Moments of History in the Work of Dan Graham

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Asked about the essential feature of his work, Dan Graham answered by calling it "photojournalism,"[1] an ironic quotation of a term Marcel Duchamp once used to describe his own activities. Graham voluntarily followed a misunderstanding and misnomer that his work has stirred since its earliest publication in 1965. In 1970 the critic Lucy Lippard could still remark during a discussion with Carl Andre, Jan Dibbets, and Douglas Huebler: "Dan, you've been called a poet and a critic and a photographer. Are you an artist now?"[2]

But even his own contemporaries, artist-friends of the minimal phase whose work had found in Dan Graham's analytical criticism since 1965 a rarely qualified protagonist, refused—by misinterpreting Graham's visual art production—the recognition of changing basic concepts within the visual arts since 1965. Dan Flavin, for example, even though he was among the first to be seriously interested in Graham's work and the first to publish one of his photographs, wrote about Graham's *Homes for America* (1966): "Your fine photographic approach seems to recall the consistently clear and plain deviceless reportage of Henri Cartier-Bresson, which you apply not to people, as he did, but to their 'feats' of banal vernacular architecture and landscape."[3]

This false classification is of particularly revealing historical irony. It shows that from a minimalist's perspective, photographic information/documentation could not possibly be conceived as "art" (except, perhaps, as "photographic" art). Flavin's misapprehension reveals, moreover, an unconscious attempt to eliminate radically innovative implications of postminimalist art activity by relating Graham's photographs to a

Homes for America

D. GRAHAM

Belleplain
Brooklawn
Colonia
Colonia Manor
Fair Haven
Fair Lawn
Greenfields Village
Green Village
Plainsboro
Pleasant Grove
Pleasant Plains
Sunset Hill Garden
Garden City
Garden City Park
Greenlawn
Island Park
Levitown
Middleville
New City Park
Pine Lawn
Plainview
Plandome Manor
Pleasantside
Pleasantville

Large-scale 'tract' housing 'developments' constitute the new city. They are located everywhere. They are not particularly bound to existing communities; they fail to develop either regional characteristics or separate identity. These 'projects' date from the end of World War II when in southern California speculators or 'operative' builders adapted mass production techniques to quickly build many houses for the defense workers over-concentrated there. This 'California Method' consisted simply of determining in advance the exact amount and lengths of pieces of lumber and multiplying them by the number of standardized houses to be built. A cutting yard was set up near the site of the project to saw rough lumber into those sizes. By mass buying, greater use of machines and factory produced parts, assembly line standardization, multiple units were easily fabricated.

"The Serenade" - Cape Coral unit, Fla.

Each house in a development is a lightly constructed 'shell' although this fact is often concealed by fake (half-stone) brick walls. Shells can be added or subtracted easily. The standard unit is a box or a series of boxes, sometimes contemptuously called 'pillboxes.' When the box has a sharply oblique roof it is called a Cape Cod. When it is longer than wide it is a 'ranch.' A

Set-back, Daisy City, New Jersey

The logic relating each sectioned part to the entire plan follows a systematic plan. A development contains a limited, set number of house models. For instance, Cape Coral, a Florida project, advertises eight different models:

A The Sonata
B The Concerto
C The Overture
D The Ballet
E The Prelude
F The Serenade
G The Noctune
H The Rhapsody

Two External Doorways, 'Two Homes Homes', Daisy City, N.J.

Center Court, Gothamtown Development, Daisy City, N.J.

Housing Development, rear view, Bayonne, New Jersey

Housing Development, front view, Bayonne, New Jersey

two-story house is usually called 'colonial.' If it consists of contiguous boxes with one slightly higher elevation it is a 'split level.' Such stylistic differentiation is advantageous to the basic structure (with the possible exception of the split level whose plan simplifies construction on discontinuous ground levels).

There is a recent trend toward 'two home homes' which are two boxes split by adjoining walls and having separate entrances. The left and right hand units are mirror reproductions of each other. Often sold as private units are strings of apartment-like, quasi-discrete cells formed by subdividing laterally an extended rectangular parallelopiped into as many as ten or twelve separate dwellings.

Developers usually build large groups of individual homes sharing similar floor plans and whose overall grouping possesses a discrete flow plan. Regional shopping centers and industrial parks are sometimes integrated as well into the general scheme. Each development is sectioned into blocked-out areas containing a series of identical or sequentially related types of houses all of which have uniform or staggered set-backs and land plots.

In addition, there is a choice of eight exterior colors:
1 White
2 Moonstone Grey
3 Nickle

LAWN GREEN

4 Seafoam Green
5 Lawn Green
6 Bamboo
7 Coral Pink
8 Colonial Red

As the color series usually varies independently of the model series, a block of eight houses utilizing four models and four colors might have forty-eight times forty-eight or 2,304 possible arrangements.

