

# CARL ANDRE, WRITER

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**What is cut. What is cut by it. What is cut by it in.** — Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*

The 1960s and early 1970s was one of those watershed epochs whose effects reverberate long afterwards. Narratives of contemporary art once began in the postwar years, with gestural abstraction; now the 1960s appears the more decisive turn—a deeper shift in sensibility, in formal possibilities, in culture in the broadest sense.<sup>1</sup> No less celebrated than such developments as minimalism and pop, conceptualism and land art, are the writings produced by artists who were associated with these activities. As the decade unfolded, writing took on a new importance; the hard distinction between art and language advanced by the modernist critic Clement Greenberg in “Modernist Painting” and other essays collapsed.<sup>2</sup> As Craig Owens observed in a remarkable account of Robert Rauschenberg’s writings in 1978, when the phenomenon in question was already on the wane, the “eruption” of language into the visual field troubled Greenberg’s conception of the artist as a purely visual intelligence.<sup>3</sup> The mute visionary of abstract expressionist legend was replaced by an altogether new species: the fiercely articulate *artist-writer*.

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The modern artist-writer has an impressive pedigree, as the writings of Joshua Reynolds, Eugène Delacroix, Paul Signac, El Lissitzky, André Breton, and numerous others suggest. Within the history of twentieth-century American art, the New York school is especially notable for its textual production. Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt, and Robert Rauschenberg each wrote copiously, inspiring the generation we are considering here. If the artist-writer did not emerge *in sui generis*, Owens was right to stress the paradigmatic nature of this endeavor during the 1960s. Writing no longer seemed an ancillary activity, or even a liability for an artist, as it sometimes seemed during the heyday of abstract expressionism (Newman, Reinhardt, and Rauschenberg did not always benefit from their reputations as “intellectuals”); it was considered a significant practice in its own right.<sup>4</sup> How did this come to pass? The founding of *Artforum* and *Art International* in the early 1960s was fundamental, introducing two major venues to an already crowded field of glossy magazines devoted to contemporary art.<sup>5</sup> Sponsored by the advertisements of a vital gallery scene centered, in the Anglophone art world, in New York, London, and Los Angeles, these journals needed copy—articles and monthly

reviews. A new constellation of critics met this demand, providing consistent, at times decisive accounts of the new art forms and enlivening a critical field then dominated by established figures of abstract expressionist vintage, among them Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg.<sup>6</sup> This crossing of sensibilities and tastes infused art writing with a rare intensity. Andre and other artist-writers emerged in an art world that valorized critical reflection to an uncommon degree. This scenario is already quite foreign. Taste is increasingly the province of the marketplace and a global exhibition circuit; the Top Ten list and sound-bite review have replaced the essay as emblematic critical forms.<sup>7</sup> During the 1960s, discourse mattered to an uncommon degree. The “case” for a practice, prosecuted in the pages of a magazine, was instrumental to its reception.

Andre took a dim view of so much mediation. His writings insist that art experience is primary, the point and the meaning of an artwork. Criticism is secondary, recasting that experience into words. However accomplished, criticism can never replace a viewer’s encounter with the actual work. Art is “not a linguistic phenomenon” but a physical one, Andre insists, because art is material by definition. “My sculptures are the result of physical operations in the material world. Theories are linguistic exercises only.”<sup>8</sup> Art does not require a viewer to exist, but a viewer must physically experience a work in order to know it. At its best, criticism is able to convey what is most vivid in that encounter. But criticism often becomes divorced from its object. Theories of art refer to other theories. A description or photograph of a work is not the work.

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When I visit places remote from where I ordinarily work, people ask me long, elaborate questions that could not possibly have any relationship to my work. The people haven’t ever seen it, and so I say: “But my dear sir, have you ever seen my work?” The response is: “Of course, I’ve seen many of your works.” — “But where?” — “In *Artforum*, *Art in America*...” — I say: “Have you ever actually seen one of the objects, have you actually stood on one of them?”<sup>9</sup>

Annette Michelson once observed that the work of Robert Morris and other minimalists had thrown criticism into a crisis. An art so formally reduced invoked a “proliferation of epithets” (“minimal,” “cool,” “rejective,” “ABC,” and so on) that bespoke the befuddlement of critics in response to these practices.<sup>10</sup> The minimal work was apparently so purged of formal complexity that it could only be comprehended in words. Andre and

his peers could not disagree more fervently. A major ambition of the artist-writers we are considering was to seize control of the debates around their work, to wrench discourse away from critics. And so they wrote their own observations.<sup>11</sup> Owens's poststructuralist understanding of all this—his conception of the artist-writer as the instigator of a postmodernist, postmedium textuality exemplified by Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*—belies the fact that Andre and others sought to staunch the infusion of language into art that Owens celebrates.<sup>12</sup> Publicity was another, unspoken motive. At a time when "coverage" mattered, publishing was a highly effective way to circulate one's ideas and one's name. Most artists were not ambitious writers, then as now; yet those who flatly refused to write did so at their own peril. Even the most recalcitrant figures answered questionnaires, granted interviews (made possible by such new technologies as the tape recorder and video camera), and provided a constant supply of catalogue statements.<sup>13</sup>

Admittedly, the number of significant artist-writers was relatively small. By artist-writer, I mean those artists who made writing a central part of their practices, who engaged writing as a *form*. Andre occupies an unusual place within this circle. He was never a practicing critic like Donald Judd, whose monthly reviews for *Arts* are the finest record we have of exhibitions in New York during those years, and whose influential essays did much to unsettle the Greenbergian dispensation. Nor did he analyze his practice with the sustained rigor of Yvonne Rainer. He never drafted a sequence of essays equal to Robert Morris's "Notes on Sculpture I-IV," nor penned a manifesto comparable to Sol LeWitt's "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art."<sup>14</sup> Finally, he never published "conceptual" magazine texts in the manner of Smithson, Mel Bochner, and Dan Graham. As a matter of fact, Andre disavowed being a prose writer to begin with. "I have never been a writer of prose, I have never felt comfortable writing prose; it is something that is very difficult for me," he observed in an interview in 1975.<sup>15</sup> As he suggested in a letter to his longtime correspondent Reno Odlin, on whom we shall have more to say: "My own mind moves by no means of prose."<sup>16</sup>

Obviously, Andre has written a great deal, as this book suggests. But his claim that he is not a "writer of prose" should not be dismissed. Andre observes that writing does not come easily to him, that his mind does not "move" by means of it. He points to a deeper problem than the usual difficulty most of us feel when we try to write, apparent in the fact that many of his texts are less than a hundred words in length. In spite of their brevity, Andre's writings nonetheless exist. His solution was unique. In an art

world that demanded exegesis, he wrote only as much as was needed, and he wrote in ways that pleased him. I want to signal the formal meaning of this resistance to prose—how Andre's professed inadequacy with writing reverberates throughout his writing, is an *engine* of it. (This is not the all-too-typical phenomenon of writer's block.) A mind that does not "move by means of prose" will seek other formats besides the essay, the favored idiom of minimalist art polemics. Consider the following typology:

### **The Statement**

Mainly drafted for exhibitions, Andre's statements include his earliest and most famous published text, "Preface to Stripe Painting," written as Frank Stella's entry in the catalogue of the "Sixteen Americans" exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art; "Notes on Two Aspects of Space," a comparison of painting and sculpture; and such position statements as "Notes on a Question Frequently Asked, Never Satisfactorily Answered" and "Against Duchamp." Other texts discuss the work of artists whom Andre admires, or places of importance to him, such as the nonprofit art space P.S. 1. Most of these statements are fifty words or less, and they are notably few: "Preface to Stripe Painting" did not lead to a succession of other audacious manifestos. Andre rarely espouses his artistic views unless asked to do so; his prose is typically *responsive* in nature. Even the "Preface" was drafted only upon Stella's request.

