

Words of Mouth—Ends of the Critics

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Abstract

This essay proceeds from the contradictions of teaching that are provoked and most clearly manifested in departments of artistic education, whether studio or post-studio: as the historian introduces young artists precisely to those canonic formations that the emerging artist aims to subvert, if not to dismantle altogether, the emerging artist encounters in the art history lecture the very authorities of historical formation that will provide the basis of a truly complex artistic subjectivity and historical project. A similar dialectic emerges within the specific epistemologies underlying the two practices: while an art historian teaching a future generation of art historians can always rely on the assumption that forms of discursive dialogue, even if opposed and mutually exclusive, ultimately will remain within the sphere of textuality (a critical deconstruction of a methodological model will at best result in significant revisions within the field's apparatus of methods). By contrast, the academic instruction of a younger generation of artists and the contributions to the initiation of their future production, will—if successfully received within the market and the institutions—contribute to the formation of potentially tremendously important economic, social and ideological strata, if not to topical transformations of the cultural state apparatus itself.

Keywords

art criticism – Formalism – Conceptual Art – Clement Greenberg – Leo Steinberg – Susan Sontag – Lucy Lippard – Jasper Johns – democratization of art – post-war American art – artist as critic

Criticism is the profession of the unprofessional.

—*Joseph Schumpeter, 1942*

St. John said, the truth shall make you free, and was he right. There is nothing like the truth. The truth is delicious. You can eat the truth; you can drink it and you can sleep with it. There is nothing like the truth. And sometimes, when it is about yourself, it hurts. It hurts, but it still makes you free. Alas the truth can also be a weapon, a means of punishment instead of correction.

— Clement Greenberg, 1984

1 From “Classic” to Modernist Critic

Gustave Courbet’s account of a critic he befriended, who was notorious for waking up in the middle of the night, standing in his bed, screaming ‘I have to criticize,’ remained as a warning in my mind not to adopt the professional identity wholeheartedly, or at least to doubt its motivations. And having encountered two of the most important art critics of the 1950s, Clement Greenberg in New York and Pierre Restany in Paris only once in my life, I distinctly remember my bewilderment at the peculiar airs they exuded: the Parisian all flair and fanfare, and the New Yorker all abstemious arrogance. However, in both instances I recall being puzzled by their auto-construction as presumably major public figures. Admittedly, both represented highly specialized forms of knowledge and competence of judgment that seemed to distinguish them from the spectatorial and readerly collective that contemporary artistic production supposedly addresses. The writings of the “classic critic” of the 1950s—as represented by Greenberg and Restany possibly for the last time in the twentieth century—were literally those of the eyewitness—, distinguished by privileged and primary access to the studio, the work and its maker. And it was this immediacy that vouched for the credibility of the critics’ accounts. Distances—spatial, temporal, epistemological, methodological—and the degree to which these promised objectivity, warranted the truth value of the historian’s narratives of the lives (and the works) of the artists.¹

To formulate the nationalist ideologue had thus become one of the last social functions of these critics of the 1950s (as opposed to critical reflections of the 1920s–1930s, which had been theorizing cultural practices as instruments of collective political transformation, for example). No wonder that their discerning judgments were dependent on innate or intentional disavowals of other historical phenomena, places and facts. And in order to sustain these necessary geopolitical distinctions and enforce their clamor for supremacy, each critic—and their many minor followers—constructed a narrative whose subtext was based on their specific penchant for omissions or calculated erasures.²

To a generation of European scholars, critics and curators, born like myself in the 1940s–1950s, an American critic like Greenberg acquired almost mythical proportions, seemingly having constructed the single most powerful artistic canon of the post-WWII period, undoubtedly one of the many causes for an ever increasing attraction to migrate to the American discourses and institutions on Modernism.³ Nevertheless, the historical fact that a significant number of emerging or even already established European scholars and critics, including myself, left for the United States in the mid-1970s to engage with Modernist visual culture, remains somewhat of a mystery even at this moment. All the more so, since almost everybody among those would have considered themselves to have been on the radical left, even if the spectrum might have ranged from Marxist Leninists, Trotskyites to Debordian Situationism. And only recently, around 1968 had all of them—in one way or another—protested in the streets of London, Paris and Berlin against American Imperialism, politically against the war in Vietnam, and culturally against the American ideologies' compulsive consumption whose coercive regimes and ecological devastation was steadily becoming more evident since the early 1960s.