Dan Graham

Dan Graham, *Homes for America*, 1966–1967. Printed matter. Courtesy: Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

Each block of houses is a self-contained sequence — there is no development — selected from the possible acceptable arrangements. As an example, if a section was to contain eight houses of which four model types were to be used, any of these permutational possibilities could be used:

AABBCCDD	ABCDABCD
AABBDDCC	ABDCABDC
AACCBBDD	ACBDACBD
AACCDDBB	ACDBACDB
AADDCCBB	ADBCADBC
AADDBBCC	ADCBADCB
BBAADDCC	BACDBACD
BBCCAADD	BCADBCAD
BBCCDDAA	BCDABCDA
BBDDAACC	BDACBDAC
BBDDCCAA	BDCABDCA
CCAABBDD	CABDCABD
CCAADDBB	CADBCADB
CCBBDDAA	CBADCBAD
CCBBAADD	CBDACBDA
CCDDAABB	CDABCDAB
CCDDBBAA	CDBACDBA
DDAABBCC	DACBDACB
DDAACCBB	DABCDABC
DDBBAACC	DBACDBAC
DDBBCCAA	DBCADBCA
DDCCAABB	DCABDCAB
DDCCBBAA	DCBADCBA

The 8 color variables were equally distributed among the house exteriors. The first buyers were more likely to have obtained their first choice in color. Family units had to make a choice based on the available colors which also took account of both husband and wife's likes and dislikes. Adult male and female color likes and dislikes were compared in a survey of the homeowners.

'Like'

Male	Female
Skyway	Skyway Blue
Colonial Red	Lawn Green
Patio White	Nickle
Yellow Chiffon	Colonial Red
Lawn Green	Yellow Chiffon
Nickle	Patio White
Fawn	Moonstone Grey
Moonstone Grey	Fawn

'Dislike'

Male	Female
Lawn Green	Patio White
Colonial Red	Fawn
Patio White	Colonial Red
Moonstone Grey	Moonstone Grey
Fawn	Yellow Chiffon
Yellow Chiffon	Lawn Green
Nickle	Skyway blue
Skyway Blue	Nickle

A given development might use, perhaps, *four* of these possibilities as an arbitrary scheme for different sectors; then select four from another scheme which utilizes the remaining four unused models and colors; then select four from another scheme which utilizes all eight models and eight colors; then four from another scheme which utilizes a single model and all eight colors (or four or two colors); and finally utilize that single scheme for one model and one color. This serial logic might follow consistently until, at the edges, it is abruptly terminated by pre-existent highways, bowling alleys, shopping plazas, car lots, discount houses, lumber yards or factories.

Although there is perhaps some aesthetic precedence in the row houses which are indigenous to many older cities along the east coast, and built with uniform façades and set-backs early this century, housing developments as an architectural phenomenon seem peculiarly gratuitous. They exist apart from prior standards of 'good' architecture. They were not built to satisfy individual needs or tastes. The owner is completely tangential to the product's completion. His home isn't really personable in the old sense; it wasn't designed to last for generations; and outside of its immediate here and now' context it is useless, designed to be thrown away. Both architecture and craftsmanship as values are subverted by the dependence on simplified and easily duplicated techniques of fabrication and standardized modular plans. Contingencies such as mass production technology and land use economics make the final decisions, denying the architect his former 'unique' role. Developments stand in an absurd relationship to their environment. Designed to fill in 'dead' land areas, the houses needn't adapt to or attempt to withstand Nature. There is no organic unity connecting the land site and the home. Both are without roots — separate parts in a larger, predetermined, synthetic order.

ARTS MAGAZINE/December 1966-January 1967

Dan Graham

particularly restorative ideology of photography, namely Cartier-Bresson's idea of the Decisive Moment. Whereas photographers like Cartier-Bresson tend to celebrate their passive-receptive activity as a medium of the *one* historical moment they try to conserve in its photographic transubstantiation, Graham intends quite the contrary: to construct functional models of recognition of actual history by his (photographic) media.

Homes for America (1966), which might be considered along with Graham's *Schema* (1966) to be the most complex and relevant of his early works, shall serve as an example. This piece of "photojournalism," which he referred to as "the transition from earlier 'conceptual' pages in magazines and the 1967–1969 articles," takes off from the by then growing recognition that information about works of art is disseminated primarily by reproductions in the (art) media. As Carl Andre had described it in 1968: "The photograph is a lie. I'm afraid we get a great deal of our exposure to art through magazines and through slides, and I think this is dreadful, this is anti-art because art is a direct experience with something in the world and photography is just a rumor, a kind of pornography of art."[4] It is precisely at this anti-art point of "pornography" that Graham starts his inquiry, and it is a signpost of his postminimalist attitude that he almost literally inverts Andre's disgust with the media and turns it into a basis for his own artistic strategies.

