’ consciousness-in-itself replaces the art object to be perceived-for-itself; his/her perception is the product of the art. Thus, instead of eliminating the physically present art object, environmental art’s meditative approach created a secondary, veiled object: the viewer’s consciousness as a subject. All this is alligned to the psychological cult of the self-realisation of the individual.

In ‘Public Space/Two Audiences’ psychologically, for one audience, the glass divider is a window showing, objectifying, the other audience’s behaviour, (the observed, second audience, becomes, by analogy, a ‘mirror’ of the outward behaviour of the audience observing); while simultaneously the mirror at the end of one space allows the observing audience to view themselves as a unified body (engaged in looking at the other audience or themselves looking at the other audience). A parallel, but reverse, situation exists for that second audience. In looking to the other audience, both audiences seek objective confirmation of their respective subjectively experienced social situations. (The spectators of one audience tend to see the other objectively, while their own subjectivity seems insulated from the subjective experience of the opposite audience. Normally neither observed or observer on opposite sides of glass can be part of the other group’s inter-subjective framework.) This effects a double reversal, for while the glass partition places a distance between opposing spectators and individuals in both audiences, the co-presence on the mirror of themselves looking and the others looking makes for a visual, inter-subjective ‘closeness’.

The complexity of this relation of the spectators to their image, and to the image of the other, reciprocal spectators, is echoed in a second reflection (in addition to that of the mirror). Because glass as a material is itself partially reflective, observers in the room distant from the mirror, looking in the direction of the mirror through the glass divider, see a double reflection of their image, first in the glass and then, smaller in size but better delineated, in the mirror. This is similar to the effect of a showcase display window, upon which is often projected the ‘ghost’ image of the spectator gazing at the products inside. Because of the particular lighting of the glass to enhance reflections, and because of the white walls as neutral background, an observer within the room with the mirror, looking in the other direction directly at the opposite audience, will see partially reflected on the glass’ surface a specular image of the space of both rooms... this image being reflected from the opposite mirror’s surface to fill in the blank space behind the glass.

The observer is made to become psychologically self-conscious, conscious of himself as a body which is a perceiving subject; just as socially, he is made to become aware of himself in relation to his group. This is the reversal of the usual loss of ‘self’ when a spectator looks at the conventional art work. There, the ‘self’ is mentally projected into (and identified with) the subject of the art work. In this traditional, contemplative mode the observing subject not only loses awareness of his ‘self,’ but also consciousness of being part of a present, palpable, and specific social group, located in a specific time and social reality, and occurring only within the architectural frame where the work is presented. In ‘Public Space/Two Audiences’ the work looks back; the spectators, inversely, see their projection of ‘self’ (conventionally missing) returned specularly by the material (by means of the structural) aspects of the work.
Public Space / Two Audiences, 1976
constructed room: plywood, mirror,
Acoustu-Pane
8 x 20 x 10 feet
Courtesy Konrad Fischer Gallery, Düsseldorf
Venice Biennale installation
Michael Heizer

Indian Red #1, 1979
oil on canvas
111 x 70½ inches
Lent by Xavier Fourcade, Inc., New York
Indian Red #2, 1979
oil on canvas
111\( \frac{1}{2} \) x 76\( \frac{3}{4} \) inches
Lent by Xavier Fourcade, Inc., New York

Indian Red #3, 1979
oil on canvas
108 x 70\( \frac{3}{4} \) inches
Lent by Xavier Fourcade, Inc., New York
"Neil Armstrong, Edwin E. Aldrin, Jr., Michael Collins."
acrylic on canvas
61 x 89 inches
Lent by the artist
"Tuesday."
acrylic on canvas
61 x 89 inches
Lent by the artist

OCT. 31, 1978
Isometric drawing of *Nine Part Modular Cube*, executed by Joseph Castner
Nine Part Modular Cube, 1977
baked enamel on aluminum
7 feet 2½ inches x 7 feet 2½ inches x 7 feet 2½ inches
The Art Institute of Chicago
Ada Turnbull Hurtle Fund
The Museum of Modern Art installation
Agnes Martin

*Untitled #12*, 1977
graphite, ink and gesso on canvas
72 x 72 inches
Lent by the Mayor Gallery, London

Detail
Untitled #11, 1977
india ink, graphite and gesso on canvas
72 x 72 inches
Lent by the Whitney Museum of American Art
Gift of the American Art Foundation
Bruce Nauman

*Trench, Shafts, Pit, Tunnel and Chamber*, 1978
(Model for Underground Sculpture)
corten steel, 6 x 9 x 19 feet 8 inches
Collection Robert S. Weiss, Los Angeles, California
Ace Gallery, Canada, installation
(not in exhibition)
*Untitled (Model for Large-Scale Work), 1977*
plaster and fiber glass
65 inches high, outer diameter 30 feet,
inner diameter 16 feet
Lent by the artist
Leo Castelli Gallery installation
In consideration of a place for at least 1,000 persons at a time,
from a location of South Michigan and East Adams
Chicago, Illinois, June 9-August 5, 1979
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Thursdays from 10:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Sundays and holidays from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m.
Public Proposal For An Open Place, 1978
pencil and ink on paper
recto: 15 x 37 1/2 inches
verso: 37 1/2 x 15 inches
Lent by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles

Fragments of a Given Ground Plan (California)
Specifications, verso: Giant Sequoia and Coast Redwood
Right of Passage From Every Direction
Allen Ruppersberg

Play on Words/ A Collection of Rare Books
(Charles Baudelaire), 1978
wooden box containing drawing (ink on paper) and book
26 x 25 x 22 inches
Lent by Ed Moses, Venice, California
Men talking (about) etc., 1979
black & white photograph and 14 drawings
(pencil on paper)
overall: 95 inches x 12 feet 8½ inches
Lent by Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles
Edward Ruscha

*The Sixties and Seventies*, 1979
oil on canvas
22 x 80 inches
Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
Your Love Stories, Your Comedies, 1979
oil on canvas
22 x 80 inches
Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery, New York
detail of Pilot
Pilot, 1978
oil on linen with metal
69 x 66 inches
Lent by Mme. Monique Barbier, Geneva, Switzerland
Fred Sandback

*Untitled, 1977*

P.S. 1, Long Island City, New York, installation
(not in exhibition)
Untitled, 1977
First of Three Constructions, 1978
black wool
approximately 19 x 85 feet
Heiner Friedrich Gallery installation
(not in exhibition)
Blank, 1978
paintstick on linen
two pieces, each 112 x 112 inches
Lent by Leo Castelli Gallery and
Blum/Helman Gallery, New York
Blum/Helman Gallery installation
Frank Stella

Ram-Gangra, 1978
mixed media on metal relief
115 x 90½ x 43½ inches
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Victor Ganz, New York
(not in exhibition)
Jungli-Kowwa, 1978
mixed media on metal relief
86 x 102 x 38 inches
Lent by Mitchell Hutchins, Inc., New York
IN RELATION TO PROBABLE USE WITHIN A CULTURE
(i.e. western)

1. AN ARTIST MAY CONSTRUCT A WORK
2. A WORK MAY BE FABRICATED
3. A WORK NEED NOT TO BE BUILT

A REASONABLE ASSUMPTION IS THAT EACH BEING
EQUAL AND CONSISTENT WITH THE INTENT OF AN
ARTIST THE DECISION AS TO CONDITION RESTS WITH
THE NEEDS OF THE RECEIVER UPON THE OCCASION OF
RECEIVERSHIP
Many Colored Objects Placed Side by Side to Form a Row of Many Colored Objects, 1979
Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, installation