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### **The Dialogue**

The interactive nature of Andre's writing is most clearly seen in his dialogic texts. Inaugurated by the thirteen *Dialogues* written with the photographer and filmmaker Hollis Frampton in 1962/63 and revived in the exchange "Commodity and Contradiction, or Contradiction as Commodity" authored with the critic Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, Andre's dialogues also encompass the written and oral interview, the questionnaire, and the interwoven text or fugue, such as the dialogue on painting he fabricated from written statements by David Novros, Brice Marden, and Paul Mogensen, a format he had previously used in such poems as *America Drill*.

Andre has given numerous oral and written interviews over the past thirty-five years. The sheer number of these texts suggests not only the fascination that Andre and his work have long held but also the artist's accessibility and willingness to engage in discussion. Many of these dialogues occurred at the time of a particular exhibition or controversy: in lieu of drafting a statement, Andre agreed to answer questions. As he confesses to Odlin in a letter of 1963, the dialogue is for him a welcome stimulus,

a necessary provocation. “Nothing is more unsatisfactory than evoking assent in the exercise of opinion. Only pertinent contradiction, exception, and denial from our interlocutors provide a locus for the mind.”<sup>17</sup> Andre’s finest interviewers challenge his assumptions and point to contradictions in his practice and political positions; his exchanges with Jeanne Siegel, Peter Fuller, Patricia Norvell, and Phyllis Tuchman have been particularly generative. As these interviews unfold, one question leads to another. Writing begets more writing.<sup>18</sup>

Nowhere are the benefits of “pertinent contradiction” more apparent than in the Frampton *Dialogues*. Though the stated topic of these exchanges is the formal definition of different media, the youthful artists are clearly more preoccupied with defining their own inchoate aesthetics. Comprehension of one’s work occurs as a result of the other’s queries. Frampton asks Andre to explain the formal tactics of his poetry in “On Certain Poems and Consecutive Matters,” while Andre leads Frampton to a greater understanding of his photography in the exchange devoted to this medium. Significantly, the two interlocutors are close friends. (See Andre’s recollections of his former roommate in the chapter on Frampton.) Unlike Andre’s interviews, the thirteen *Dialogues*, loosely modeled after Plato’s Symposium as Benjamin Buchloh has noted, suggest the importance of conviviality and friendly conversation in fostering self-knowledge.<sup>19</sup> The binding theme of these texts, as opposed to most of Andre’s dialogues, is not only art but friendship, and the role of friendship in fostering art.<sup>20</sup>

## The Epistle

The letter is also a dialogic form, with a difference: where the thirteen *Dialogues* were typed in Frampton’s presence, the letters were written, as most are, in the absence of their recipients. The epistle is another format with which Andre, a prolific correspondent, is clearly at ease. The letter has many attractions. It may be private or public (e.g., a Letter to the Editor), a communication with one’s intimates or with persons one does not know. It may be informally composed or carefully wrought, a lengthy missive or a postcard. Many of this book’s finest passages are epistolary, such as Andre’s subtle analysis of the condition of being an artist in a capitalist society in his 1970 letter to Sol LeWitt, or his lucid assessment of the strained relations between himself and the dealers Tibor de Nagy and John Myers in which he severs his relationship with their gallery. Andre’s most remarkable correspondence is indubitably the sequence of letters he has written to Reno Odlin over the past four decades, an exchange that continues to the present day. It is to Odlin that he describes his formation as a young poet, his views

of Chaucer and Shakespeare (“The Curve of Utterance,” in “Poetry”), and of Michelangelo (“Broken is the High Column,” in “Sculpture”). It is to Odlin that he describes a visit to the Brooklyn Museum, a discussion that leads to an analysis of Egyptian low-relief sculpture and its pictorial nature (“Surface and Illusion,” in “Sculpture”). And it is to Odlin that Andre confesses “visions of earth sculpture” in 1965, not long before Michael Heizer produced his first outdoor works.

If Andre’s friendship with Frampton is marked by the *Dialogues*, his tie to Odlin is embodied by the letter. Their friendship was, and remains, epistolary out of necessity, as Odlin has always lived outside of New York.<sup>21</sup> Much like Greenberg’s friend Harold Lazarus, Odlin provided Andre with a sympathetic and informed interlocutor safely ensconced outside the artworld’s competitive environs. Moreover, he entered Andre’s life at a crucial time—the fertile early 1960s when the artist, employed as a railroad freight brakeman, wrote much of his most important poetry and experimented with new sculptural forms, many discarded, in a cramped East Broadway studio they referred to as the “indoor vacant lot” (page 94). The friends also had common literary interests. Along with Frampton, who introduced them, Odlin had been part of a circle of young people who had congregated around Ezra Pound at St. Elizabeth’s psychiatric hospital in Washington, D.C., in the late 1950s, where the poet had been incarcerated for treason as a result of his profascist activities during World War II. Seated in a chair on the asylum’s lawns, surrounded by admirers, Pound read the *Cantos* out loud and discoursed on poetry.<sup>22</sup> Although Andre found nothing admirable in the poet’s politics, Pound’s art criticism became among his greatest inspirations; the poet’s essays on Brancusi and Gaudier-Brzeska in particular were a key introduction to the high formal ambitions of modernist sculpture.<sup>23</sup> Andre found in Pound an antidote to the leading art critics of the day, including Greenberg, who devoted much of their attention to painting. Pound was “the premier critic of sculpture in the 20th century,” Andre avers in “Sculpture Is a Temperament” in the chapter on the poet, because he *liked* the medium. Although Frampton initially pointed Andre to Pound’s criticism, Odlin had also sat with this friend of Eliot, Yeats, and Brancusi, and imbibed Pound’s discourse first hand; like Andre, he was learned in prosody and literary history. A better reader of Andre’s excursions on poetical form or his instructions for reading his *Operas* cannot be envisioned.