Graham has commented on this key body of work to the effect that he repeats the intertwinement of the various formal and (art) historical relations and dialectical inversions of the work:

> First it is important that the photos are not alone, but part of a magazine layout. They are illustrations of the text or (inversely), the text functions in relation to/modifying the meaning of the photos. The photos and the text are separate parts of a schematic two-dimensional grid. The photos correlate [to] the lists and columns of serial information and both "represent" the serial logic of the housing developments whose subject matter the article discusses. Despite the fact that the idea of using the "real" outdoor environment as a "site" on which to construct "conceptual" or "earth works" (remember the article was written some years before Smithson's and Oppenheim's works), I think the fact that "Homes for America" was, in the end, only a magazine article, and made no claims for itself as "Art," is its most important aspect.[5]

Schema for a set of pages whose component variants are specifically published as individual pages in various magazines and collections. In each printed instance, it is set in its final form (so it defines itself) by the editor of the publication where it is to appear, the exact data used to correspond in each specific instance to the specific fact(s) of its published appearance. The following schema is entirely arbitrary; any might have been used, and deletions, additions or modifications for space or appearance on the part of the editor are possible.

SCHEMA:

(Number of)	adjectives
(Number of)	adverbs
(Percentage of)	area not occupied by type
(Percentage of)	area occupied by type
(Number of)	columns
(Number of)	conjunctions
(Depth of)	depression of type into surface of page
(Number of)	gerunds
(Number of)	infinitives
(Number of)	letters of alphabets
(Number of)	lines
(Number of)	mathematical symbols
(Number of)	nouns
(Number of)	numbers
(Number of)	participles
(Perimeter of)	page
(Weight of)	paper sheet
(Type)	paper stock
(Thinness of)	paper
(Number of)	prepositions
(Number of)	pronouns
(Number of point)	size type
(Name of)	typeface
(Number of)	words
(Number of)	words capitalized
(Number of)	words italicized
(Number of)	words not capitalized
(Number of)	words not italicized

Dan Graham, *Schema*, 1966–1967 (March 1966). Printed matter. Courtesy: Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

The informational frame of an art magazine's coverage thus becomes the "found" formal structure. This is, however, juxtaposed with the subject matter of a found "reality" structure—the misery of everyday industrial housing. At the same time, its formal stylistic qualities—the serial order of the cubic house-forms, their permutational principles of single but repetitive elements (whose sum constitutes the "wholeness" of a given formation)—reflect in an obviously ironic and ambiguous manner the formal and stylistic principles of minimal sculpture. The dialectic of reality structure and formal structure, this capacity to read "buildings and grammars," or reality systems and formal systems, is most typical and significant of all of Graham's early writings and conceptual works. It places them into a category of structure "as simulacrum of the object of history," as Barthes has defined it,

> a pointed, intentional simulacrum, because the imitated object reveals something which remained invisible or even more incomprehensible with the mere object. . . . This simulacrum is intellect added to the object; and this addition has anthropological value as it is the human being itself, its history, its situation, its freedom and the resistance which nature opposes to his mind.[6]

The general misunderstanding and delayed recognition of Graham's work may have had its cause in the work's specifically "non-aesthetic" forms of appearance. These forms are not only a result of Graham's functionalizing of formal concerns, but probably also of an entirely different approach to those historical sources of constructivism that had become a point of reference in American art since Stella, and which had finally received a "formalist" reading by the generation of minimal artists, if only reluctantly, as in this acknowledgment by Donald Judd in 1974: "With and since Malevich the several aspects of the best art have been single, like unblended Scotch. Free."[7]

Dan Graham and the Minimal Heritage

> The split between art and real problems emerged in the Sixties in an essentially apolitical and asocial art—to the extent that, for most artists, political engagement meant moving to an extra art activity. . . . The neutrality which this art assumes excludes the possibility of a critical relation to a capitalist form of life.[8]

Formalism in aesthetic practice and the correlating equivalent, an entrepreneur's morality, have not been the original position of the minimal generation. The minimalists had not only oriented their formal and material strategies according to constructivist axioms, but also attempted to reactivate the latter's sociopolitical implications. This meant demanding an objective functionalism of materials that had to originate from technological products and processes; unlimited capacity of technical reproduction as well as its dialectical counterpart—namely, the idea of the unique and specific work, that could only find its actual function and realization in a particular segment of the time-space continuum; and, finally, the abolition of the artwork's commodity status and the attempt to replace its exchange and exhibition value with a new concept of functional use value.

