

chapter one

art, advertising, sign value

As one of my favorite poets, Ezra Pound, once said, the beef stew cooking on the stove doesn't need any advertising. It has advertising. It has its aroma. You can smell the beef stew on the stove. But the beef stew in the can has to be advertised. Somebody has to sell it to you. It can't sell itself.

—Carl Andre, 1968¹

We specialize in the development and organization of public relations programs involving the fine arts. The art program is the medium through which you tell your story to the community. . . . [It is] designed to give you maximum return on your public relations dollar.

—Seth Siegelau and Jack Wendler, 1967²

When Seth Siegelau opened his gallery in New York in June 1964 he was only twenty-three years old. The circumstances were favorable, as the 1960s were boom years in economic terms and the future promised endless growth. This euphoria carried over into all areas of

speculation, including the art business. Art was being purchased at record rates, and a new type of patronage was emerging that differed dramatically from that of the elite circles that had previously dominated the art market in the United States.³ “In a short span of time,” wrote one observer in 1966,

*serious avant-garde collecting changed from a private depreciated “act” of commitment to untested ideas into a conspicuous public activity that drew more and more eager recruits from the new age of affluence. Advocacy and support of experimental art has now gained such a hold on the American imagination that the normal lag between artistic invention and its public acceptance is disappearing.*⁴

“Experimental” art had various attractions for the “eager recruits.” For one thing, it now had investment value—a phenomenon that had long evaded the contemporary art market. Whereas buyers of art as an investment in the first postwar years generally patronized more traditional work, during the early 1960s speculation permeated every facet of the art market, including contemporary art.⁵ Astute collectors and investors discovered that contemporary art, which could be purchased at bargain prices because of its newfangledness, had enormous investment potential. Furthermore, the patronage of innovative art gave collecting the same sense of adventure and risk-taking that existed in the world of business. The cumulative effect of these trends, coupled with changes in tax laws, contributed to a booming market for contemporary art that in turn inflated the exchange value of art and attracted an even greater number of interested patrons. Financial journals made investment recommendations for art, singling out the potential of the work of a number of artists and artistic movements, and newspapers covered museum and gallery exhibitions more thoroughly in their social columns. In 1963, a *Life* magazine article boldly announced that “more buyers than ever sail into a broadening [art] market.” The article included reproductions of work by a number of young artists, along with a price range for each.⁶ Two years later, a feature in *Newsweek*, “Vanity Fair: The New York Art Scene,” focused on how the art world as an institution had become the center of attention and the artist a supplier of commodities in an exchange of fashionable goods.⁷

But there was more to the growing market for ambitious new art during the early 1960s. As important as monetary value was the prestige this type of patronage could bring the collector in the new phase of image-centered capitalism. As the contemporary art scene became a subject of interest in the popular press, the media increasingly gave the purchasers

of experimental art some of the same attention they gave the artists.⁸ Articles often featured tag lines such as “These pictures are like IBM stock, don’t forget that, and this is the time to buy,” alongside photographs of hip-looking collectors in front of their accumulations of contemporary art.⁹ The new collectors clearly enjoyed the limelight, and when quoted, in true American fashion, were anything but culturally pretentious. As one explained to the journalist of a 1965 *Life* magazine article: “I don’t even look at the pictures. I just know they’re there—and that I have the best and biggest collection in the world.”¹⁰

Thus for the young, upwardly mobile art enthusiasts, many with college backgrounds and some knowledge of art history, untried contemporary art was at once a potential investment, a means by which to differentiate themselves from their past, and a way of distinguishing themselves from their more established, and for the most part aesthetically conservative, peers. Experimental art was hip, and, because of its inherently tenuous character, the contemporary art world provided a space for the ambitious newly rich to locate themselves on the way up the social ladder. Francis O’Connor comments on this phenomenon in “Notes on Patronage: The 1960s,” written as the great wartime prosperity collapsed and the art market ran out of steam in the recession of the early 1970s: “This new audience was made up of young, mobile, affluent, highly trained technocrats, eager to enjoy the comforts of their class—one of which was art. Art magically combined characteristics irresistible to these nouveau[x] riche[s]: it was prestigious to own and conspicuous to display, and vied with the stock market in investment potential.”¹¹

