

# PAPER THIN AND MAXIMINIMALIST: MINIMALISM AND ITS LEGACY

## SCALE

The permission given by television is permission to make tiny choices, within the context of total permission infected with a sense of no permission at all.

— George W. S. Trow, “Within the Context of No Context”

After yesterday’s superstructure and infrastructure, we might now envisage a third term, intrastructure, since the very recent advent of nanotechnological miniaturization promotes biotechnology’s physiological intrusion into, or insemination of, the living organism.

— Paul Virilio, *The Art of the Motor*

## INTRODUCTION

Did you know that our dear planet is in imminent danger of being devoured by a giant grey blob? No, seriously. The world-consuming “grey goo” would actually be an uncontrollable mass of self-replicating, molecular-sized robots called nanomachines that feed on organic matter and reproduce at a rate fast enough to blanket the Earth within two days.<sup>1</sup>

But we’re already awash in all-consuming info-goo. What’s to be afraid of? We’re getting used to it, and if we don’t, the next generation will. In 1965, critic Barbara Rose called Minimalist art an “antidote” to a culture increasingly defined by proliferating images and information.<sup>2</sup> The reductive tenets she described have since been co-opted by designers and advertisers seeking a cheap and effective way to wrest attention away from the morass. A few seconds of silence and stillness make for an effective commercial interruption, and a blank page in a magazine will surely get noticed.

In their time, the clean lines, solid forms and simple colors of Minimalist art embodied a new set of ideas, threateningly experimental and resolutely formal. Aesthetics turned inward toward conceptions of mind and away from the wild, unpredictable gestures of the hand. By removing traditional signs of art like brushstrokes and pedestals, Minimalist art brought the world around it into sharper focus, and put art and life on an equal, interchangeable footing, reducing itself and expanding perception at the same time.<sup>3</sup> By its own hand, Minimalism gave way to far messier reflections and depictions as the proliferative culture evolved and embraced itself. Pop Art took hold. Why resist? The standard video blue-screen is about the most familiar minimalistic gesture left.

The concentrated handwork of some contemporary artists, call them maximinimalists, is curious for its resistance to digitization. For these handworkers, physical digits are in play, five fingers on each hand getting down and dirty with the paintbrush and markers, the X-acto knife and plaster-stirrer. Minimalists made one thing, then sought out logical variations on that one thing. Maximinimalists do one thing, then do it again and again. And again, and again. First came an aesthetics of mind, now aesthetics are a ghost of a suggestion, a given. Machine-mind meets readily available materials, repetition and sameness become individuation and enunciation of passing time. In much Minimalist art, ends and limits are suggested by the internal logic of individual pieces and the methods used to realize them. For maximinimalists, ends and limits are suggested by more or less arbitrary, practical choices. Maximinimalists propose that the only thing holding back endlessness is a choice to end it, whether a wall, the edge of the paper, or hand cramps.

Never mind the back-and-forth sparring over what Minimalism was really about.<sup>4</sup> As a practitioner and critic, Robert Smithson would recognize greater possibilities and important relationships to the world in the ideas Minimalist art produced. According to Smithson, Sol LeWitt “helped to neutralize the myth of progress,” and in so doing, paved (or un-paved?) the way for Earthworks and other art forms more closely connected to the world from which they spring.<sup>5</sup>

#### EXPANSIVE REDUCTION

Numbers used to mean something. Kids used to think one hundred was the biggest number imaginable.<sup>6</sup> Stars, once a collection of identifiable constellations, now number beyond even the uncountable “billions and billions” of Carl Sagan, with mellifluous names like SCR 0630-7643 AB, SO 0253+1652, and LHS 292. We’re way past the Too Much Information Age, into the age of endlessly proliferating proliferation. Me? I’m already waiting for You Tube Classics of the Early ’00s and ’10s, and GoogleOscars™ for Best Myspace Page.<sup>7</sup> Landfills are full and leaching, mindfills are filling up. Does it really help to know (or Wiki-know, that is) more about the world than any preceding generation? Do we understand ourselves or world any better? The endless parade of Myspace and Facebook pages and YouTube clips individuate us, and make us all into pretty much the same reduced package of interchangeable characteristics.