Although most of Andre’s correspondence has remained private until the present publication, a smaller portion of his letters, addressed to critics, curators, and politicians, is public in address. Andre’s letter to Barbara Rose, published in *Artforum* in 1967, wittily

disavows any relationship of his art to that of Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, and Marcel Duchamp, found objects, “unassisted ready-mades,” and other anathema influences. It reserves for Andre himself only the “care of the art of my sculpture.” My misquotation of Andre’s memory of a conversation with Eva Hesse inspired “An Exchange Between Eva and Myself,” a dialogue in which Andre comforts Hesse after visitors to her studio ventured a simplistic reading of her work.<sup>24</sup> Other letters contest a perceived injustice, such as Andre’s unpublished defense of Robert Morris, drafted in response to the critic Roberta Smith’s negative review of the artist’s 1993 retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum.<sup>25</sup> Listing a number of contemporaries who were influenced by Morris’s work, Andre challenges Smith’s imputation that Morris’s is a derivative practice. “In the list of those indebted to Robert Morris’s art and thought,” Andre humbly concludes, “I include myself.”

### **Epigrams and Maxims**

The epigram’s origins are also ancient (Callimachus, Catullus, and Martial were famous epigrammatists). An epigram is defined as “a short witty poem expressing a single thought; a concise, clever, often paradoxical statement.” A maxim is “a succinct formulation of a general principle.”<sup>26</sup> The epigram’s salient quality is its wit, the maxim, its truthfulness. Maxims and epigrams are thoughts conveyed economically; brevity is their common coin. In general, all of Andre’s writings aspire to the epigrammatic. Just as his sculpture consists of “cuts” of elemental materials, his texts are condensed expressions, containing few asides, parenthetical remarks, and dependent clauses. The epigram, the most reduced of Andre’s texts—many are twenty words or less—is thus exemplary of a larger tendency. The shortest entry is a mere eleven letters: “DOGMA:I:AMGOD.” Andre’s intervention is slight yet decisive: the addition of the title “Art Theory” to a well-known palindrome points up an art-world trend of which he disapproves. The chiasmus is another favored form. Where a palindrome reverses the letters of a single phrase, a chiasmus is an inversion of parallel statements. For example, religion is usually assumed to be “holy”; another term for capitalism is “business.” Andre switches the expected relations of noun and predicate of these hackneyed assumptions: *CAPITALISM MUST BE HOLY/BECAUSE RELIGION IS A BUSINESS*. Another epigrammatic form, the syllogism, is also undermined through inversion in the Blakean chant “God Did Not Create the World”:

GOD DID NOT CREATE THE WORLD  
BECAUSE GOD DOES NOT EXIST.  
BECAUSE GOD DOES NOT EXIST  
GOD WILL DESTROY THE WORLD.

This four-line stanza advances a claim and then proceeds to a conclusion, as syllogisms do. Yet "God Did Not Create the World" is not a simple syllogism, but a syllogism crossed with a chiasmus. The initial claim is already a double negative: God did not create the world because God "does not" exist. A chiasmus occurs as the second claim contradicts the first, resulting in the positive conclusion that is, in fact, the most negative telos imaginable.

"Preface to Stripe Painting" is rightly identified as the inaugural text of minimalism, not only for its early date and antisymbolic claims but also for its sober eloquence, its lack of affect.<sup>27</sup> At the time of its publication, the "Preface" was a no-nonsense antidote to the ecstatic paeans of the New York School poet-critics Rosenberg and Frank O'Hara, among others. But those who take the "Preface" as Andre's exemplary text overlook the ludic tendency of his writing, most prominent in the epigrams and planes, in which the declension or repetition of a few words can be extremely suggestive, capturing a range of feeling.<sup>28</sup> The nine-word "Damien Hirst" is an amusing commentary on the work of a fashionable young artist: I DON'T FEAR HIS SHARK, I FEAR HIS FORMALDEHYDE. By contrast, the haunting "Swiss Watch" builds in effect as the number of words in each line is reduced from four, to three, to two:

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TIME WILL NOT TELL  
THE APPLE FROM  
THE SKULL

"Swiss Watch" and "Damien Hirst" are among Andre's most pithy enunciations; his more complex maxims inflect an initial premise over several lines. In "Form Is Appearance/ Structure Is Resistance," the nouns at the head of each phrase remain the same from stanza to stanza. Variation occurs with new conjugations of the verbs "to appear," "to resist," "to support," and "to yield":

FORM IS APPEARANCE  
STRUCTURE IS RESISTANCE

FORM APPEARS  
STRUCTURE SUPPORTS  
PLACE



FORM, APPEAR  
STRUCTURE, RESIST  
PLACE, YIELD

The slight grammatical shifts between stanzas emphasize three interrelated claims: (1) Form is “appearance,” that which we are able to see. (2) A form’s structure is that which both supports *and* resists form. (3) Place, the work’s context, “holds” the structure, making it possible for form—the initial proposition—to appear. The mutual dependency of form, structure, and place integral to Andre’s notion of sculpture is asserted through the repetition and substitution of these terms.

### The Plane

Andre’s first experiments in planar poetry (“plane,” as applied to poetry, is a neologism of Andre’s) date to 1960. He does not seem to have developed the expository plane until 1964, in the memorable pair of poems “Essay on Sculpture for E C Goossen” and “Essay on Photography for Hollis Frampton” (see the figures on pages 233 and 175). Previously, Andre had written poetry relating to art and other matters that are not, properly speaking, planes. The organizing structure of “Duty of Water: Gorky” (page 106) is a rhythmic syntax:

move us to the cool chalk-like what clarity  
over all tortures where once great centuries  
danced celtic with gaiety bleeds on thy mouth  
of me in paradises

“Duty of Water: Gorky” marks the end of Andre’s examination of the formats of sentimental verse. A letter to Odlin of June 17, 1963, reproduced in the chapter “Poetry,” describes how he wearied of the “chic ... New Yorker style” of his own adolescent efforts, modeled on the elegant evocations of the everyday of Robert Graves (and, one suspects, the poetry of Elizabeth Bishop and James Merrill). “He was cut from his own origins but never secure in the current modes.... [He] could never smooth enough the surfaces nor be passionate enough to dwell in trivia.” Although beatnik poetry, then also at the height of its prestige, suggested a dramatic departure from such refined efforts, the demotic language of Allan Ginsburg and Gregory Corso, invariably expressive and syntactical, did not serve Andre’s purpose either. “Duty of Water”

heralds a more systematic method than either model afforded. Admittedly, the poem does not yet follow the rigorous systemic method of Andre's subsequent poetry. Consisting of fragments from Gorky's letters subjectively chosen and arranged in an interlocking, shifting manner evocative of Gorky's canvases, the poem is expressive in aim.<sup>29</sup> Yet the imagery is not Andre's but—crucially—entirely appropriated. Nor are Gorky's allusions entirely his. The painter's confidences have been estranged from their epistolary origins, fragmented, and then recombined into a textual collage: behold the nascent Andrean "system" of syntactical dissolution.