Unlike the connoisseurs of the past, many of whom had made of art collecting a diletantish avocation, the new collectors typically remained active in their workaday world, with art a part of that world rather than a relief or escape from its values or pressures. Supporting this outlook was the increased presence of “art” in corporate offices and buildings. In practice this subtle shift, whereby art now proliferated in the workplace as well as in museums and private collections, meant a decreased emphasis on the opinions of established art critics and scholars and an increased and more evident reliance on art galleries and dealers, whose advice often emphasized the exchange value of works of art alongside their aesthetic value. The impact of the new market patterns that this new group of collectors put into effect, together with the ecstatic coverage of the art scene in the mass media, combined to effect a near total reversal of the traditional processes by which artists were recognized. Whereas erudite art critics previously played a significant role in establishing reputations, in the 1960s new collectors of vanguard art began to purchase the work of artists prior to criti-

cal “legitimation,” increasing the artists’ recognition and fiscal opportunities. Here is how the critic Harold Rosenberg put it at the time:

*The texture of collaboration between dealers, collectors and exhibitors has become increasingly dense to the point at which the artist is confronted by a solid wall of opinion and fashion forecasts constructed, essentially, out of the data of the art market. . . . The presence of this potent professional establishment has radically affected the relation, once largely regulated by the taste of patrons, of the artist to society and to his own product.*¹²

As Rosenberg suggests, in this fundamental reconception of patronage the entrepreneurial, innovative, and often historically naive art dealer replaced the highly specialized art critic as the central conduit between artists and their audience. The critic, who had had a continuing importance throughout the era of the New York School, was no longer the primary arbiter of artistic success. Despite the move away from elitism, what emerged was an increased collusion among dealers, collectors, curators, and artists, where value was fixed by “trendiness” and, ultimately, by “marketability.” The potential “power” of the collection in determining an artwork’s value was also on the rise. As Siegelau notes in a 1969 interview, collectors often approached artists with “some line of horseshit about a very important collection, they say, ‘Sell it to me very cheaply because you’ll be in my collection.’”¹³ Value, in this new scheme, was determined by a “collection” and, by direct extension, by an ambitious collector with little or no knowledge about art. Siegelau declares in conversation with Charles Harrison in 1969 that people are aware of art through printed media and conversation, or through publicity and rumor—two venues that Siegelau was to exploit during the mid-1960s.¹⁴ “By 1965,” one observer put it a decade later,

*it was almost immaterial who had written an article on an artist, where the article appeared, or how complimentary it was. Since more and more collectors of vanguard art lived outside the art world, they did not always read such abstruse journals as Artforum, at least not word for word. A photograph used to illustrate an article on an artist often proved more effective in marketing his work than the article itself. For the same reason, an article in Time, Life, or the New York Times was more useful to a dealer than an article in one of the art journals. Ironically, articles which criticized an artist’s work began to have the same effect as articles which praised it: both brought the artist to the public’s often casual attention.*¹⁵

This last comment resonates almost explicitly with the findings of Harrison and Cynthia White's 1965 study of the French art world.¹⁶ Interestingly, the writer's point was not that positive criticism was now indistinguishable from negative, but that all such distinctions were irrelevant in the burgeoning art marketplace of the 1960s. The passage directs attention to the shift during this decade from serious intellectual critique and analysis to the crucial importance of publicity. Within this atmosphere a new type of dealer emerged, one who had to appeal to collectors but maintain a distance from them at the same time.