In its time, Minimalism may have been an antidote to a growing parade of images and messages of questionable value and meaning (and that was way before *Jackass*). The plain geometries, flat surfaces and machine colors of **Ellsworth Kelly**, **Frank Stella**, **Donald Judd**, Carl Andre, **Sol LeWitt**, **Agnes Martin** and Anne Truitt elaborated on the experimentally reductivist approaches of their immediate predecessors, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, and essentialized the groundwork of proto-Minimalists **Josef Albers**, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko and Ad Reinhardt.

Johns and Rauschenberg worked in tandem with John Cage and Merce Cunningham to dismantle the grandiosity of the epic gestures of preceding generations, notwithstanding the pre-Minimalist efforts of Newman, Rothko and Reinhardt, identified as they are with Abstract Expressionism. Rauschenberg, a restless experimentalist, achieved the logical apotheosis of reductivism when he made a set of all-white paintings in 1951 while still a student of Albers.<sup>8</sup> Close collaborator Cage would respond to these paintings (calling them “airports for the lights, shadows, and particles”) with what became a signal piece of Minimalist art, *4’33”*.<sup>9</sup> The piece consisted solely of musical rests, perceived as silence by the audience.<sup>10</sup>

Johns's *Flag* paintings of 1954-55 marked a clear path out of this inevitable reductivism, by remaking an instantly, universally and irremediably recognizable icon as a controllable set of abstract concerns. The American flag is meant to be the same for all, and yet it holds different meanings for each observer. Johns suggested that what appears simple can be as complex as whoever looks at it. His *White Flag* of 1955 may have been a direct response to Cage's and Rauschenberg's ultimate equations of the bleak and beautiful.

In 1959, with much fanfare for a young artist just out of school, Stella acted on Johns's example, showing single-color, striped paintings devoid of free gesture and shaped by their own interior logic.<sup>11</sup> Stella and his fellow painters and sculptors radically simplified surface, shape and color to control or eliminate the hand of the artist, making art that placed mind and hand on equal terms. LeWitt embodied these ideas in room-sized works of pure reason and cubic geometry, but their sculptural presence and conceptual suggestiveness delivered them from being mere formalist exercises.<sup>12</sup> The artist became a reasoning mechanism and made perception a material part of the work. LeWitt's conceptual concentration introduced a whole new species of art practice.

After art forms are reduced to their logical essences, new kinds of work must be built on those seminal examples. Some early makers of Minimalist art, like Dorothea Rockburne and Judy Chicago, would abandon strict realizations of form for work that embraced complication and unresolvability. Eva Hesse merged the corporeal and the formal, leading eventually to the ephemeral physicality of Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Tara Donovan's material fields.<sup>13</sup> **Richard Tuttle** approached sculpture from the scale of the hand-held, refuting monumentality and illusionistic scale, leading to the real-world object constructions of Robert Gober and Tom Friedman. Lynda Benglis concentrated fluids into proto-fractal structures, leading to the graphite drawings of Nancy Rubins, which act as heavyweight, room-filling sculpture while remaining paper thin.

Kelly had already developed his own Minimalist idiom, recasting painting as color and grid in *Colors for a Large Wall* (1951) and *Spectrum Colors Arranged by Chance* (1952-53). Brice Marden would continue in this vein, pursuing noticing and the sensation of seeing as subjects, and **Robert Mangold** would turn Kelly's block colors and shaped canvases into a formalist aesthetic. A less revolutionary, more reactive Minimalism produced exercises in color, shape and surface: Kenneth Noland, **Gene Davis**, Jo Baer, Patricia Johanson and Stella explored the boundaries of formalist approaches to painting. Minimalist tenets introduced into music and dance by Cage and Cunningham inspired work of engaging, enduring quality across the spectrum of art forms and media.

More recently, following years of death pronouncements, reanimation and revenant status for painting, Gaylen Gerber showed a way through the Minimalist looking glass, moving beyond seemingly endless exercises in reductivism to an expansive, world-embracing approach. His literally wall-sized canvases begun in the 1990s are painted in a resolutely neutral grey, neatly avoiding the polarities of black or white. Gerber's *Backdrop* paintings might represent the inability or refusal to choose amidst an infinite array of choices, but choices are made whether intentional or not. The works of other artists—photographs, paintings and sculptures—are hung on the plain surfaces of Gerber's paintings or are placed in front of the looming grey expanses. Whatever gallery furniture or museum fixtures are present also become part of the work.<sup>14</sup> Boiled down to their essential elements, Gerber's paintings act as backdrops to life outside the canvas, while at the same time accepting life into the confines of the painting. Like Rauschenberg's *White Painting*, Gerber's *Backdrop* paintings prove that now anything is possible within the scope of painting.