Andre's planes are a dramatic departure from syntactical verse and prose. Unlike the artist's floor sculptures, however—which are also called "planes"—the written planes do not consist of identical semantic units. The parts of Andre's sculptures are equivalent with one another; each brick or metal square is unique, and, Andre insists, irreplaceable. Within each pile the units may be indefinitely rearranged. In contrast, Andre's planar texts are carefully composed: if a word or letter were altered, the message would be scrambled. For example, Andre's planes dedicated to LeWitt bear the message "When you go to Sol you see music" (pages 129–130). True to the musical premise of variation, Andre rearranges this statement into different patterns, such as the square plane to the upper right of the sheet, or the pattern containing the phrase repeated twice up and down around an empty diamond, or the square with letters tilted forty-five degrees to the left. Other versions of this text on the sheet's verso are arranged in triangles and an hourglass shape; most of these forms appear in Andre's sculpture. Rearranging the letters in different patterns, Andre employs the musical concept of the fugue in a manner analogous to LeWitt himself in his numerous permutation works. The varied formats of these homages visually connote their denoted message: that LeWitt's art is music that one can "see."

The planes dedicated to LeWitt retain a rudimentary syntax. In contrast, Andre's serial planes dispense with conventional grammar, recalling the most radical examples of concrete poetry.<sup>30</sup> Words are arranged according to an a priori logic. "Chaintomb Ode" and "Essay on Sculpture to EC Goossen" employ serial formulas such as the alphabet and counting numbers followed to varying degrees. In both texts, the words are laid out in loose alphabetical order and according to length, from three, to four, to five or six digits. The starting premise of "Essay on Sculpture" is a typology of sculptural form: "arc/arch/aisle/bridge/bench/ball/bin ..." A sawtooth pattern, not unlike the repeated triangular formation of *Redan* (1965), is the outcome of this additive/subtractive structure.

Most of Andre's planes are neither serial nor ungrammatical: more often than not, these texts combine the plane with the epigram, the grid with a standard syntax. In other words, they have something to say. Many are easily decoded. Still others reveal their messages slowly, as the reader pieces together the hidden phrase.<sup>31</sup> For example, "The Life Process of Society" (1976/77) initially appears to be a square field of 225 random letters (it is 15 letters high and 15 wide). Reading to the conclusion one learns that the text is, in fact, a quotation from Marx's *Capital*. By contrast, "George W Bush," a sheet folded into a grid pattern of 49 digits, is a caustic description of the bellicose American president.<sup>32</sup> Still other planes have neither the serial structure of the early "Essays" nor the syntactical transparency of "George W Bush." For example, Andre's reviews of exhibitions by David Novros and Brice Marden (pages 164 and 165) are fairly random arrangements of adjectives and nouns; the only structure they adhere to is the outer boundary of the plane itself. Last but not least, "The Bricks Abstract" is a hilarious collection of critical responses to the Tate Gallery's purchase of Andre's sculpture *Equivalent VIII* in 1976, which quickly devolved into a national scandal (page 283). Here the grid serves as an armature for exhibiting the artist's bad press.



The use of so many formats is unusual among the artist-writers of Andre's circle (only Smithson and Bochner were so experimental). Andre has attributed his familiarity with the epigram, the chiasmus, and other grammatical forms to his parents' instruction. His background was working class, he has long noted, yet literary. The artist's mother was an amateur poet given to reciting her own productions at parties and club meetings, "extraordinary, bizarre doggerel, sort of like eighteenth-century occasional verse. She'd just dash it off."<sup>33</sup> A favorite uncle who worked as a contractor often chanted Poe's "The Raven" and other rhymes while driving between construction sites, his nephew in tow.<sup>34</sup> Andre's father, a draftsman at the Quincy shipyard, read poems to him as a young child, among them Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." This fascination with the words and cadences of classic English poetry, Andre later surmised, had to do with the fact that his father, an immigrant from Sweden, had not learned English until the sixth grade.<sup>35</sup> While Andre's mother and uncle were his earliest instructors in the rhythm and meter of poetical language, his father taught a different lesson: the semantic specificity of the word. The English lexicon, hard won, was greatly prized in the household on Moffat Road, and not only the diction of the great poets. "My father ... was delighted to bring home new words from his work and daily experience and

spring them on me."<sup>36</sup> The word was a found object conferred from parent to child, a shared pleasure. The dictionary was consulted, the word's etymology traced, its meanings parsed. (Even today a dictionary is never far from Andre's reading table.)<sup>37</sup>

Little wonder that Andre decided to become a poet; as late as the early 1960s he styled himself such. He began to compose at an early age. "First poem in the third grade ... After the age of twelve a steady production."<sup>38</sup> Steady indeed (around one thousand extant sheets).<sup>39</sup> But what of prose? As a graduate of the rigorous boarding school Phillips Academy, Andover, Andre had received ample instruction in the composition of essays. The fact that he never completed college nor pursued higher degrees, as Judd and Morris did, suggests a disinclination to develop his ideas in a sustained manner. Prose, Andre once observed, is "a method of connecting proximate and distant points by certain tacit increments which each must justify itself." If the points do not connect, the "arch will fail."<sup>40</sup> An argument consists of words configured into sentences, which become paragraphs and, eventually, an essay. Judd and Morris were accomplished arch builders whose analytical writings established the theoretical framework of minimalist debate. In contrast, Andre has written despite, or *around*, his antisyntactical inclination. His sensibility resists the syntagm, the semantic glue that connects word to word. More precisely, he *disrupts* the syntagm, and—this is crucial—he then reconstitutes a different kind of syntax. Owens observes that Andre's writings cause a "disorientation of grammar" by means of a "lack of inflection" of individual words.<sup>41</sup> The offense of syntax, for Andre, is its deemphasis of the particular, its suppression of the part in the service of the semantic whole (the "arch"). Andre instead emphasizes the particular, and this, Owens rightly notes, is an antisyntactical tendency. But it is not quite enough to suggest that Andre merely disrupts grammar. Andre's dismantling of syntax is not destructive.<sup>42</sup> He developed a *nonsyntactical syntax* that stresses the part (the "cut") rather than the whole. Where the old syntax is predicated on an established, a priori grammar, the new syntax is based on the *unit's* grammatical potential. The work's form is continuous with its internal elements—their shape, their density, their size. The relation is no longer that of part to whole, but of whole to part.<sup>43</sup> As Stein suggests in the epigraph to this essay, "What is cut" determines "What is cut by it in."