SETH SIEGELAUB CONTEMPORARY ART

Located at 16 West 56th Street in New York, Siegelau's gallery—Seth Siegelau Contemporary Art—dealt not only in fine art but also in Oriental rugs, which were sometimes incorporated into shows.¹⁷ This coupling provided the dealer an appropriate setting to project the image of the art collector as a highly cultured individual surrounded by refined objects. Additionally, the combination of new art and old, “timeless” rugs inevitably suggested that this particular “new” would also withstand time and become “priceless.” Siegelau's aggressive promotion of his gallery is evident in the structure of his first exhibition (14 September–10 October 1964). He arranged paintings and sculptures by a number of artists throughout the gallery space and placed couches and chairs on an exotic carpet in the center of the room. The gallery visitor was encouraged to lounge in the seats and experience the show as an overall environment.¹⁸

The vanguard aspects of Siegelau's exhibition strategy were even clearer in the gallery's second show, scheduled in late December 1964, which featured a carnivalesque “conscious[ness] expanding experience” by the artist Arni Hendin. This four-day “happening” also encouraged audience participation through an unpredictable series of encounters. “During the 22 thru 25 December,” wrote Siegelau to the collectors Robert and Ethel Scull on 18 November,

Arni Hendin will be creating an experience at my gallery called “an examination of Social Reaction”—a simulated day in the life of Mr. and Mrs. Important People. As the name suggests there will be an entire day constructed in the gallery: walls will be made, as will rooms, a subway car, office, department store, party and private apartment. Mr. and Mrs. Important People will begin their day in their simulated house and continue through their day to the simulated party. The other people in

*the gallery will watch the I.P. go through their day and play parts in their day as servants, artists, party-givers, friends, office help, etc. I expect coverage from two art magazines and one paper (so far), and I plan to tie in with other media as we pick up steam.*¹⁹

What is remarkable about the “experience” that Siegelaub describes is that it engages in a sharp social critique of the potential collectors, or “I.P.,” exposing the banality of their routine lives, while at the same time appealing to the very sources that legitimate such lives—the mass media—to validate the exhibition. But what I want to single out in particular here is that right from the beginning of his career Siegelaub places importance on cultivating, shaping, and ensuring press coverage and publicity.²⁰ Over the next several years, he will become as attentive to the organization of image, artistic (and corporate) identity, and publicity strategies as to the actual production of art exhibitions. His credo will be that, if marketed correctly, almost any artwork, no matter how unconventional, could be sold.²¹

Siegelaub initially sought an identity for his gallery as a site of what were then variously referred to as “action,” “happenings,” and “environments.” Fashioned into sensory obstacle courses, these interiors might include not only the traditional media of painting and sculpture but also, as Allan Kaprow (with whom the term “happenings” was primarily associated at the time) suggested, “objects of every sort . . . , paint, chairs, food, electric and neon lights, smoke, water, old socks, a dog, movies, [and] a thousand other things.”²² Kaprow’s polemic against the immaculate, gallery-bound object, published in what was then *the New York School* journal, *Art News*, was taken up in the years immediately following its publication by a whole range of artists who sought to reposition artistic practice within everyday life, breaking down all traditional divisions not only between artistic genres and media, but also between the actor and spectator, the stage and public space, aesthetic and secular objects.²³ And Siegelaub was a participant in this trend, in his capacity as exhibition organizer and art dealer.

As things turned out, however, the Seth Siegelaub Contemporary Art gallery only operated from 23 June 1964 to the end of April 1966. The increase in the number of collectors in the 1960s was paralleled by increases in both the number of artists operating in the art world and the number of galleries. According to one source, in New York City alone there were nearly one thousand galleries during this period.²⁴ With the proliferation of galleries outpacing the rise in patronage, competition became more intense and Siegelaub could not sell enough work to cover the gallery’s overhead.

But things were by no means over for him. Although he would never again become affiliated with a particular gallery space, he organized a large number of pivotal and highly influential exhibitions over the next six years. In the process he played an even more important role in the enormous transformation in art exhibition and production practices that took place during the late 1960s.