## REDUCTIVE EXPANSION

Choice is empowering, but having too many choices is dizzying. Maximinimalist art is expansive and utterly reductive in the same moment: one gesture done so many times it cannot be counted but can still be counted as one overall gesture. Repetition is no longer a series of acts, but a single enunciation, an essence. Mysteriously, each piece of the process also retains its individuality.<sup>15</sup> The maximinimalist credo could be: make more with less, the less is an illusion. Michelle Grabner's dots of flashe paint are each the effort of a hand, making a predetermined action, like a programmed machine of flesh. The same is true of Jill Sylvia's cut ledgers, Martin Creed's drawn marker lines, and Livia Marin's plaster-cast cup volumes.

In "ABC Art," Rose wrote:

And since our lives, both by nature and by the newspapers, are so full of crisis that one is no longer aware of it, then it is clear that life goes on regardless, and further that each thing can be and is separate from each and every other."<sup>16</sup>

In Star Wars, "the Force" was what flowed through all and held the universe together. In our world, the equivalent might be WiFi. The interconnectedness of all information is our main point of mutual understanding, yet conversely, with so much information available, we can comfortably choose to ignore disasters half a world away.

In the early 1980s, proto-maximinimalist Allan McCollum introduced an art of repetition and sameness, deploying great (and potentially infinite) numbers that played on notions of valuation, uniqueness and decision-making.<sup>17</sup> His early *Plaster Surrogates*, cast pieces that mimicked framed pictures with plain black rectangles in place of images, framed art as a repeatable, characterless commodity.<sup>18</sup> These "pictures" nevertheless assigned a signature idea to McCollum as an individual artist, thus establishing a framework for their value. Very early on in the age of information, by producing "astonishingly large quantities of unique objects," McCollum saw the implications of digital copying.<sup>19</sup> His ideas have culminated in the *Shapes Project*, which aims to make a unique shape (out of a limited set of combined geometric figures) for every person on the planet, with the exponentially expanding population in mind. So far, McCollum has produced around 214,000 shapes, with the total number possible expected to be over 31 billion.<sup>20</sup> McCollum absorbed what Minimalism had given him, but turned what had become a purely formalist tendency toward reduction into an active critique of proliferation, using the multiplying currencies of the art market to further the meaning and valuation of his work.

**Martin Creed** makes this equation: "the whole world + art = the whole world." However, Creed allows that while art may not change the value of the world, that doesn't mean it still can't do something of value. If it's not a matter of addition, then it may be a matter of choices from what's available. Among his multifarious, catalogued-and-numbered projects, Creed takes sets of markers and discharges them on standard, office-sized sheets of paper, filling the entire page with continuous or sweeping lines, manageable gestures for a hand seeking to cover an 8 1/4" x 11 1/2" surface with the ink flow from a single marker.<sup>21</sup>

*Work No. 496*, the group of marker drawings in *Maximinimalist*, makes use of a set of yellow markers, presumably all the yellows handily available to Creed at the time of his decision to make the piece, or maybe a particularly complete set of yellow shades available from a producer of art pens. The seven drawings

all resemble each other, in that each is a shade of yellow, each is recognizably a collection of repeated discharges from a single marker, with some thickening of color where the drawn lines overlay. The paper is covered edge-to-edge and mostly saturated as far as the quality of the pen and felt tip allowed, more an object than a drawing (a couple of drawings appear more scumbled than the others, probably due to a pen with a drier tip). Conversely, Creed's gesture drawings (*Work No. 407*, for example) are simplifications, just enough gesture to fit on a single sheet. They are scribbles, and doodles, and represent the formal rudiments of those activities.

Creed's gestures are silly, and he doesn't necessarily consider them art, anyway.<sup>22</sup> But they are clear realizations of purpose, pens and paper finding their full potential with the right hand to help them. The gestures Creed employs are embedded more in the objecthood of the pen than in his artistic hand. He individualizes these mass-produced objects, not in a way so crass as to make a drawing in his own style, but generous enough to make a drawing in their style.

**Livia Marin**, like McCollum, finds in systematic repetition an opportunity to discover the impossibility of truly repeating. While McCollum's forms are grander, weighted with the depth of history, Marin defines proliferation as an opportunity for endlessness in the everyday. Minimalist artists sought to eliminate common, hand-borne flaws within the field of perception (think of the smooth surfaces of Donald Judd and John McCracken), but Marin trucks in the secrets of handling. Each of her mass-produced forms is its own thing, weighted by the intervention of her hand, still recognizable as one tiny piece in a massive field of sameness. Her bifocal perceptual field is simultaneously massive and minute.