Andre describes these two modes of arrangement as *plastic* and *clastic*. In the plastic work—a category that encompasses Western sculpture from antiquity through cubism and David Smith—the components read as a coherent entity: a body, perhaps, or an

abstract image. The work's parts suggest a form that a viewer can read, just as the words of a syntactical sentence or phrase suggest a legible meaning. But in the clastic work, preexisting units are "put together or taken apart *without joining*."<sup>44</sup> The parts do not suggest a stable meaning, or any meaning, other than their material existence in the sculpture with other units of the same kind. In the most radical planes, the letters or words form a visual pattern of uncertain meaning. There is no finer description of this method than Smithson's account of Andre's project in "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," the most significant discussion of the artist-writer of the 1960s:

Carl Andre's writings bury the mind under rigorous incantatory arrangements. Such a method smothers any reference to anything other than the words. Thoughts are crushed into a rubble of syncopated vowels. Reason becomes a powder of vowels and consonants.... The apparent sameness and toneless ordering of Andre's poems conceal a radical disorientation of grammar. Each poem is a "grave," so to speak, for his metaphors. Semantics are driven out of his language in order to avoid meaning.<sup>45</sup>

Andre's poems, Smithson suggests, "avoid" meaning by "smother[ing] reference" to anything but the words themselves. Such texts negate both the syntactical and metaphorical poles of language, according to Smithson: causing a "disorientation" of grammar, they are also "'grave[s]'" for metaphor. In order to clarify Smithson's important claim, a brief turn to the writings of the Russian Formalist critic Roman Jakobson is called for. As is well known, Jakobson, in a series of essays on the affliction known as aphasia, set out to describe the two major "axes" of language whose command the aphasic has lost.<sup>46</sup> The first, which concerns the grammatical relation of noun and predicate, Jakobson calls the horizontal or syntagmatic plane of language; this alludes to the human capacity to arrange words into syntactical coherence so that the sentence signifies. The vertical or paradigmatic axis spatializes the idea that words are replaceable: a sentence can accommodate different choices of verb, noun, or adjective. Where the associative axis, involving word combination, is associated with the notion of metonymy, and thus, prose, the paradigmatic axis is concerned with word selection, the substitution of one word for another, and so is equated by Jakobson with metaphor.

Andre's impulse is to disrupt the syntagmatic plane of signification, the axis of prose (of "arch-building"). Instead, his inclination is to develop a serial, nongrammatical syntax. Yet as Smithson suggests, Andre's practice cuts *both* ways. Andre's writings "drive out semantics," or syntax, Smithson observes, but they also deny the plane of substitution, of metaphor. In the poem "Green" from the *First Five Poems*, the word green exists in a grid of 764 identical "greens" (page 195). Once the word becomes part of the grid, it no longer functions as an adjective in a sentence. Equally important, though, is the way this arrangement also cancels the word's metaphorical capacity. To substitute "green" with another word, for example, "blue"—as Frampton proposes in "On Certain Poems and Consecutive Matters"—would result in a different pattern consisting of the word blue. Blue has four characters rather than five; the letters "b," "l," "u," and "e" create a different visual impression than "g," "r," "e," "e," and "n." But once the word blue is removed from standard syntax—once it has become a "cut" of language—it is no more capable of substitution than green. This is, I think, precisely what Smithson is getting at when he observes that Andre's writing is a "grave" for metaphor.<sup>47</sup>

According to Jakobson, the "poetic function" occurs at the crossing of language's two axes, at the point of projection of "the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination."<sup>48</sup> Everyday language is both selective and associative; like the lay speaker or writer, the poet chooses and combines words. Jakobson is careful to distinguish the poetic function from that of everyday language. The aim of common language is communication; the grammatical sentence makes this possible. Poetic language, however, is characterized by the quality Jakobson identified as *poeticity*. This is present, the critic observes, "when the word is felt as a word and not a mere representation of the object being named." In everyday language the word takes on a kind of transparency, as if it were, somehow, the "natural" or necessary representation of its referent. Poetical language stresses the contrary principle: that the word is conventional, that it accrues meaning in relation to other words, that it is not at all transparent but a sign. In poetical language, Jakobson observes, words "acquire a weight and value of their own instead of referring indifferently to reality."<sup>49</sup>

Words, Andre observes in "Poetry, Vision, Sound" in the "Poetry" chapter, "have palpable tactile qualities that we feel when we speak them, when we write them, or when we hear them. That is the real subject of my poetry." Similarly, Jakobson speaks of the sign's tactility (its "weight"), of the word having a "value" of its own. The poetical device, for Jakobson and his Russian Formalist colleagues, is defined as "semantically charged,"

as a signifier layered with signifieds and connotations.<sup>50</sup> Many of the entries in this volume consist of simple, transparent prose. The language of Andre's statements, dialogues, interviews, and letters is utilitarian; these writings do not trouble ordinary language, but convey their meanings directly. Syntax is reduced to the bare components of noun, verb, and object. But in the epigrams and maxims, meter, rhyme, and the stanza come to the fore, and the word takes on a semantic weight or importance—the quality that Jakobson calls poeticity. In Andre's most uncompromising planar experiments, the word and the letter are isolated as themselves. The sign, severed from syntactical and metaphorical use, assumes a ponderous density; the word has accrued so much weight that its referent is all but forgotten, its signified, negated. It has nearly (but surely not entirely) lost its capacity to mean. Smithson's memorable description of Andre's project suggests no less: Andre's writing, Smithson observes, has "crushed" thoughts into a "rubble" of vowels and pulverized reason into a "powder" of consonants.

Barbara Rose once described the work of Andre and the other minimalists as "post-cubist" because it abandoned the relational balancing of the cubist tradition, then exemplified by the sculpture of David Smith and Anthony Caro among others.<sup>51</sup> Where the cubist "put something in one corner" and balanced this "with something in the other," as Stella famously put it, the minimalist adopted such anticompositional tactics as the whole shape that needs no inflection, and a serial distribution of parts.<sup>52</sup> The new art revealed its structure and material constitution and, it was claimed, nothing more. Much like the *nouveau roman* of Alain Robbe-Grillet or the cinema of Alain Resnais, it had purged itself of allusion and anthropocentric meaning.<sup>53</sup>

Now there was a semiological stake in all this as Smithson understood. Jakobson—who, Yve-Alain Bois has argued, formulated his concept of language's axes concurrently with his encounter with cubism—speaks of the "metonymical orientation" of the cubist enterprise and the "patently metaphorical attitude" of Surrealism.<sup>54</sup> Bois, following Jakobson's lead, describes cubism as a semiological pursuit entailing the "confluence and constant *chassé croisé* of metaphor and metonymy." Picasso's surrealism, he goes on to suggest, is an extension of this cubist method.<sup>55</sup> We may now grasp the magnitude of Rose's claim that the minimalists had developed a "post-cubist" practice.<sup>56</sup> Andre and his peers not only rejected cubist balancing and asymmetry, but in so doing they also jettisoned the *semiological* ambition of cubism, the impulse to represent the things we see relationally, however latent this had become in the welded sculpture of the late 1950s (as Michael Fried, in a provocative early essay on Caro, persuasively suggested at

the time).<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Andre avoided the combination tactics of surrealism and the assisted readymade.<sup>58</sup> Andre's sculpture instantiates neither the relational play of meaning of the cubist pasted paper or sculpture nor the metaphorical ambiguity of the Surrealist object. On the contrary, the deepest ambition of his postcubism (the radicality of this move must be stressed) was nothing less than an art devoid of polysemy, an art in which, as Smithson observes, thought has been "crushed" and meaning has been "driven out."