One explanation of this paradox might be the fact that the young European scholars and critics of 1968 transferred to the United States to study if not already to teach with a generation of disciples of eminent mostly German and French Jewish art historians and critics who had been forced to emigrate to the United States to escape fascist prosecution. The field of Modernist art history, most certainly in Germany, had hardly been formed before having been erased and had not been reconstructed for decades after 1945. And the field and profession of the modernist critic, the legacies of writers such as Carl Einstein, Max Raphael and Paul Westheim had now been transferred to a fundamentally different, yet newly foundational American context, as their roles as public critics and historians had been re-activated and reconfigured in the United States in the work of Clement Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro and Leo Steinberg. But another aspect, less recognized in its tremendous impact on Europeans, artists, historians and critics, was the fact that the methodological and historical models to comprehend the histories of Modernist production, as they had now been reconfigured by these American historians and critics also provided the basis upon which American artistic debates were activated and differentiated continuously since the 1940s (a phenomenon utterly absent from German, and to a considerable degree also from French critical culture until the 1960s, if not even later).⁴

These first movements within the field of a critical reception of Dada and Duchamp were now initiated in the United States, which in turn had a tremendous impact on the formation of American artistic post-WWII practices:

Jasper Johns would only be the first and the most eminent example of how an entire artistic trajectory was almost singlehandedly triggered by a reception of Duchamp's oeuvre and Dada within the context of artistic production, restituting, or rather endowing that history for the first time in the twentieth century with primary centrality (a process that would find its European sequels only several decades later). Thus, the other and probably even more compelling condition explaining the European drift to the United States clearly must have been the ever more compelling American artistic practices since the rise of Abstract Expressionism in New York, intensifying in the wake of its complex historicizations and critical interpretations by both the subsequent generations of artists and the ever more avid followers among critics and art historians. One could even speculate that in a paradoxical mirror image of historical transfers, the European avantgarde of the 1920s and 1930s, Dada, Surrealism and the Soviets, returned to an extremely belated reception to Europe through the primary mediation of American artists, ranging from Pollock to Sol LeWitt, (and thereby laid the foundations of a newly emerging complex European post-WWII artistic practices, in the way that Richter is unthinkable without Warhol or Buren is unthinkable without Ryman and Stella, and Hanne Darboven and Isa Genzken are unthinkable without Sol LeWitt and Eva Hesse) in a process of a peculiarly inverse reciprocity.

2 The Critic as Democratic Agent

Obviously, this historical and political process of radical democratization, as artistic practices since the 1960s increasingly emphasized that any cultural practice, be it visual or literary, would inevitably and increasingly have to challenge, if not to eventually eliminate all hierarchical orders differentiating the presumed novice recipients from the presumed 'expert.' In fact, the innate hierarchical division between privileged forms of knowledge that the expert claims as a placeholder for the interested engagement of a selected class-based audience had been precisely a perpetual target of all efforts the avantgardes (and some of the post-WWII neo-avantgardes). But it is doubtful that the critic, under the circumstances of a continuously expanding processes of democratization (which inevitably entailed also massive consequences of historical, subjective and aesthetic desublimation) could any longer withstand these processes and pose as a 'guardian of the secret' (as Greenberg had famously called one of Pollock's most eminent paintings).