Like McCollum's *Shapes*, Marin's work is ultimately a restorative, humanist gesture. The "shimmer" she describes ("For what the viewer is first presented with is an overall 'shimmer' rendering, for the moment, the individual objects indistinguishable") represents the play of vision, of ever-growing crowds disappearing into memory as in an empty stadium. Subtle shifts in tone, light and material elucidate the endless variations of similar objects, personality in the cast-off, and utility of purpose in the useless.

Jill Sylvia's father was a bookkeeper. Ledgers were his world, and now they are hers. On their own, numbers are abstract symbols, as Johns showed in paintings and prints of "figures," but they gain meaning when applied to real-world objects and processes.<sup>23</sup> If the work of Sylvia's father figured directly into his family's life as its primary means of support, and the numbers he worked with ultimately described the economies of other workers, then humanity becomes a ghostly presence in the artist's hollowed paper grids. By painstakingly and systematically removing the squares and rectangles of the grids, Sylvia replaces these lost economies with invisible handwork.

Sylvia's pieces are silent markers, small protests against, and realizations of, loss. But she is also an economic trickster. "Time is money" reduces life to a sequence of more or less productive moments. But one can opt out of this equation and redefine how time is "spent." Sylvia converts a handwork of addition to one of subtraction, undoing and then redoing her father's work, turning his ledgers over to an economic system entirely removed from standard notions of work.

You might say all of **Michelle Grabner's** new paintings are alike, or at least resolutely similar. But they each are exactly what they are, the results of small variations in process. En masse, from a distance, they can

be dizzying to look at. But up close each articulates its own content: that each pale bluish-white flashe dot is a singular act, a moment in time expressed directly in a chosen medium. Each dot is a tick on a circular clock.

But what else happens during a single tick? In her practice, Grabner does not separate her family and domestic life from the preoccupations of her art. These paintings might be the product of a desire to make work that allows life to intrude into the studio. The brush can be put down while the needs of an infant daughter or teenage son are attended to, then picked back up and the painting rejoined right where it was left off. Politics is intimately local, and the politics of family life influence not only how much work is accomplished but how work is made. Grabner's work is at once an admission that family life will place its demands on her work time, and acceptance that a style of work that can survive unpredictability is a necessary adaptation. A pre-programmed painting is not a painting without feeling, but an invitation to read feeling in minute discrepancies of perception. A vertiginous field can still be brought into focus, dot by dot, just as motion-sickness can be handled by staring at the still horizon until sea-legs are stabilized.

#### CONCLUSION: NO END IN SIGHT

The human genome has been mapped, with its three billion DNA chemical base pairs. Yawn. Sorry, what was I saying? Everyone knows that every single human being is unique, wholly and completely, in appearance and behavior, much like McCollum's *Shapes*. But like the *Shapes*, we are composites of a limited set of variables. Of those three billion DNA chemical bases, 99.9% are exactly the same in all people.<sup>24</sup>

So, while humanity has learned its fallacies of reduction and repetition, that reduced forms unveil uncountable complexities, and that each occurrence of a thing is unique no matter how much alike it appears to the last one, we also learn that variation is an irreproducible commodity. That blob of grey goo depends on infinitely repeatable, digital sameness, which is impossible for organic forms of life. That one-tenth-of-one-percent of variation in our DNA really means something.

There are those who will insist that the problems of today are more complex, deeper or worse than problems of the past. What is true is that there are more people today than ever before, and so the pace of change may have accelerated. But the fundamental problems persist no matter the particular conditions. Here's a quote, read it first, then I'll tell you who said it and when:

The innumerable forms and images of visible things, let in one after the other, gather together and pile up at the bottom of the soul... They weigh it down and worry it; the soul isn't made for this; it can't hold so many deformed objects. From this springs that plague of phantoms who dissipate our thoughts and whose pernicious variety bars the way to luminous contemplation.

This critique of oversaturation in the visible world was written by Petrarch in the mid- fourteenth century.<sup>25</sup> The idea that vision can become oversaturated and experience reduced to a meaningless muddle also held true in Barbara Rose's time, and certainly holds true today. Disguised in the repetitions of maximinimalist art is an unvarying fact: each single action that makes up the uncountable whole is a decision, the only power we may have left.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> According to Wikipedia, the term was coined by Eric Drexler in his 1986 book, *Engines of Creation*.