Andre discovered such an art in Stella's *Black and Aluminum Paintings*, whose execution he witnessed. His "Preface to Stripe Painting" declares that Stella's work is "not symbolic." Even so, the *Black Paintings* have evocative titles, some of which were supplied by Andre himself. Stella's works are not purged of meaning but are allusive after all.<sup>59</sup> From the start, the minimalist enterprise encoded a tension between a negation of subject matter and the recognition that this was, by definition, unachievable.<sup>60</sup> "When I set out on the great adventure of my art I dedicated myself to the creation of work utterly free of human associations," Andre recalled. "It is exactly the absurd impossibility of that quest which made my work possible. If I had known that it is impossible to make art devoid of human associations because the essence of art is human association, I never would have been able to do what I have done."<sup>61</sup>

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Andre came to recognize that an art devoid of meaning was a contradiction. As Roland Barthes, who conceptualized such a practice in his writings on the *nouveau roman*, also suggests, to claim that there is no meaning is to assert the meaning that there is none. One can be "against interpretation," as Susan Sontag proposed in her essay of the same title, but to deny the possibility of interpretation is, Barthes insists, illogical. "To suspend meaning is already an infinitely more complicated enterprise—it is an 'art'; but to 'annihilate' meaning is a desperate project in proportion to its impossibility. Why? Because what is 'outside meaning' is infallibly absorbed ... into no meaning itself, which is of course a meaning."<sup>62</sup>

Andre describes his quest to develop an art without meaning as "absurd." An art devoid of human associations is impossible, he notes, "because the essence of art is human association."<sup>63</sup> Many of the descriptive terms in his "Essay on Sculpture" attribute the medium's genesis to human use ("aisle," "bench," etc.) "Sculpture and Death" asserts that sculpture's origins are sepulchral. Sculpture, Andre suggests, is a reminder of our mortality, the awareness that "people leave nothing other than a mark." His numerous



works named for friends or places of personal importance to him are also obviously allusive.<sup>64</sup> Andre's materials cannot but evoke the place of their origin, and the loci of their fabrication (the mills that have shaped trees into blocks, the factories that have forged raw metal into regular plates: the "cut" acknowledges its industrial processing, of nature's use by capital). Andre's sculptures are capable of interpretation like any work of art. Indeed, as works of art, they will elicit associations. Yet we do well to insist that the notion of subject matter, of a symbolized or represented content, is quite foreign to Andre's project. His ambition to purge his work of allusion may have been "absurd," yet this impulse initially generated his work. Andre's sculptures are not, nor could they ever be, emptied of meaning and history, as their titles confirm. But they have an implacable material existence apart from whatever associations we bring to them. "To say that art has meaning is mistaken because then you believe that there is some message that the art is carrying like the telegraph, as Noel Coward said.... No explicit meanings, no, not in mind when I address myself to the work, none at all."<sup>65</sup>

Andre's materialism is not well understood. If, as Bois suggests, it is difficult for some to accept the premise of a materialist formalism, a formalism that does not establish a work's meaning but attends to how this is produced, it is equally challenging for others to accept the premise of an art that endeavors to *negate* meaning—as Andre's practice surely does.<sup>66</sup> Forty years after minimalism's emergence, the antihumanist thrust of his work remains alien to those who remain attached an anthropocentric notion of art, who cannot accept the premise of an art that exists in the room *with us* but does not exist *for us*.<sup>67</sup> If it is possible to glean a single argument from these pages, it is the ethical and political claims of matter, of an art that reveals matter as matter—"matter as matter rather than matter as symbol." Andre's identification with the materialist philosophical tradition from Lucretius to Marx is the crucial link between his aesthetics and politics. His sculpture aspires to reveal nothing more nor less than its own condition: the materials of which it consists; their subjection to gravity; the sculpture's status as commodity. Andre's practice—abstract, materialist, antianthropocentric—goes against the grain of a culture that valorizes the virtual encounter and a nostalgic humanism.<sup>68</sup> His practice is, on the contrary, an effort to resist the replica, the insubstantial, and the expressive even if (or because) it cannot entirely achieve this.<sup>69</sup> Andre's sculpture is material, but so too is his writing. The cut of language, the severing of syntax, the serial arrangement of words—such tactics underscore his assertion of matter's primacy in the world and in human affairs. All else follows:

Another human capacity, you might say faculty, perhaps poetic faculty, is to make symbols out of anything... There is no such thing as a work of art that will be free of the possibility of symbolism. However, perhaps again we have come to a point where we look to the world as if it were a symbol, and I think this is a mistake, because I don't believe the universe is a message... My works can never be free of symbols. But to me it's their existence which is important. I am not an idealist as an artist. Artists are trained to be idealists: they start with a vision, then they seek to implement it. I do not proceed like that at all. I try to discover my visions in the conditions of the world. It's the conditions which are important.<sup>70</sup>

# NOTES

*I wish to thank Alexander Alberro and Patrick Garlinger for their editorial comments on this text.*

1. The current fascination with the 1960s avant-garde among younger artists and art historians, curators, middlebrow journalists, and the art market and auction houses is a complex phenomenon, as the publicity juggernaut surrounding the recent opening of DIA: Beacon, dedicated to this so-called Greatest Generation, confirms.
2. Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1960), reprinted in *The Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. IV, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 85–93.
3. Craig Owens, "Earthwords," in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture*, ed. Scott Bryson, Barbara Kruger, Lynne Tillman, and Jane Weinstock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 44.
4. The polemics around pop, minimalism, and conceptualism were exceptionally lively. See the texts collected in Steven Henry Madoff, ed., *Pop Art: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), James Meyer, ed., *Minimalism* (London: Phaidon, 2000), and Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2000).
5. *Artforum* and *Art International* were established in the early 1960s. Other significant Anglo-American publications of the time included *Arts Magazine*, *Art in America*, *Artnews*, and *Studio International*.
6. I refer to such critics as Michael Fried, Barbara Rose, Lucy Lippard, Annette Michelson, Lawrence Alloway, David Bourdon, Robert Pincus-Witten, Max Kozloff, and Rosalind Krauss.
7. For more on these subjects, see Hal Foster, *Design and Crime and Other Diatribes* (London: Verso, 2002) and "Roundtable: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism," *October* 100 (Summer 2002): 200–228.
8. "My works do not explain the world" (1991), reprinted in this book in the chapter "Theory."
9. "Un entretien entre Carl Andre et Elisabeth Lebovici et Thierry Chabanne," question 15, reprinted in the chapter "Art and Capitalism" as "Art and Reproduction."
10. Annette Michelson, "Robert Morris: An Aesthetics of Transgression" (1969), reprinted in Meyer, *Minimalism*, 247.
11. Donald Judd, who began to write art criticism as early as 1959, turned to art criticism partly out of dissatisfaction with the dominant model of art writing—the lyrical criticism of such

poets as Frank O'Hara and James Schuyler—then favored at *Artnews*. Leaving this journal after five issues, Judd developed a pragmatic model of criticism in the pages of *Arts Magazine* and other journals.