THE NEW MARKET EERS

When Seth Siegelau Contemporary Art closed in the spring of 1966, Siegelau shifted strategies. He took a two-room apartment at Madison Avenue and 82nd Street and began dealing privately out of his suite. Conducting business in this way meant sparing the expenses of maintaining a gallery. The practice of direct-mail advertising continued, though, as did the strong promotion of an identified and select group of forward-looking artists—although now a much smaller group.²⁵

Siegelau installed paintings and sculptures throughout his apartment and maintained an invitation-only policy. Through his past dealings he had cultivated various art enthusiasts and young businessman-collectors who found the association with artists and others in this “salon-type” art world as appealing as collecting objects. Another site of business for Siegelau during this period was the Manhattan nightclub Max’s Kansas City on Park Avenue South at 17th Street, where artists, critics, collectors, and visiting Hollywood celebrities would mingle over drinks and food. Social capital, that network of contacts so important to a successful career, could be gained there, night after night. Thus Siegelau’s days would be spent in his Madison Avenue apartment, tirelessly drafting promotional letters and telephoning prospective patrons, and his evenings socializing and networking at Max’s Kansas City and other accessible sites of art world activity. Every Sunday afternoon, Siegelau would host a *soirée*, or *salon*, at his apartment, to which he would invite a select group of collectors, critics, and museum curators to mingle with the artists he represented. This tactful organization of an exclusive “inner circle” was the way Siegelau now did business and showcased his artists’ work.

But Siegelau had more than a good eye and adept managerial skills; he also had an extraordinary knack for promotion and publicity. For a succinct illustration of his entrepreneurial strategy we have only to look at the agenda and promotion of Image. Art Programs for Industry, Inc., a service company he incorporated with the wealthy collector and busi-

nessman Jack Wendler early in 1967. Image presented itself to the corporate world as “a public relations specialist.” “We specialize in the development and organization of public relations programs involving the fine arts,” stated an Image promotional pamphlet targeted at prospective corporate clients. “The art program is the medium through which you tell your story to the community. . . . [It is] designed to give you maximum return on your public relations dollar.”²⁶ No doubt Siegelau and Wendler were right: art is capable of bestowing personality dimensions even on corporations. Also clear, though, is that by highlighting the personal dimension—“your story”—Image establishes a differentiating system. And as a range of distinguishing marks is keyed to one of personality traits, art comes to play the same role as did formerly a field of distinct values.²⁷

The infusion of corporate funds was a major element in the expansion of the art market during the mid-1960s.²⁸ Corporate ideology in that decade was a dynamic force, as the business world undertook dramatic transformations both of the way it operated and the way it imagined itself. In significant ways, corporate collectors made clear their preference for contemporary art over more established work. Many in corporate practice, especially in public relations departments, imagined new, innovative art as a symbolic ally in the pursuit of entrepreneurship, a partner in their own struggles to revitalize business and the consumer order generally.²⁹ Furthermore, contemporary trends and innovations in art offered the corporate patron a progressive image in the business sphere and a public sign of commitment to fresh ideas. A 1967 text that was clearly directed to corporate executives and shareholders stated:

*There are . . . immediate and direct advantages for the corporate collector. . . . Management executives have come to recognize the many practical benefits in public relations terms—among them, building goodwill and establishing a reputation for progressiveness. This reputation is vital to the modern business institution. It influences consumer acceptance of its products; helps attract dynamic young talents to the executive roster; satisfies stockholder interest in its ability to compete; and contributes significantly to heightened respect from all segments of society.*³⁰

Thus the corporate patron could share the creed of laissez-faire economists such as Milton Friedman, who maintained that a corporation’s only responsibility was to produce profits, and still justify support of the arts as “enlightened self-interest.”³¹

Siegelau was evidently determined to mine this new and potentially enormous source of corporate patronage. In a way that paralleled and fed off the deliberations of the

1965 Rockefeller Panel Report, and the growing pressure on business and industry to assume a greater responsibility for the support, growth, and vitality of the country's artistic life, his strategy relied on dramatically emphasizing, and bluntly outlining, the legitimization of economic and social power that art patronage could bring a corporation, regardless of the critical political character of the work.³² A case in point is a brochure he drafted in 1967 to promote Image to prospective corporate clients. This tract, organized around a series of rhetorical questions posed to the solicited corporation, complete with answers, specifies the value of an artwork. "Fine Art? Why should we get involved with art?" The answer closely echoes the calls for corporate patronage of the arts coming from quarters of business and industry: "Because Fine Art is good business. The contemporary corporation has much to gain from the identification with the positive virtues the Arts possess." The advantages are itemized:

Specifically, an identification with the Arts will do the following: a. Improve the image of your company by making your public more aware of what you are doing in the community. b. Assist in developing a more fully rounded personality for your corporation by adding a Cultural dimension. c. Provide a bold, unique and exciting element in the presentation of your products and services. d. Promote greater public acceptance of your corporation and its products and services by making yourself more attractive and visible in the marketplace.