<sup>2</sup> “But, if pop art is the reflection of our environment, perhaps the art I have been describing is its antidote, even if it is a hard one to swallow. In its oversized, awkward, uncompromising, sometimes brutal directness, and in its refusal to participate, either as entertainment or as whimsical, ingratiating commodity (being simply too graceless or too empty or too boring to appeal) this new art is surely hard to assimilate with ease.” Barbara Rose, “ABC Art,” *Art in America*, Oct./Nov. 1965.

Both Rose and I are referring to Minimalist art in the United States. Movements abroad, like Art Concret in 1930s Europe and Arte Madi in 1940s Argentina influenced both the later Brazilian Neoconcretists and Minimalist artists in the U.S. More can be found on this topic at “Beyond Geometry: Experiments in Form 1940-70,” lacma.org, the website for a 2004 exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles: <http://www.lacma.org/beyondgeometry/index.html>.

<sup>3</sup> To be fair, Donald Judd said, “I object to the whole reduction idea” (quoted by Hal Foster in “The Crux of Minimalism,” *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art* [New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1986], 162). Foster attributes the quote to Bruce Glaser, “Questions to Stella and Judd,” in Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art* (New York: Dutton, 1968). The Glaser article, a transcription of a radio interview edited by Lucy Lippard and first published in 1966, may have marked the first appearance of Stella’s famous “What you see is what you see.” The context of Judd’s quote from that interview: “GLASER: You seem to be after an economy of means, rather than trying to avoid sentimentality. Is that nearer it? STELLA: ... I don’t go out of my way to be economical... I don’t think people are motivated by reduction... JUDD: You’re getting rid of the things that people used to think were essential to art. But that reduction is only incidental. I object to the whole reduction idea, because it’s only reduction of those things someone doesn’t want. If my work is reductionist it’s because it doesn’t have the elements that people thought should be there.” Edward Strickland, however, is comfortable referring to Minimalism as “reductive art” in *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 8.

<sup>4</sup> A central example of Minimalist theory spelled out was the four-part “Notes on Sculpture,” *Artforum*, Feb. 1966-Apr. 1969, by early practitioner Robert Morris. An oft-cited rebuttal was “Art and Objecthood,” *Artforum*, Summer 1967, by Greenbergian critic Michael Fried, though critic Annette Michelson later said “that article... is the *most* overcited, overvalued, overestimated piece that Michael [Fried] ever produced.” Editor Philip Leider agreed, saying “Michael really made some *major* mistakes in that... It was a *serious* mistake to think that Robert Morris was Don Judd’s spokesman and that Morris’s articles roughly represented the views of all the Minimalists.” (cited in Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974* [New York: Soho Press, 2000], 196-199). A summation of the debate between Morris and Fried is available in Jonathan Vickers’s essay “Art and the Ethical,” in *Art and Thought*, ed. Dana Arnold and Margaret Iverson (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 111-128.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Smithson, “Entropy and the New Monuments,” *Artforum*, June 1966, 27-37.

<sup>6</sup> For a now-40ish, midwestern kid, that is. Sol LeWitt informs us on page 116 of his self-designed monograph, *Sol LeWitt* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1978), that in the Orient, the number 10,000 is considered the traditional “large number.”

<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing, no such awards existed. However, a brief in the *New York Times* on 20 March 2007 mentions that YouTube “announced yesterday that it would honor the best user-created videos of 2006 with the first YouTube video awards... including ‘most adorable video ever.’”

<sup>8</sup> Rauschenberg studied under Albers, famous for the “Homage to the Square” series of paintings and works on paper he began in 1949 at Black Mountain College. As a former member of the Bauhaus, Albers’s aesthetic is summed up in the words of a former student, Lucian Marquis: “Josef Albers fulminating against ‘self-expression’ taught us the discipline of the minimal tools to be used, the discipline of color.” This quote was located on the Black Mountain College Project website:

<http://www.bmcproject.org/Features/SUNLEY/SUNLEYpartII/MethodsofTeachingJOSEFALBERS.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Brian O’Doherty, “Robert Rauschenberg: The Sixties,” *American Masters: The Voice and the Myth* (New York: Universe Books, 1988).