Even though Flavin may not have understood or appreciated Graham, this is not true for the opposite: Graham has frequently remarked how important his knowledge and understanding of Flavin's work has been to his own development as an artist. And it remains an open question whether the work of the elder artist offered, in fact, the complexity that Graham discerned in it, or whether he read aspects of complexity into Flavin's work that would become the key features of his own artistic production, anticipating his own future development by projecting it onto the historical screen of the predecessor's work. The transformation of "formalist" terms into a more "functionalist" context, in particular, could be called one of the essential qualities that Graham's work introduced into the visual arts around 1965. For example, Flavin's (and equally Andre's and LeWitt's) notion of place, the fact that the work referred to the gallery as the spatial container, along with the notion of presence, which had meant in Flavin's work that an installation was contingent on its present situation and therefore always specifically conceived for one particular architectural context, became key issues in Graham's early conceptual works, as well as in his critical analytical writings (which preceded his development of performance, film, and video works).

This transformation from plastic-material modes of analyzing perceptual (aesthetic) processes to literal-verbal analyses and conceptualization takes place within Graham's descriptions of the works of Andre, Flavin, Judd, Nauman, Serra, and Sol LeWitt, in texts Graham wrote and published starting in 1965. It seems more appropriate to read these texts as artistic arguments indicating the development of new forms of aesthetic work than as art criticism. Initially, these critical texts open up a historical

perspective through their minute descriptive precision, inasmuch as they show the basic principles of minimalism to be derivatives of constructivist fundamentals. Graham catalogs these principles in his 1967 description of Flavin's work:

> Fluorescent light objects in place are replaceable in various contingently determined interdependent relations with specific environmental situations and are also replaceable from their fixture and in having a limited existence. The components of a particular exhibition upon its termination are replaced in another situation—perhaps put to a non-art use as a part of a different whole in a different future.[9]

Or even more systematically and explicitly on Carl Andre's sculpture *Crib*, *Compound, Coin* (1965):

> The component units possessed no intrinsic significance beyond their immediate contextual placement being "replaceable." Works are impossessible by the viewer in the monetary sense, the sense of an artist being possessed of a vision or of satisfying personal inner needs of the viewer. Unweighted with symbolic transcendental or redeeming monetary values, Andre's sculpture does not form some platonically substantial body, but is *recoverable*; for which no one may be poetically transported from view when the exhibition is terminated (the parts having been recovered and perhaps put to an entirely non-related use as part of a different whole in a different future).[10]

Another reading of Graham's criticism would examine the historicity of the writings themselves, from a present point of view, their acuity in the way they denote almost systematically all the elementary principles of visual thinking as they had been developed by minimal art practice. At the same time, these texts connote by their very precision the change of artistic procedure into concepts of verbalized materiality and materialized language. This has been quite accurately observed by Robert Smithson, who, as early as 1967, seems to have seen more clearly than Flavin that the historical and aesthetic implications of Graham's writings and photographic works belonged to a new definition of art axioms (updating modes of aesthetic production to the general standards of means of recognition) that drew them closer to their use value potential: "Like some of the other artists Graham can 'read' the language of buildings (*Homes for*

America, 1966). . . . The reading of both buildings and grammars enables the artist to avoid out of date appeals to 'function' or 'utilitarianism.'"[11]

In most of his writings Dan Graham has reflected on the double nature of those processes—to the extent that they could be formalized and integrated into the context of his work—by referring to them as "in-formation," indicating that to him formal procedures as well as their material content are indivisible units. The materiality of the formal processes in Graham's works could therefore be called "specific" in the sense coined by Donald Judd for painterly-sculptural works of the minimal phase: "Materials vary greatly and are simply material—formica, aluminum, cold-rolled steel, plexiglas, red and common brass and so forth. They are specific. Also they are usually aggressive."[12]

Graham's critical analysis of the formal and material heritage of minimal aesthetics not only seems to have led him to the discovery that minimalist artists' ideas about materiality were in fact rather traditional and positivist (oriented at a neo-constructivist craft ethos), but moreover he seems to have acknowledged that their original radicality in questioning the role of the artwork in its social context had been given up and that minimal works had been restored easily into the commodity status, acquiring exchange value inasmuch as they gave up their context-bound idea of use value. Therefore, the materials of reality are for Graham no longer simply "found objects" or the "ready-made elements" of technological everyday reality that they are in Flavin's fluorescent lights or even Andre's metallurgical elements (which are much more technologically "cultivated" than their elementary "natural" look might at first reveal); they are, rather, the found structures beyond visible reality and its seeming concreteness. They determine reality, however, with a more subtle and effective impact: equally the psycho-physiological motivations of subjective behavior and the socioeconomical conditions of objective political practice, or, even more precisely, the omnipresent mechanisms of interdependence within those systems revealed in the acutely observed situations of their combined effects.