12. Andre's suspicion of the linguistic framing of art was widely shared by his peers. See Donald Judd, "Complaints, Part I" (1969), reprinted in Meyer, *Minimalism*, 245–247, and Dan Flavin's unfavorable remarks about art critical practice in "some remarks ... excerpts from a spleenish journal," *Artforum* 5:4 (December 1966): 27–29, and "some other comments ... more pages from a spleenish journal," *Artforum* 6:4 (December 1967): 20–25.
13. The pressure to speak or write about one's work induced such artists as Smithson, Andy Warhol, and Larry Bell to develop satiric responses to such formats at the statement and interview. See Robert Smithson, "Response to a Questionnaire from Irving Sandler" (1966), reprinted in Nancy Holt, *The Writings of Robert Smithson* (New York: New York University Press, 1978), 216–217, Larry Bell, statement in Barbara Rose, *A New Aesthetic*, exhibition catalog (Washington, D.C.: The Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 1967), 22; and Andy Warhol's "interview" in Emile De Antonio's film *Painters Painting* (1972), in which the artist turns the interviewer's mike toward De Antonio, and has Brigid Berlin respond to the director's questions on his behalf.
14. Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture, Part I," *Artforum* 4:6 (February 1966): 42–44; "Notes on Sculpture, Part II," *Artforum* 5:2 (October 1966): 20–23; "Notes on Sculpture, Part III: Notes and Nonsequiturs," *Artforum* 5:10 (Summer 1967): 24–90; "Notes on Sculpture, Part IV: Beyond Objects," *Artforum* 7:8 (April 1967): 50–54, 68; and Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art," *Artforum* 5:10 (Summer 1967): 79–83.
15. Oral interview, Lisson Gallery, London, and Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 1975.
16. Unpublished letter to Reno Odlin, November 24, 1974.
17. Unpublished letter to Reno Odlin, November 8, 1963.
18. The reader will note the presence of two excerpts from Patricia Norvell's 1969 interview with Andre, which I am grateful to include. Regrettably, permission was not granted to publish Andre's remarks on such subjects as certainty, conceptualism, minimalism, the writing of "Preface to Stripe Painting," the construction of his "Pyramids," Ad Reinhardt, and the restriction of his process to "fewer choices."
19. Occasional references to alcohol in these texts are also unmistakable allusions to *The Symposium*. Buchloh observes: "Given Frampton's erudition in matters of classical philosophy and literature, we have to assume that the dialogue in classical philosophy served as a model." *Twelve Dialogues 1962–63* (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1980), vii.
20. For an important discussion of the classical theme of friendship in relation to the visual arts (a discourse that encompasses Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Montaigne's essay "Of Friendship," among other texts), see Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

21. Odlin resided for many years in Washington State and currently lives in Louisiana.
22. On the circle of Pound's young acolytes, see Reno Odlin, "Pound at St. Elizabeth's: Apud Laestrygonas," *Antigonish Review* 51 (Autumn, 1982): 39–48.
23. See Andre's discussion of this influence in the chapters "Constantin Brancusi," "Hollis Frampton," and "Ezra Pound."
24. Andre's text is a correction of my "Non, Nothing, Everything: Hesse's 'Abstraction'" in Elizabeth Sussman, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2002), 76, n. 41.
25. Roberta Smith, "History: Robert Morris, Guggenheim Museum, New York," *New York Times*, February 4, 1994, C24.
26. *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, fourth edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 471 and 856.
27. Judd was also known for his "placid, yet dismal" enunciations. See Smithson, "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," in Holt, *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, 69.
28. One may also see this ludic side of Andre's sensibility in the little-known sequence of "Dada Forgeries" the artist has produced since the late 1950s, and "exhibited" at the Julian Pretto Gallery in New York during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many of these efforts enlist the Dada/surrealist formula of metaphorical combination, the pairing of unlikely terms, a tactic Andre studiously purged from his "serious" sculpture as early as 1959. A few of these works, long since destroyed, are reproduced in *Twelve Dialogues*, 1962–63, 96–97.
29. Telephone conversation with Carl Andre, January 23, 2004.
30. Although Andre maintains that he took no interest in the international tendency of concrete poetry that flourished in Brazil, Germany, and elsewhere during the 1950s and 1960s—his principle inspirations being Pound and Stein—the contemporaneity of these endeavors bears noting. Mary Ellen Solt's observations that concrete poetry stresses the "physical material from which the poem ... is made," or that the concrete poem is "an object to be perceived rather than read," may equally be applied to Andre's practice. Mary Ellen Solt, Introduction, *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).
31. Rob Weiner has noted the tension arising between one's perception of the whole field and discernment of "hidden words" within it, in "On Carl Andre's Poems," *Chinati Foundation Newsletter* 2 (Chinati Foundation website), without pagination.
32. Andre and the artist Melissa Kretschmer have since developed a sequence of postcards with appropriated imagery, *Welcome to Bushworld*, in opposition to the Bush administration. For an earlier use of appropriated imagery for the purpose of political protest, see Andre's pages in the collective effort by the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition/Artists and Writers Protest Against the War in Vietnam, *Attica Book*, ed. Benny Andrews and Rudolf Baranik (South

Hackensack, N.J.: Custom Communications Systems, 1971).

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33. Paul Cummings, "Taped Interview with Carl Andre" (1972), Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 4.
  34. The boy took great delight in his uncle's recitations. See Letter to Reno Odlin, June 17, 1963, in the chapter "Poetry."
  35. "There was a great fascination for words in my family, probably because English was not my father's native language." Cummings, "Taped Interview with Carl Andre," 30.
  36. Ibid.
  37. "I would ask what [the words] meant and he always refused to tell me what they meant. He said 'If you want to find out what they mean, look it up.' We had the big third or fourth edition of *Webster's International Dictionary*, the really thick one with all the words: it was a beautiful thing." Ibid.
  38. Letter to Reno Odlin, June 17, 1963.
  39. Rob Weiner, "On Carl Andre's Poems."
  40. Letter to Reno Odlin, November 24, 1974.
  41. See Owens, "Earthwords," 44.
  42. Andre never aspired to produce a nonsensical poetry, nor a sculpture purged of form, even though Andre's practice has been mistakenly equated with the "antiform" tendency espoused by Robert Morris in the late 1960s. Although his *Untitled (Scatter Piece)* (1966) anticipates antiform's dissolution of the minimal gestalt, this and similar works by Andre emphasize the integrity of the sculptural unit and its capacity for combination. Andre's poetry also stresses the specificity of the word and its potential for arrangement.
  43. The parts of an Andre sculpture may vary in material and, in rare instances, shape—for example, Andre's sculptures containing different metal plates of the same size, a type exemplified by *37th Piece of Work* and *Six Metal Fugue*. Among his few works with differently shaped particles are his *Scatter Piece* of 1969 consisting of ball bearings, pulley discs, aluminum channel, rectangular acrylic solids, and aluminum ingots, and *Skitter Scatter*, 2000, 32 plastic units of varying size. On the interchangeability of parts, see "Anaxial Symmetry" in the chapter "Symmetry" in this volume.
  44. "My first problem has been to find a set of particles ... and then to combine them according to laws which are particular to each particle, rather than a law which is applied to the whole set." The units are combined in ways that "are no more than the qualities that any one particle might have." Phyllis Tuchman, "An Interview with Carl Andre," *Artforum* 8:10 (June 1970): 55.
  45. Smithson, "A Museum of Language," 67.