It is certainly not accidental that the writing of criticism in the subsequent decade of the 1960s splintered into ever more incompatible philosophical and

aesthetic dichotomies, whose extremes we will try to sketch in two, more or less randomly chosen pairings of writings from that decade.⁵ The first would be Leo Steinberg's and Donald Judd's simultaneously written, yet fundamentally different responses to Greenberg's legacy and their discovery of his artistic *bête noir*, Jasper Johns. One of the first compellingly argued criticisms of Greenberg's hegemonic, so called Formalist practice (which by that time had already spawned a number of increasingly powerful followers) was formulated by Leo Steinberg (Steinberg, 1972a, 1972b, 1972c).⁶ An art historian whose comprehension of the complex epistemology of artistic practices and philosophical hermeneutics had not only motivated him to write a groundbreaking essay on Jasper Johns in 1962 (and thus initiated the reception of a new generation of artists, fundamentally changing the pictorial paradigms of the 'New York School'). Steinberg's essays also opened that school's curtains to an utterly unknown landscape of historical methods and philosophical principles (Steinberg, 1972c).

The extreme opposite of Steinberg's vast expansion of criticism, based on the ever more complex accounts of art historical knowledge, would be introduced at precisely the same moment in the writings of the artist Donald Judd. The artist not only reduced and reinforced the neo-positivist parameters and ahistorical armatures he had inherited from Greenberg to the level of a toolbox *doxa*, designing templates to process perception that confirmed his indisputable artistic authority. At the same time, performing, or rather enforcing one more time the functions of the critic as agent of local, regional and national ideological and economic interests, Judd also fortified the paranoid boundaries of a presumably insuperable triumph of New York School painting and sculpture, its trajectory inevitably leading and culminating in his own achievements, manifestly defying and disqualifying the ever increasing differentiations emerging in the various post-WWII visual productions in Europe, Asia or the Latin American countries.

3 Redefining Criticism: New Paradigms of the 1960s

Our second pair of exemplary paradoxical oppositions of critical thinking of the 1960s might possibly be even more perplexing. Two utterly incompatible demands for criticism, or rather the objections voiced against its seemingly enduring and pervasive power, were once again enunciated from extremely different philosophical and aesthetic positions. Thus, Susan Sontag in her notorious essay "Against Interpretation" (1966) signaled—if not outright called for—the termination of the critic's historical legitimacy:

Today is such a time, when the project of interpretation is largely reactionary, stifling. Like the fumes of the automobile and of heavy industry which befoul the urban atmosphere, the effusion of interpretations of art today poisons our sensibilities in a culture whose already classical dilemma is the hypertrophy of the intellect at the expense of energy and sensual capability. [...] What kind of criticism, of commentary on the arts, is desirable today? [...] What would criticism look like that would serve the work of art, not usurp its place? [...] In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotic of art. (Sontag, 1966)

Sontag's call for an 'eros' of perception in her crucial conclusive statement, was at the time of her writing already an antiquated, romanticizing projection. The challenges posed by the procedural precision and the materiality of painterly and sculptural practices at that very moment, from Stella to Hesse, from LeWitt to Ryman had long surpassed the wishful aspiration that artistic production could still transmit the aesthetic enchantment of an unalienated sensuous subjectivity. Artistic practices since the early 1960s conceived of themselves as engaging with and engendering a materialist phenomenology of experience (and materialist implied precisely all aspects of the philosophical concept, from contemplating mere matter to the manner of mediation). It also addressed the very fact that artistic practices would now refuse the hegemonic demands of an external or transcendently pre-existing discursive order of criticism. Increasingly engaging with different temporal and geographical orders, as much as different conventions of subjective perception, aesthetic practice aimed to simultaneously undo conventional concepts of subject formation. Not only had the previously ruling critical discourses maintained linguistic primacy and the dominance of specific communicative conventions, they sustained the social hierarchy by providing a presumably qualified speaker with interpretive privileges, so to speak. Rejecting the written criticism of the 1950s, criticism would now attempt to literally formulate a new terminology, to conjure and conceive different, de-hierarchized social and subjective constellations.