Another question reads: "Is this the right time to get involved in an art program?" Most definitely:

As you are aware, the modern corporation is in the process of increasing its involvement in America's Cultural life. Within a few years much of the excitement associated with the Arts will have been exploited, and thus drained of its present Public Relations value. Now is the time to become involved in the Arts and capitalize on the huge reservoir of interest, excitement and good-will.

It is hardly necessary to add that the suggestion that an association with art could ultimately assist the corporate patron in "moving goods in the marketplace" is at the heart of the message of this brochure.³³ But Siegelau's strategy was more particularly to propose that increased sales would follow from the type of image, prestige, and legitimacy that a corporate patron would gain through collecting art. To paraphrase Pierre Bourdieu, by strategi-

cally accumulating “cultural capital,” corporations (with high amounts of economic capital but relatively low amounts of cultural capital) could realign the relationship not merely of the volume but also of the structure of the capital possessed. In turn, the socially constructed prestige value generated for the corporation through the growth of cultural capital could do double duty. On the one hand, it could allow the corporation to attain a certain distinction through signifying its benevolence, legitimacy, and pursuit of ideals beyond the ordinary, instrumentalized world of business. On the other hand, in a relatively short amount of time this same cultural capital could be “reconverted” into greater economic capital.³⁴ Here we might recall Jean Baudrillard’s argument in “Sign Function and Class Logic” that sign values are produced by a “sumptuary” operation connected to expenditure and social prestige:

*Thus objects, their syntax, and their rhetoric refer to social objectives and to a social logic. They speak to us not so much of the user and of technical practices, as of social pretension and resignation, of social mobility and inertia, of acculturation and enculturation, of stratification and of social classification. Through objects, each individual and each group searches out her/his place in an order, all the while trying to jostle this order according to a personal trajectory.*³⁵

According to Baudrillard, in contemporary capitalist societies both the object form (use value) and the commodity form (exchange value) are transfigured into sign value, transformed into a sign pointing to the distinctness, vitality, and benevolence of the patron. With the emergence of sign value comes a new interest in the psychological and characterological traits of the agents—in this case artists—between the merchants and their consumers. This leads to the development of new forms of perception, both physical and social—new kinds of seeing, new types of behavior—and the creation of conditions in which altogether different kinds of art forms are not only possible but desirable, and encouraged by their new publics.

Seen from this perspective, the structural model on which Siegelau based his promotion of art is remarkably similar to the operation of advertising—an industry that was on the cutting edge of shifts in corporate practice in the 1960s. As Thomas Frank has shown, seeking a single trait by which to characterize the accelerated obsolescence and enhanced consumer friendliness to change that were the goals of business, the advertising industry in the middle of the decade settled on “hipness.”³⁶ As with advertising, the issue of novelty and

currency was crucially important to Siegelau's message. Recall that the *Image* brochure warned that "within a few years much of the excitement associated with the Arts will have been exploited, and thus drained of its present Public Relations value. Now is the time to become involved in the Arts and capitalize on the huge reservoir of interest, excitement and good-will."

Siegelau's relocation of operations from 56th Street to Madison Avenue also signaled a shift in emphasis. No longer the operator of an art gallery, his function was now closer to that of an advertising executive. His point of view was increasingly calibrated to the bottom-line interests of the corporation. As the *Image* brochure announced to the prospective corporate patron: "*Image* represents your interests. We do this by seeing the world of art from your point-of-view." Here, then, we have the development in art whereby entrepreneurs such as Siegelau and Wendler realize the disenchanting and ever-expedient tendencies of capital. Their publicity program represents a pivotal stage in the development of an instrumentalizing tendency that will lead through twists and turns in subsequent years to achieve the "total" organization and control of even the most innovative and politically progressive elements of the 1960s art world. The ramifications of this turn will be vast. But this is not to conflate the meanings and motives of individual action with the logic of the systemic. Siegelau and Wendler were conscious of their project, which was a completely rational one. Ultimately, the publicity of art seemed far easier to manipulate than direct sales to art patrons or segues into the established art world of museums. As for the systemic consequences, we are of course free to suppose that they could not foresee them or, if they did, that they did not care.