46. "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," in Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle, *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), 55–82. Jakobson also pursues this subject in "Linguistics and Poetics," in Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings III: Poetry of Grammar and Grammar of Poetry*, ed. Stephen Rudy (The Hague: Mouton, 1981), 18–51, among other texts.
47. See Andre's discussion of this work in "On Certain Poems and Consecutive Matters," in *Twelve Dialogues, 1962–63*, 75.
48. Jakobson, "Linguistics and Poetics," 27.
49. "What is Poetry?" in Jakobson, *Selected Writings III*, 80.
50. Yve-Alain Bois, "The Semiology of Cubism," in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. Lynn Zelevansky (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 178.
51. "The new sculpture arose out of ... a rejection of Cubist composition." Barbara Rose, "Post-Cubist Sculpture," *American Sculpture of the 1960s* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967), 38.
52. Frank Stella, in Bruce Glaser, "Interview with Frank Stella, Donald Judd, and Dan Flavin" (1964), reprinted in Meyer, *Minimalism*, 197.
53. On the association of Minimal practice with the *nouveau roman*, see Barbara Rose, "ABC Art" (1965), reprinted in Gregory Battcock, *Minimalism: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1968), 274–297. Judd discussed the antianthropocentric aims of his work in "Specific Objects" (1965), reprinted in Meyer, *Minimalism*, 209.
54. Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," 78; Bois, "The Semiology of Cubism," 194. Cubism's metonymical and metaphorical tactics are also explored in Rosalind Krauss, "In the Name of Picasso," *October* 16 (Spring 1981): 5–22, and "The Motivation of the Sign," in Zelevansky, *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, 261–286.
55. Bois, "The Semiology of Cubism," 194 and 207–208, n. 81. Bois cites as an example Picasso's *Head of a Bull* (1943), in which the combination of a bicycle seat and handlebar suggests at once a metonymical and metaphorical play of signification.
56. Rose's account was itself based on Judd's and Stella's assertion that the "new American" art constituted a rupture with "European" (i.e., cubist) practice. See Glaser, "Interview with Frank Stella, Donald Judd, and Dan Flavin." Lynn Zelavansky describes the minimalist enterprise in similar terms in *Sense and Sensibility: Minimalism and Women Artists in the 1990s* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1994).
57. In an important essay on Anthony Caro's sculpture inspired by the later writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Michael Fried equated Caro's part-by-part arrangements with the syntax of signifying bodily gesture. See "Anthony Caro" (1963), reprinted in Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269–276.

58. See excerpt, Cummings, "Taped Interview with Carl Andre" in the chapter "Marcel Duchamp."
59. See the entries on "Morro Castle" and "The Marriage of Reason and Squalor" in Brenda Richardson's meticulous study *Frank Stella: The Black Paintings* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1976).
60. Rosalind Krauss makes this point in an early analysis of Judd's work, "Allusion and Illusion in Donald Judd," *Artforum* 4:9 (May 1966): 24–26.
61. Chantal Pontbriand, "Carl Andre: Fourteen Written Answers to Questions," *Parachute* (Winter 1979): 68.
62. "Literature and Signification," in *Critical Essays*, translated by Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 272. Barthes theorizes an art devoid of anthropocentric meaning in his essays "The World as Object" and "Literal Literature" in the same volume. As Alex Alberro has pointed out to me, Robert Smithson's antihumanistic reading of Andre's writings may well suggest the mediation of Barthes's early criticism, which had penetrated the New York literary and art scenes by the early 1960s.
63. Pontbriand, "Carl Andre: Fourteen Written Responses to Questions," 68.
64. I am thinking of such works as *The Void Enclosed by the Squares of Three, Four, and Five*, produced for an art space in a former synagogue in Stommel, Germany (page 152), Andre's works dedicated to Hesse (*Eva Adamas* and *Evangles*, page 108) and Smithson (*Smithsonite Spiral*, page 254), and those numerous works that allude to Quincy, whose shipyards and quarries and shoreline Andre recalls in this book, such as the *Manet Blocks* works of 1991.
65. Interview with Phyllis Tuchman, 59–60, reprinted in this book as "Some kind of blankness ..." in the chapter "Minimalism."
66. See Yve-Alain Bois's discussion of "iconological blindness" in "Introduction," *Painting as Model* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990), xxv–xxix. On the iconological tendency of recent minimalist criticism, see my *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the 1960s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 184–188.
67. In this regard, Andre's project implicitly resists Michael Fried's famous reading of minimalism as a theatrical tendency. Fried argues that the minimalist work exists for the spectator, actively soliciting her regard. Andre sees his practice as nontheatrical in ambition. His floor works induce a bodily encounter, as occurs when a viewer walks upon them. Yet, *as matter* they do not "need" a viewer's recognition to exist (a point of view that applies to all sculpture, according to Andre), nor do they confront a spectator in the classic theatrical manner described by Fried; as Andre notes, his works can even be missed by a spectator—including the artist himself. See Excerpt, interview with Paul Cummings, in the chapter "My Work."
68. Andre's dislike of dematerialized tendencies in art—Dada, pop, and conceptualism—follows accordingly. In "Against Duchamp," Andre clearly separates his own use of industrially



processed materials to fabricate a physical work of art from the Dada found object, the embodiment of an idea. His negative assessment of pop (“pop”), first espoused in the early 1960s, follows from the view that the pop artists never developed an art sufficiently distinct from the advertisements that are its inspiration. Andre’s harshest attacks are reserved, however, for conceptualism, a tendency with which he has often been misleadingly associated. For Andre, the art “idea”—once espoused by Lucy Lippard and others as the ultimate “dematerialized” art form—is the perfect commodity (the art certificate as pure financial value). For a similarly critical view of conceptualism see Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

69. Cummings, “Taped Interview with Carl Andre,” 40–41, reprinted here as “A Museum of the Elements” in the chapter “Matter.” Resist is the operative word. A poignant tension may be seen between Andre’s assertion of matter’s primacy and his predilection for materials that have been mined, cut, measured, and shaped by industrial procedures: in Andre’s art the experience of matter-as-matter is always already mediated, indeed is made possible, by the preexistence of a capitalist system of production and replication and the “art-world” this supports. On these questions see the artist’s “Three-Vector Model” and Letter to Sol LeWitt in the chapter “Art and Capitalism.”
70. “Un entretien entre Carl Andre et Elisabeth Lebovici et Thierry Cabanne,” Yvon Lambert Gallery, Paris, July–November 1976, question #8, reprinted here in the chapter “Language” as “It is being which makes symbol possible.”