Graham's authentically conceptual early magazine publications, which were written before his critical articles on fellow artists, took the conventional standard magazine page as their formal ground and common denominator. They were, in a sense, about "themselves." Works like *Figurative* (1965), *Schema* (1966), and *Detumescence* (1966)—which were among the first artworks, if not the very first, to be published in magazine advertisement form—sum up the reflection of minimal presuppositions

by translating them into an entirely different formal language. The historical distance and degrees of differentiation that have actually been achieved by Graham's theoretical thought as well as by his aesthetic production can be easily understood by comparing Judd's position regarding materials of art objects and Graham's attitude toward the materiality of art in his "Other Observations" (1969). The essay was written as a comment on *Schema* and reads in parts almost as a word-for-word comparative study and critique of minimalist formal thought and its transformation:

> A page of *Schema* exists as a matter of fact materiality and simultaneously semiotic signifier of this material (present): as a sign it unites, therefore, signifier and signified. . . . In the internal logic, there is the paradox that the concept of "materiality" referred to by the language is to the language itself as some "immaterial" material (a kind of mediumistic ether) and simultaneously is to it as the extensive space. There is a "shell" placed between the external "empty" material of place and the interior "empty" material of "language," (systems of) information (in-formation) exist halfway between material and concept, without being either one.[13]

The consequent radicality of Graham's formal procedure to reduce *Schema* to a mere formula of self-referentiality finds its dialectical material equivalent in his decision to publish this work in the context of an (art) magazine advertisement, as he has pointed out in later notes on *Schema*:

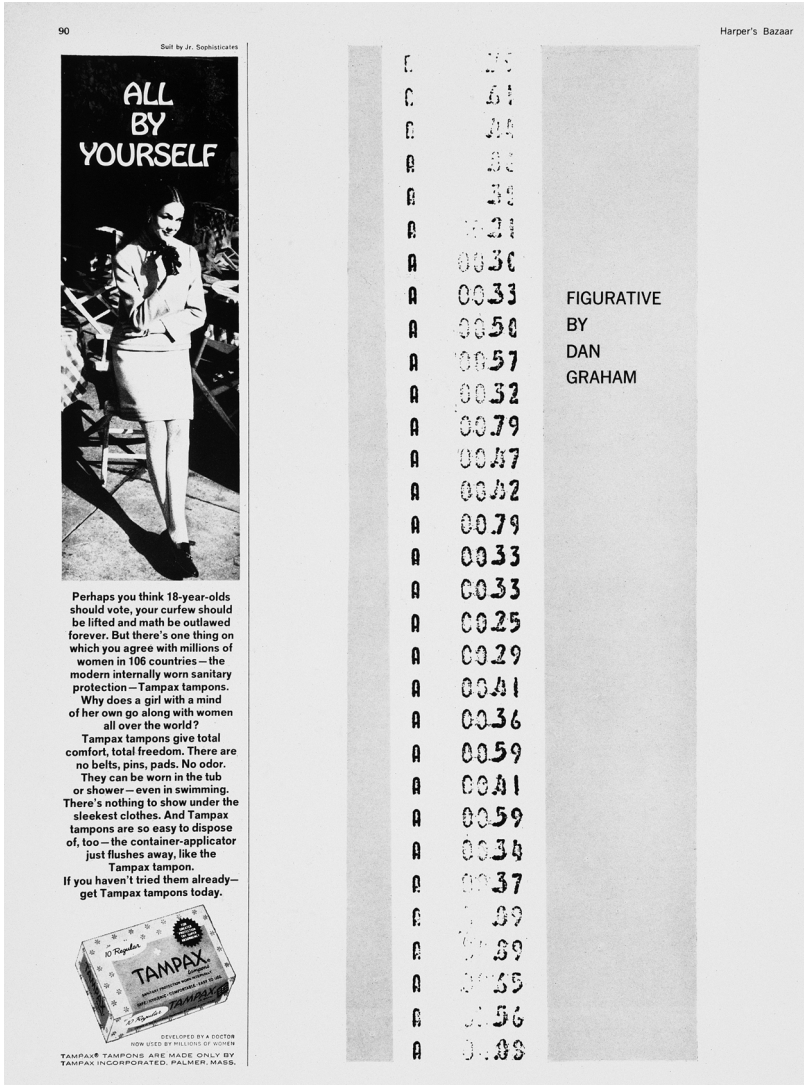
> But, unlike a Stella painting, for example, the variants of *Schema* are not simply self-referential. This is because of the use of the magazine system as support. Magazines determine a place or a frame of reference both outside and inside what is defined as "Art." Magazines are boundaries (mediating) between the two areas . . . between gallery "Art" and communications about "Art."[14]