"YOU DON'T NEED A GALLERY TO SHOW IDEAS" ³⁷

Savvy about publicity, Siegelau was keenly aware of the importance of staging group exhibitions as events and points of discussion. The identification of artists with a group and with a specific dealer would enable the public to place them. Thus in early 1968 he organized two shows featuring the work of three artists affiliated with him, Carl Andre, Robert Barry, and Lawrence Weiner. The two exhibitions were not only highly publicized but also supplemented with well-documented public symposia featuring the artists. The first show opened in February at the Laura Knott Gallery of Bradford Junior College in Bradford, Massachusetts, and the second in April at Windham College, a small liberal arts institution in Putney, Ver-



Installation view, Laura Knott Gallery, Bradford Junior College, 4 February–2 March 1968:
Carl Andre, *Untitled (144 Pieces of Zinc)*, 1968; Lawrence Weiner, *Untitled*, 1967; Robert
Barry, *Untitled*, 1967

1.1

mont.³⁸ Not coincidentally, both venues were removed from New York City, then indisputably the epicenter of the art world.

In contrast to the completely controlled, almost ideal interior space of the Laura Knott Gallery exhibition (fig. 1.1), Windham College did not have a gallery, and Siegelau suggested that the artists produce temporary, outdoor, site-specific sculptural installations on the college campus. The installations, made entirely with materials indigenous to the area, would only function within the specific campus sites, and for the duration of the exhibition. As Siegelau envisioned it, this show would break, or displace, the traditional institutional framework of a work of art. In an unpublished essay entitled "The Enclosure" that he wrote immediately following the Windham College show, Siegelau stated:

The contention that the framing convention of a work of art was implicit was accepted a priori by the majority of painting and sculpture of the late 50s and early 60s. Painting became involved in the role of the art as object ignoring, in this acceptance of logical art history progression, the implication of the object and its relation to its physical context (walls, floors, ceilings, and the room itself). Sculpture revealing its intrinsic objecthood, not burdened by the problems of illusionism, seemed to accept its delimiting or placement as implicit or become architectural (environmental) hence non-sculptural.³⁹

Thus Siegelau traces the development from a type of late modernist art that unproblematically accepts the traditional framing conventions, to works that take into consideration the room in which they are placed and works (necessarily sculptural) that integrate with the broader environment and become architectural. In an obvious sense, this notion is related to the development from painting to sculpture or "three dimensional objects" that Donald Judd articulated in his 1965 manifesto "Specific Objects," and to Robert Morris's contemporary account of minimalist sculpture as contingent with its environment in his 1966 "Notes on Sculpture."⁴⁰ But Siegelau's observations also relate the sculptural installations exhibited at Windham College to the emerging phenomenon of land art, begun in the previous year with the projects of Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, and Dennis Oppenheim, among others.

By mid-1968, the Windham College show was identified as a linchpin in the slow but steady move away from institutions that developed into an integral element in the reflection and production of postminimal sculpture of the late 1960s. An art critic signing his



1.2

Robert Barry, Dan Graham, Lawrence Weiner, and Carl Andre at the Windham College symposium, 30 April 1968

name Arthur R. Rose categorically asserted this aspect of the exhibition in an unpublished essay written in the spring of 1968 entitled “Three since Windham.” “In a season of many earth shows,” Rose writes, the “Windham [College] show is important because it was *the first outdoor show*.”⁴¹

Siegelaub organized a symposium with the three artists to coincide with the opening of the Windham College show. Rather than moderating the symposium himself, as he had done in Bradford a few months earlier, Siegelaub hired Dan Graham (fig. 1.2).⁴² An aspiring artist and cultural critic, Graham had briefly operated the John Daniels Gallery in New York City between 1964 and 1965, during which time he befriended Andre and Weiner; they, in turn, introduced Graham to Siegelaub as early as 1966. Influenced by pop’s fascination with the disposable mass culture of commercial magazines and rock music, Graham was crucial in articulating and defining the course of the new site- and context-specific work that subsequently came to be called “conceptual art.”