Thus, simultaneously with Sontag's liberal bourgeois pomposity reclaiming the privileges of an unencumbered aesthetics of eros if not ecstasy, we encounter Lucy Lippard's radically innovative conception of the critic and curator as a feminist activist and as a self-effacing mediator of artistic documents. Lippard, the historian of Ad Reinhardt in 1967, now in 1968 becomes the foremost critic of Conceptual art who only collected and delivered the barely commented documents of the artists themselves. In a spirit of self-negating neutrality, she dislodges even the last remnants of the critic's claims to privileged vision and

discursive functions. Lippard concluded her magnum opus as a critic (largely an accumulation of documents, photographs, charts and manuals provided directly by the artists themselves) in her Postface:

It seemed in 1969 that no one, not even a public greedy for novelty, would actually pay money or much of it for a xerox sheet referring to an event past or never directly perceived, a group of photographs documenting an ephemeral situation or condition, a project for work never to be completed, words spoken but not recorded; it seemed that these artists would therefore be forcibly freed from the tyranny of the commodity status and market—orientation. [...] On the other hand, the esthetic contribution of an 'idea art' have been considerable. An informational, documentary idiom has provided a vehicle for art ideas that were encumbered and obscured by formal considerations. [...] Such a strategy, if it continues to develop, can only have a salutary effect on the way all art is examined and developed in the future. (Lippard, 1973, p. 263)

Radically consequent as Lippard's project actually was, it is only with hindsight that we can comprehend the historical and theoretical deficiencies of her belated enactment of an essentially factographic definition of the future consonances and equivalences of artistic and critical practices. First of all because Lippard's collectively operating agents of a newly accessible universal aesthetic, called Conceptual Art, in fact only designated the collective of artists as newly enabled speakers and readers. And while Lippard in fact disbanded the privileges of critical hierarchies and evaluation, and more importantly perhaps the hierarchies of genres and techniques, now relativized if not disqualified by a presumably universal photographic and linguistic textuality, the chasm between production and reception was only dramatically widened. Most tragic of all was Lippard's utopian self-deception that—given the rapidly advancing and increasing distribution of leisure time—, the reduction of the visual practices to readerly textuality would inevitably entail a new community of self-determining critics and readers.

We have already seen, however briefly, when glancing at Judd's writings, that the status and functions of criticism were very much on the mind of artists of that generation as well (Robert Morris's writings, by comparison, would qualify rather as those of one of the most eminent theoreticians of the sculptural production of that decade). That the critic's claims to provide literal and literary agency to a structure emerging from and operative within the field of the visual, had come under historical pressure if not outright doubt would also be signaled by a triadic derision by three artistic giants, performed in short

order from the late 1950s to the late 1960s: Marcel Duchamp, Jasper Johns and Richard Hamilton. Confronting the dogmatic voices of the critics of the 1950s thus generated at least three explicit artistic dialogic responses in actual works and statements produced by these artists, and we want to conclude by adding a final, if sketchy sampling drawn from criticism's opposite discursive sphere of actual production.

Johns' *The Critic Smiles* (1959), Richard Hamilton's *The Critic Laughs* (1969), and most importantly, Marcel Duchamp's lecture *The Creative Act*, ironically delivered at the annual conference of professionalized critical interpreters College Association in 1957, his radically emancipatory bill of readers and spectators' rights, which decisively transfers the traditional functions of the critic to spectatorial emancipation and self-constitution.