Graham is clearly attempting to include the analytical reflection on those determining elements that had been ignored before, the different aspects of a socioeconomical framework as well as the individual's psychological framework, which conditions the production as well as the reception of the artwork. By inverting his perspective from formalist concerns to functionalist strategies, Graham makes them the very subject matter of his art. Again, his own retrospective comment is most illuminating in regard

to the changes that his work initiated in comparison to the given (art) historical conditions:

> It was interesting, then, that *aesthetically* (but not functionally, that is, in material, economic terms) some of the Minimal Art seemed to refer to the gallery interior space as the ultimate frame or structural support/context and that some "Pop" Art referred to the surrounding media-world of cultural information as framework. But the frame (specific media-form or gallery/museum as economic entity concerned with value) was never made structurally apparent. *Schema*'s strategy was to reduce these two frameworks, to coalesce them into one frame so that they were made more apparent and the "art product" would be radically de-valued. I wanted to make a "Pop" Art which was more literally disposable (an idea which was alluded to in Warhol's idea of replacing "quality" for "quantity"—the logic of a consumer society), I wanted to make an art-form which could not be reproduced *or* exhibited in a gallery/museum, and I wanted to make a further reduction of the "Minimal" object to a not necessarily aesthetic two-dimensional form (which was not painting or drawing): printed matter which is mass reproduced and mass disposable information. Putting it in magazine pages meant that it also could be "read" in juxtaposition to the usual second-hand art criticism, reviews, reproductions in the rest of the magazine and would form a critique of the functioning of the magazine (in relation to the gallery structure).[15]

Graham's *Schema* and his later comments on it, such as "Other Observations" (1969) and "Magazine/Advertisements" (1969), which began with the sentence "Art is a social sign," have to be read along with Daniel Buren's "Limites critiques" (1969; published in English as "Critical Limits" in 1973)[16] as one of the first and most relevant attempts of that period to make art's most extraneous, repressed, and camouflaged conditions obvious and invert them to become art's subject matter. Anticipating Hans Haacke's somewhat comparable reflections in the late sixties (recently published under the title *Framing and Being Framed*[17]), Graham's framework analysis differs considerably from the work of Buren—who reflects on the historical and museological determinations of the artwork—as well as that of Haacke—who takes the social conditioning of art reception into consideration along with art's historical



Dan Graham, *Figurative*, 1965. Printed matter, 15" × 22" and 24" × 24 3/8". Courtesy: Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

If nature didn't, Warner's will.
Our Comfort Curve™ bra with low-cut sides will do it for $5.
Warners®
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transformation by becoming an object of capital investment. Graham analyzes the general social conditions of production and reproduction of (art) information and their formal and material consequences.[18]

Graham's processes—compared to Judd's "specific objects"—are specific in a threefold manner: first, in regard to their proper epistemological and historical context (i.e., the visual arts) as they dialectically reflect and transcend the given conditions of minimal aesthetics; second, in their relation to objective methodology, which consciously and clearly inserts them into a context of more general principles of meaning production, such as their explicit dependence on semiology; third, because of their very concrete reference to a particular segment of reality. It is not least of all for this last reason that Graham's works, his "specific processes," seem to lack visual aesthetic qualities, which would more easily allow them to be read in a cultural context of art history. On the other hand, their lack of surface aesthetics, rooted in their potential function, their insistence on the idea to reinvest the artwork with a potential use value, makes them more similar to certain works of productivist art than a superficial comparison might reveal. It is precisely this lack of aesthetic attraction, which denounces all forms of false reconciliation, that more craft-oriented artworks bring into the world as cultural commodities. Their service to the dominating principles includes restoring art to its most traditional role, namely that of functioning as the mere decorum of the ruling order.

Graham's "Subject Matter" and Postminimalism

Dan Graham's compilation of critical essays, which was first published in 1969 in his privately edited *End Moments* under the title "Subject Matter," indicated in its subtitle the paradigmatic change occurring in the visual arts around 1965: "1. the subject (rather than the object), 2. matter (as process not as object)." This collection of "art-critical" writings, which includes one of Graham's earliest pieces on Donald Judd (1964) as well as the latest in a series of analyses on his experience of a performance work by Bruce Nauman (1969), goes further than his other pieces in its attempt to overcome minimalist presuppositions. "Subject Matter" must be considered in part a reviewing and critical reflection of Graham's own work of the *Schema* period, work he felt still somehow to be part of the "non-anthropomorphic ideology of late '60s New York 'Minimal' art." Parallel to these writings Graham initiates his own first activities, within which he transformed the notions of visual and spatial concretions into

the less "aesthetic" yet more concise and immediate perceptual modes of experience, acted out by real performers. Graham's concern for the immediacy of perceptual experience shows that he consequently pursued the reductivist approach to art that had been induced by Stella and had been at issue all through minimalism, and that he quite necessarily arrived at a concern for the "behavior" of people themselves, their actual practice of perception (the subject) instead of a concern for their behavior in relation to a perceived sculptural object. While Graham most lucidly described and analyzed the gradual shift from the minimalist object to the postminimal focus on process, he underwent in his own work a similar change, albeit though remaining as specific and consistent in attitude just as his works of the *Schema* period had been. Again, the starting point of reflection goes back to Graham's perception of Flavin's work as he has described it in retrospect:

> I liked that as a side effect of Flavin's fluorescents the gallery walls became a "canvas." The lights dramatized the people (like "spotlights") in a gallery—throwing the content of the exhibition onto the people in the process of perceiving; the gallery's interior cube itself became the real framework.[19]

In Graham's essay on Sol LeWitt this reading of a sculptural work, understood in a manner that announces the future development that Graham's own art would take, is even more explicit:

> As the viewer moves from point to point about the art object the physical continuity of the walk is translated into illusive self-representing depth: the visual complication of representations "develops" a discrete, non-progressive space and time. There is no distinction between subject and object. Object is the viewer, the art and subject is the viewer, the art. Object and subject are not dialectical oppositions but one self-contained identity: reversible interior and exterior termini. All frames of reference read simultaneously, object "subject."[20]

This reveals at the same time the absolutely consequent logic of the extension of formalist concerns into the more functional reality of Graham's later performance activities. It elucidates the strictly nonliterary and nontheatrical quality of Graham's understanding of performance activities. "Acting" in the context of the visual arts is relevant only inasmuch as it

performs the elementary procedure of perceiving the network of relationships between performer and perceiver, both being simultaneously subject and object. Graham observed this in detail when confronted with the works of Bruce Nauman, whose performance practices Graham described in "Subject Matter," showing then the process of assimilating and transforming Nauman's influence on his own future work. In a recent comment on "Subject Matter," in particular on the parts concerning the influences of music and performance on his work, Graham describes clearly the importance of these phenomena for his own development:

> I had the idea of the reciprocal interdependence of perceiver (spectator) and the perceived art-object/or the artist as performer (who might in the case of Nauman present himself as or in place of this "object"). In this new subject–object relation the spectator's perceptual processes were correlated to the compositional process (which was also inherent in the material. . . . thus a different idea of "*material*" and the relation of this materiality to nature (al) processes was also developed). This change in compositional process came from developments in music and dance . . . where the performer or performance was the center of the work, executed and perceived in a durational time continuum. This was the opposite of Minimal Art's durationless presence . . . a series of discontinuous instances, related by a generating self-contained compositional idea (which was *a priori* to the performance or execution of the piece). From music also came the idea of the *physiological* presence . . . a work about the perceptual process itself, taking place simultaneously as an external phenomenon and inside the brain as part of the brain's interior processes. . . . "Subject Matter" was written at the same time as my first films and performances. I wanted to explain these new types of works I was relating to.[21]

The outline of Graham's interests and the strategies of his formal enterprises appear in the writings and in the works as a microscopic analysis of segments of the processes of history itself, their given structures as well as the modes of perceiving them, and the perspectives of analyzing and transforming them. And it is to the degree that the analysis succeeds in mediating the patterns of a given reality structure (individual behavior, modes of interaction)—for example, Graham's subtle revealing of stereotyped male–female roles in his video-performance *Two Consciousness*

Projections (1972), the gradual increase of awareness of group behavior versus individual behavior in performances like *Intention/Intentionality Sequence* (1972) or *Performer/Audience Sequence* (1974), and the open structure inducing and elucidating the mechanisms of group identification in his *Public Space/Two Audiences* (1976)—that the works open up an instrumental perspective of further historical proceedings, endowing the viewer with what he experiences as their artwork quality, their aesthetic value.

Epilogue on the Idea of Use Value

> A spindle maintains itself as use value only by being used for spinning. Otherwise, by the specific form which has been given to the wood or metal, both the work which produced the form and the material which was shaped by the form would be spoiled for use. Only by being applied as a medium of active work, as an objective moment in its very being, are the use value of wood and metal as well as the form, maintained.
>
> —*Karl Marx, sketches for the* Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie

Use value is art's most heteronomous counterpart, which, defining the artistic activity as organon of history, as instrument of materialist recognition and transformation, determines itself primarily and finally by its historical context: because it can only result from the most advanced state of aesthetic reflection, it must function at the same time within the specific conditions of a given particular historical situation. For example, the artist as constructivist engineer in revolutionary Russia fulfilled a functional and aesthetic necessity, whereas forty years later, in the era of monopoly, constructivist engineering necessarily functions merely as aesthetic objects. Restorations on the formal surfaces of social reality effect the opposite of their original intentions, as can be seen clearly in the development of architecture since constructivism and the Bauhaus. On the other hand, if artistic production gives up altogether the idea of use value, it abolishes its own inherent potential to induce dialectics within the reality of cultural history, thus producing mere artistic facticity incapable of initiating further processes of development. This seems to be true of much contemporary postconceptual work, whether so-called "new" painting and sculpture or, even more so, photographic stories and