In his introductory comments, Graham noted the ephemeral nature of the exhibition installations, and emphasized that the artworks did not operate as definitive objects with inherent qualities but, after fulfilling their purpose during the exhibition, would be recycled and disappear. He also summoned the notion of “place.” “The show is done for a specific place,” Graham announced, “and involves placing as a verb as well as a noun.”⁴³ Importantly, this conceptualization of the artistic process in a linguistic metaphor would be repeated with increased frequency during the late 1960s and 1970s; it would characterize not only the work of the artists Siegelaub represented in these years, but also his own publicity practices.

Graham’s observations about the artwork’s relation to place were primarily focused on Andre’s work, though they may be just as appropriately applied to that of the other artists at the symposium.⁴⁴ Andre’s sculpture *Joint* did not have a cohesiveness capable of transcending the local or temporal specificity of its initial site of display (fig. 1.3). The work was made of a row of one hundred and eighty-three nearly identical modules (approximately 4 x 4 x 6 feet) of uncovered common baled hay set up one next to the other. The modules of hay were arranged in serial formation in a horizontal line, with the parallel narrow sides flush but distinct. The bales were similar, but differed slightly due to the procedures by which hay is compacted. Andre’s arrangement of these rough-hewn modules emphasized both their uniqueness and their similarity to others in the line. Thus apart from their linear arrangement, length, and placement, the materials dictated the form of the work.⁴⁵



1.3

Carl Andre, *Joint*, 1968, as installed at Windham College, 30 April–31 May 1968

It is also important to recognize that in Andre's *Joint*, each unit of hay, like each unit of zinc in the sculptural grid of metal plates he exhibited at the Laura Knott Gallery, remained in its raw state: "I don't want to disguise the material employed at all," he stated at the symposium, "I don't want to make something else out of it. I want wood as wood and steel as steel, aluminum as aluminum, a bale of hay as a bale of hay."⁴⁶ Like others, Andre believed that his refusal to transform the material elements of the work problematized the role of the artist as it was conventionally understood: that of a catalyst in the transformation of raw matter into artistic form. In an insightful account of current artistic developments published the month following the Windham College exhibit, Graham noted this aspect of Andre's art practice:

Andre translates material base into base measure of values, literally inverting normative value terms for material ones. Bricks, bales of hay, slabs of slate, aluminum or zinc are worth exactly what their market value (defined by scarcity of supply and demand) brings. Their sale as art adds commission price to gallery and artist (also determined by market laws). The commodity is produce, not produced by the artist's handiwork. It possesses actual, physically definable qualities as opposed to abstract, imagined or critically defined qualities. Instead of projecting past artists' or the artist's past experiences for the viewer's emotional investment, Andre's sculpture is placed in a present situation of confrontation open to the viewer's here and now experience. No permanently worthwhile experience is implied, the "value" of an Andre (or Flavin or Warhol or Christo) being temporally contingent on its present context.⁴⁷

There are several notions implied in this passage that deserve to be highlighted. For one thing, it characterizes Andre's role not as an artist but as an *art worker*. Just as the exchange value of his works remains linked to the market value of the materials of which they are made, the remuneration of the artist's labor is in the form of a sale also determined by laws of supply and demand. Seen in this light, the role of the artist is brought down to earth, desacralized, and the ascribing of worth to art objects is attributed to forces separate from the artist. Artworks are now conceived of as possessing their own proper value, which is separate from what the artist charges "as commission" for his own labor. Secondly and relatedly, Graham considers the commodity status of a work of art and interprets Andre's sculpture as resistant to commodification. This is the first public discussion of this sort in the New York art world of the late 1960s, though the theme will proliferate in the following years. Then