The first example would be Jasper Johns' enigmatic, or rather sardonic object, *The Critic Smiles*, a small sculptmetal sculpture from 1959. The title of the work, stamped by incision on the sculpture's base like a caption under a photograph or an inscription on a specimen object, announces an uncanny exchange between the practices of the artist and the critic. Trading the brush's bristles for a set of molars, not only confounds soft matter with bone, but implicitly inverts the painter's trade of the subtle application of encaustic paint with the critic's gnawing compulsion to bite. Only a few years later Johns will stage an even more vociferous attack on the profession: *The Critic Sees* (1961) (sculptmetal on plaster with glass). Again, we are confronted with a literal 'anatomy of criticism.'⁷ This time, however, the relief does not only display the teeth as integral to the critic's anatomical and discursive apparatus, but in an act of almost diabolical substitution, Johns positions the lips of the speaking critic literally *in lieu* of the eyes, perversely shielded by the glass lenses of a pair of mockery spectacles. One might even speculate that Johns paid specific tribute to Greenberg's notorious fleshy lips, a critic that had indeed not provided Johns with any succor. Rosalind Krauss, at one point closer to Greenberg's formalism than later on in her career, described his physiognomy in the following manner:

There are two seemingly mismatched fragments, just as I remember them: the domed shape of the head, bald, rigid, unforgiving, and the flaccid quality of the mouth, slightly ajar in the physiologically impossible gesture of both relaxing and grinning. As always, I am held by the arrogance of the mouth—fleshy, toothy, aggressive—and its pronouncements, which though voiced in a hesitant, stumbling drawl are, as always, implacably final. (Krauss, 1993, p. 248)

Johns' animus against the critic might have originated primarily from the conflict that the critic's writing and speech prioritize voice over vision. Whereas it had been precisely the artist's ambition to have his painting address its viewing subjects performatively, as the painting itself is suspended, if not actually already transiting from vision to language in what was clearly one of Johns' most revolutionary ambitions at that time. By excluding anybody's mediating interference (the very opposite of aesthetic experience), the work will yield its utopian aesthetic power to allow the viewer to become a reader on the painting's own newly emerging linguistic terms. The sovereignty of the voice of the artist aims to establish a dialogue with the sovereignty of the reader's and spectator's vision. And it is that dual sovereignty that the critic's mediation deflects and disrupts with its paternalizing intentions to speak for others or to others in lieu of the painting speaking without mediation to the newly authorized spectatorial and readerly subject.

4 Ends of the Critics

The extent to which the functions of the critic engaged that generation of artists becomes even more obvious when we discover that Johns' initial alert to the critics' problematic performances as blind speakers would not only be repeated by Johns in two subsequent works, but that his tribulation would find a dialogic response across the Atlantic in a work by Richard Hamilton in 1968. After having received a set of enlarged artificial teeth made from sugar at a funfair from his son, Hamilton mounted the candy dentures on an authentic electric toothbrush, designed by Dieter Rams and produced by Braun—then along with almost all of their products—a magnet of attraction for Hamilton and others to ponder the magic power of post-WWII design in West Germany. Repeating Johns' uncanny play of substitutions, transforming the object to be cleaned into a disabled cleaning device, Hamilton radicalizes Johns' title from *The Critic Smiles* to his own *The Critic Laughs*. If Johns had associated the critic with blindness, Hamilton's false dentures diagnose the critic's inability to laugh, to respond to a joke, and by implication his inability to respond to any artistic intervention that is restructuring the unconscious in order to experience a moment of sudden relief from the continuous and collective conditions of repression.

Just like Johns, Hamilton would even follow up with a second work contemplating the ever more precarious, if not ludicrous conditions of critical commentary. In 1971–1972, after a prolonged and apparently almost insurmountable

sequence of production problems had been resolved, Hamilton released a second version of *The Critic Laughs*. No longer a photographic image with manually applied painterly marks targeting the toothbrush and its grinning dentures, the follow-up version now confronts us with a perfectly produced assisted readymade. The candy dentures, recast in professional dental plastic, are now delivered in an authentic faux display case that features once again the original Braun device. One modification, however, at first easily overlooked, matters most: the brand name Braun has been replaced by a typographical simulacrum of the artist's name, Hamilton. Quite strikingly, yet another blow to the myth of the critic, the question is posed as to what should the critic now judge once all artisanal and artistic differentiations have been purged to an equal extent from life and from art? Thus, the dentures baring the critic's laughter or last laugh acquire an ominous note of mortality, in the best tradition of the *memento mori*.