Dan Graham, *Intention/Intentionality Sequence*, 1972. Performer, audience. Performance: Protetch-Rivkin Gallery, Washington, D.C., May 1972. Courtesy: Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

the new theatricality of performance. All these show the features of a decadence in art that is deprived of its inherent function to affect reality, to exist otherwise than just aesthetically, to claim a potential to recognize history. Much present-day art is either infantile or demonic in its pretension, either decorative or dramatic, as it has nothing "to do" but be "art" and somewhat new. These works exhibit a false vivacity that seems to denounce the rigorous abstraction of the best of conceptual art and react against the tautological cul de sac of conceptual academicism at its worst, but does not seem aware of the fact that art, once transformed onto the level of language, had achieved a state of most advanced (potential) communicability and assumed the highest form of abstract use-value potential. One could hypothetically argue, then, that if present-day aesthetic language does not maintain communicability and use value, as well as the general level of abstraction achieved by language and its counterpart, the concretion of a specific use value potential (as it does most efficiently in the recent works of Dan Graham or equally in those of Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, and Lawrence Weiner), then art gives in ignorantly to the general conditions of production and, therefore, on the level of superstructure, reflects and shares their dilemma:

> Boredom, resulting from the experience of destroyed use value, until now a problem of the privileged, has now also become a problem of the masses. The avoidance of proletarian revolution enables the capitalist development to take a final step in completing its basic aporia: namely to produce wealth by destroying use value. What will be left over in the end is the unresisted and unquestioned production of simple trash.[22]

Notes

1. See "Photographs by Dan Graham," in *Minimal Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968), pp. 175–179.

2. Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (New York: Praeger, 1973), p. 155.

3. Dan Flavin, "Some Other Remarks by Dan Flavin," *Artforum* 6, no. 4 (December 1967), p. 27.

Sol LeWitt seems to have had quite a different understanding of Graham's photographic work, proven by the fact that he included one of Graham's photographs as illustration for his "Paragraphs on Conceptual-Art" in an issue of *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (summer 1967). [LeWitt's essay is reprinted in *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999)—Ed.]

4. Carl Andre, interview with Willoughby Sharp (1968), *Avalanche* 1 (fall 1970).

5. Dan Graham, letter to the author, August 1976.

6. Roland Barthes, "L'activité structuraliste," in *Essais Critiques* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964), p. 216. [Translated as "The Structuralist Activity" in Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972)—Ed.]

7. Donald Judd, "Malevich," in *Complete Writings* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York: New York University Press, 1975), p. 212.

8. Karl Beveridge and Ian Burn, "Don Judd," *The Fox*, no. 2 (1975), p. 138.

9. Dan Graham, *Dan Flavin* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1967); reprinted partly in *End Moments*, ed. Dan Graham (New York: Self-published, 1969), p. 15.

10. Dan Graham, "Carl Andre," *Arts Magazine* 42, no. 3 (December 1967–January 1968), p. 34.

11. Robert Smithson, "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," *Art International* 12, no. 3 (1968), p. 22. [Reprinted in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996)—Ed.]

12. Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," first published in *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965), pp. 74–83; reprinted in Judd, *Complete Writings*, p. 181.

13. Dan Graham, "Other Observations," in *For Publication*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Otis Art Institute, 1975), n.p.

14. Dan Graham, letter to the author, August 1976.

15. Ibid.

16. On his relationship to the work of Daniel Buren, Graham commented (letter to the author, August 1976): "I found out about Buren's theory and works many years later. I think of them as a clear advancement on Flavin's, Judd's, LeWitt's positions. It now seems to me that some of the ideas in 'Schema' foreshadow aspects of Buren's theory/practice (I don't think he knew about the piece until 1970 . . . although it is possible that he did, as it was published in 'Art & Language' in 1968)."

17. [Hans Haacke, *Framing and Being Framed: 7 Works 1970–1975* (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1975)—Ed.]

18. See also his later work, *Income/Outflow* (1969).

19. Dan Graham, letter to the author, August 1976.

20. Dan Graham, "Sol LeWitt—Two Structures," in *End Moments*, p. 65.

21. Dan Graham, letter to the author, August 1976.

22. Wolfgang Pohrt, *Theorie des Gebrauchswertes* (Frankfurt: Syndikat Verlag, 1976), p. 16.