there is the homology Graham draws between Andre's works and pop art, articulating the "value" of one of Andre's works as similar to that of the work of Flavin, Warhol, or Christo—all of whom Graham considered to be pop artists at the time. Certainly, the structural repetition of the store-bought, ready-made, modular units parallels the emphasis on serial objects and conditions in Flavin's or Warhol's work. And, as in the mid-1960s work of these two artists, Andre's abandonment of manual production in favor of a modular structure with its own transparent system of units negates processes of authentication, rendering impossible any attempt to identify or verify the work's producer. Furthermore, employing an element from the general environment of rural Vermont—a bale of hay—as the primary material, Andre's *Joint* echoes pop art's erasure of the boundaries between common experience and high art. In the process, Andre brought one of the most repressed forms of everyday experience at Windham College, the surrounding fields on which the community depends economically, dead center into the cultural reflection.⁴⁸

Yet, as Graham implies, Andre's work goes beyond the operation of pop and minimal models in several ways.⁴⁹ On the one hand, the environment in which the work is to be exhibited determines the choice of material; on the other hand, the work's surfaces are continually altered by their own history, by the events that occur to them, up to the point of obliteration. Since *Joint* was exposed to the natural elements, the weathering process would in time erode the modules of hay and the work would gradually disintegrate, literally fusing with the place. This aspect of Andre's work, its impermanence, relates to its subversion of the marketplace for art. "The hay, of course, as people walk on it, is going to break down and gradually disappear," Andre noted at the Windham College symposium. "But since I'm not making a piece of sculpture for sale, . . . it never enters the property state."⁵⁰ This comment elides not only the fact that this work is an anomaly in the context of Andre's production (the vast majority of which is for sale), but also that it breaks with the practice by which Andre's other works were sold. For Andre and Flavin had pioneered a new form of guaranteeing authorship of works of art by providing the patrons certificates of authenticity along with the material objects. The certificate, signed by the artist, delineates in legalistic language (often complemented by a schematic drawing on standard graph paper) the various components of the work.⁵¹ Given the general accessibility of the materials and Andre's deskilling of the procedures of production, it is primarily the certificate that authenticates his work.⁵²

What Andre's work of the 1960s signals—like that of Barry and Weiner—is the gradual dismantling of the integrated self-contained pictorial object or sculptural structure

made for gallery display, in favor of interactive spectatorial spaces, complicated participatory modes, and an increasing awareness of the specific interplay between the artwork and the architectural and ultimately institutional setting or framework. One of the most complicated results of such transformations is the way they problematize the concept of public space. Once spectatorial participation as theorized by these and other artists is integrated into the conceptual structure of the work, the question of the proper site for artistic experience inevitably becomes more pressing. As the architectural setting is recognized in terms of the institutional and discursive limitations that it imposes upon sculptural or painterly experience, the next logical step will inevitably be considered: abandoning the institution of the gallery or museum with all of its restrictions in favor of a supposedly uninhibited, unrestricted, open, external space where none of these limitations apply. This development in the direction of a gradual expansion of the sites and locations for artistic exhibition and distribution became an integral aspect of the reflection upon and the production of ambitious art during the late 1960s. However, it was Siegelau, rather than the artists, who most thoroughly explored the specific operation of the institutional and contextual parameters that cordon off the work of art.

Siegelau's engagement with those boundaries, for reasons that differed from those of the artists, is consistent with the new practices of marketing that he was trying to develop. This transformation was as far-reaching in its own way as the changes in art production then taking place, and it shared with the new art a common hostility toward hierarchy, established conventions, and inherent wisdom. Significantly, creativity and perpetual innovation had by the mid-1960s also become the ethos of ambitious business practice, as well as of its stalwart promoter, advertising. The ideologues of Madison Avenue now proclaimed, contrary to the standard practices of the previous decade, that the "chic-adman" must internalize an automatic mistrust for received ideas.⁵³ Here, as in so many aspects of 1960s culture, advertising practices spilled over unproblematically into the actual content of art and art promotion. This willingness to defy convention was not only customary for artists; it became increasingly prevalent among—and in many ways absolutely necessary to—dealers as well. For Siegelau, this meant an embrace not only of creativity but also of the unexpected. In the following years this became more than a strategy for him; it became a philosophy, a way of thinking, and it was a concept he chose to utilize in promoting the artists he represented.