Just like Johns and Hamilton, the practices of Pop Art and emerging Minimalism had insisted on their innate self-evident communicability. Even more, their iconographic choices and their formal and morphological structures had claimed universal accessibility. These claims to suture collective perception and enact *unmediated* legibility, had already been voiced once before as an emancipatory project with a variety of fatalities and some rare successes in the 1920s. But now, neither falsely popularizing, nor indoctrinating under the conditions of the collective erasure of the subject, the critic's claims to serve as the privileged and legitimate mediator between the studio and the page, between the artist and the collective of competent readers had also acquired a newly manifest futility.

That the socio-historically constructed role and the functions of the critic had been drastically reduced if not effaced altogether, was apparently inevitable. This erasure, however, seems to have been caused by fundamentally different, yet equally compelling historical, economical and ideological-political forces. First of all, the newly ruling order of universal equivalences resulting from the globalization of cultural practices, compellingly disqualifies any claim for hierarchical evaluations of any kind. Comparative qualifications and criteria can no longer be drawn on any consensus formed by particular classes, individual subjects and their interests, local traditions or nation state cultures. The second set of causes is no less powerful in its determinations, even though it originates in an utterly different spectrum of universalizing and relativizing forces. It is the fact that the final industrial commercialization of artistic production (retroactively even embracing and equalizing all the conflicting positions of the avantgardes of the pre-WWII period and the post-WWII

neo-avantgardes) eliminate the motivations and the credibility of any invested speech claiming to act as agency for a particular aesthetic, any ideological or political agenda. And lastly, once again the total obverse of the causes just defined: the universal politicization of artistic practices themselves can neither deploy nor tolerate the meddling voices of a critic's attempt to sift and secure viable practices and positions from mere political posturing. endow the object with that uncanny quality.

If we rally assume that we are now living in a time without critics, a time from which critics are not only absent, but when they are objectively no longer desirable or needed, what are the criteria of a time without criticism? First of all, I could repeat my old adage first stated over ten years ago, that a system of investment and of financialization of the art market does in fact not only no longer need critical input, but quite explicitly disqualifies it. Criticism is only a hindrance, or a farce once the patterns of cultural consumption have reached a status in which stock market and art market have become assimilated to such an extent that only market expertise, prognosis of profit maximization and growth potential are the central questions of professional comment.

Most importantly, we have to recognize that the universal acceptance of all practices, of all kinds from all sites and periods of production is not necessarily a sign of an emancipated global community. What currently appears as a revolutionary distribution of universal cultural access and assets and its ever expanding infinity of potential objects of desire, obviously is not the offspring and harvest of a truly liberated global collectivity. Rather, it operates as the phantasmagoria to still find meaningful structures of formal, material and social organization of subjective and objective experience in just about any formally defined aesthetic object of any time. Its compelling motivation is to dissimulate the actually governing conditions of an extreme totalization of digitally administrated technocratic regimes. It does not matter how politically ambitious the aims of artistic practices might be if the sphere of a public social and political culture is increasingly subjected to oppressive and censorious control.

Duchamp's utter and final delegation of aesthetic judgment and experience to the condition not just of spectatorial participation, but rather, of self-determination, the spectator's literal authorization (anticipating Barthes's later prognostic of the future of literal and literary authorization of readers) had already in 1957 diagnosed that the process of reception of cultural representations can only be recognized and evaluated, outside of any specialized and professionalized expertise by the liberated and self-constituting acts of spectatorial participation:

If the artist, as a human being, full of the best intentions toward himself and the whole world, plays no role at all in the judgment of his own work, how can one describe the phenomenon which prompts the spectator to react critically to the work of art? In other words, how does this reaction come about? All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone: the spectator brings the work of art in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act. (Duchamp, 1959, pp. 77–78)

Notes

- 1 As the great art historian Leo Steinberg remarked early on, to emphasize the distinctions between art historians and critics was the rule at that time (and ever after, most likely): "In those days, the mid-1950s, practicing art critics were mostly artists or men of letters. Few art historians took the contemporary scene seriously enough to give it the time of day. To divert one's attention from Papal Rome to Tenth Street, New York, would have struck them as frivolous—and I respected their probity" (Steinberg, 1975, p. vii).
- 2 Examples would be the fact that the first generation of critics from the 1950s utterly failed to recognize even a minimum of Duchamp's and Dadaism's epistemological and aesthetic impact, the failure to confront the primordial restructuring of painting by the Soviet avantgardes, and most strikingly perhaps, the utter failure to recognize the centrality of photography in the visual cultures of the twentieth century. Two of the most paradoxical but consequential key hinges within that American context, initially utterly contained within the confines of Greenberg's power, were Robert Motherwell and William Rubin. Motherwell, a bona fide, even if slightly younger member of Greenberg's certified painters of the New York School, broke ranks with its ethos and aesthetics by editing the most comprehensive history of Dada activities at an astonishingly early moment in 1951. Motherwell's book *The Dada Painters and Poets* (1951), initiated the American rediscovery of Dada on all levels, including Dada's reception by artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, and bringing about the first major exhibitions at Sidney Janis, for example. Rubin, a bit more than ten years later—while remaining a staunch follower of Greenberg's theories and aesthetics—followed Motherwell's lead by organizing the first comprehensive grand scale exhibition account of that history in his *Dada and Surrealism Revisited*, at the Museum of Modern Art in 1968. Comprehensive as it was at that moment, it was from a later perspective of course also scandalously deficient in its complete omission of any of the actual political and vast photographic dimensions of Dada and Surrealism.
- 3 Among the many examples of the seemingly never-ending European engagement with Greenberg's writings at the end of the twentieth century, and even the first decade of the following one, see among others: Bois (1996), Buchloh (1994), Clark (1982), Duve and Greenberg (2010), Guilbaut (1983), Harrison (1984), and Lüdeking (1994).
- 4 One example of a serious breakthrough in critical European visual culture would be Umberto Eco's *Opera Aperta*, which was published in 1962. Another, no less crucial, however later in their explicit engagement with phenomena of visual artistic practices, would be the writings of Roland Barthes.

- 5 Obviously, the number of critics and the ever more differentiated critical positions expanded to the same extent that artistic production itself rapidly evolved in the 1960s, demanding its unique and specific critical company and commentary. Paradoxically, however, this expansion could not guarantee that the viability of the methods of criticism would now be fortified and expanded as well. Rather it would appear that with the diversification and ever intensifying liberal randomization of aesthetic practices, the rapidly increasing indifference and irrelevance of criticism was solidified, finding of course its climactic conclusion with the formation of the “art industry” of the past two decades, where criticism has become manifestly obsolete and utterly pointless. See Buchloh (2012).
- 6 When critical legacies were almost pathologically internalized, another major factor emerged that forces us to dispute the viability of the current, let alone a future of the practice of the critic: not everybody succeeded as compellingly to transit from Greenberg’s hegemonic model of critical writing and thinking as did Rosalind Krauss. For example, Charles Harrison’s never ending labor of (un-)love for Greenberg in London was possibly even more inextricably entangled due to an imaginary Anglo-American formalist tradition leading from Roger Fry’s Bloomsbury to Greenberg’s Tenth Street. Harrison defended and extended Greenberg’s legacies even after two generations of artists (Pop and Minimalism), had amply proven that the terms and the concepts, let alone the historical records and accounts of Greenberg’s formalism had been utterly deficient from the start. See Harrison (1984).
- 7 Anatomy of Criticism had of course been the title of Northrop Frye’s notorious late Formalist study of literary criticism in 1957. Almost exactly the time of both the Duchampian and the Johnsian polemical farewells to the profession of the critic.

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