<sup>10</sup> Cage’s original handwritten score specifies that the piece can be any duration, using any instruments and number of performers, but to this day the piece is generally identified as 4’33,” which refers to the premiere performance in 1952, a solo for piano featuring David Tudor. An image of the score can be found in *Singular Forms (Sometimes Repeated): Art From 1951 to the Present*, Guggenheim Museum Publications: 1071 (2004): 73.

<sup>11</sup> Shown in “Sixteen Painters” at the Museum of Modern Art in 1959. According to critic Frances Colpitt, Stella’s *Black Paintings* “inaugurated the period [of Minimalist Art].” Strickland, *Minimalism: Origins*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> “A blind man, says LeWitt, can make art. One must not be influenced by how art looks; this is the sole way to eliminate design and relational factors in favor of wholeness, integrity, new forms. Nevertheless, LeWitt is making art, the kind of art that is categorized for better or worse as *visual art*, and he welcomes the paradox involved.” Lucy R. Lippard, “Sol LeWitt: Non-Visual Structures,” *Artforum*, Apr. 1967:57.

<sup>13</sup> In a picture caption on p. 116 of his monograph (see note 6, above), LeWitt writes of Hesse: “The two wall drawings at the top of the previous page were done at The Yvon Lambert Gallery in Paris. The show was dedicated to Eva Hesse, who had died a few days before. I was a close friend of hers and felt the loss greatly. It was my friendship with Eva that made me aware of the problems that women artists face in a world dominated by a male hierarchy (critics, editors, museum and gallery administrators). There seems to be an implicit rule (even among female critics, etc.) that a woman can never be considered the dominant practitioner of a style or idea. When the time came for the kind of work Eva Hesse was doing (a reaction to Minimalism, it was called ‘anti-form,’ whatever that may be) to be officially recognized, she was relegated to a minor role. Only years later did the mistake become evident. But even now, women artists face the same intellectual blindness and sexist “put-down.” Hesse was eventually credited as a progenitor of the post-minimalist style, which also included Lynda Benglis, Barry LeVa, Bruce Nauman, Jackie Winsor and others.

<sup>14</sup> In a 1999 Hermetic Gallery show in Milwaukee, Gerber paired two large ficus trees with two pillars fronting the *Backdrop* canvas. Adrian Schiess paintings on paper were hung on the canvas and around the other walls of the gallery.

<sup>15</sup> Brian Sholis, in a review of the “dense minimalism” of Helen Mirra, described an aspect of the Maximinimalist ethos: “Nature’s imperfections, time’s markings, and the inability of human hands to exactly recreate their own gestures lead to a pleasurable variation from work to work.”  
<http://www.briansholis.com/WRITING/CONTENT/MIRRA/index.html>

<sup>16</sup> Rose, “ABC Art,” 69.

<sup>17</sup> I would be remiss not to recognize Erik Satie’s *Vexations* (1893), a score for piano meant to be repeated 840 times (a deep examination of the work is available at <http://www.af.lu.se/~fogwall/article3.html>) and the laborious early 1990s work of Ann Hamilton provides a more recent predecessor than McCollum.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the *Plaster Surrogates*, consult Andrea Fraser’s 1986 essay for the ICA exhibition “Investigations,” at [http://home.att.net/~allanmcnyc/Andrea\\_Fraser.html](http://home.att.net/~allanmcnyc/Andrea_Fraser.html). For photos of various *Surrogates* groupings, see <http://home.att.net/~amcnet2/album/plastersurrogates5.html>. For a statement by the artist, and a shot of some more colorful *Surrogates*, consult [http://www.xavierhufkens.com/press2001\\_art-bourghornmc.htm](http://www.xavierhufkens.com/press2001_art-bourghornmc.htm).

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.petzel.com/index\\_mccollum2006.html](http://www.petzel.com/index_mccollum2006.html) .

<sup>20</sup> See Nancy Princenthal, “Shape Shifter,” *Art in America*, Feb. 2007, 106-109. For images of the project, see <http://thoseresponsible.com/blog/default.asp?Display=185>

<sup>21</sup> Creed has discharged the markers of a single 220-pen set into 220 framed drawings (*Work No. 502*), each of a single color, framed individually, looking not unlike a slightly more cheerful, but still eerie, echo of McCollum’s *240 Plaster Surrogates*, (1988). Images of Creed’s work are available at <http://www.martincreed.com/works/index.html> .

<sup>22</sup> In “Martin Creed: 20 Questions, A Project by Matthew Higgs,” originally published in the British magazine *Untitled* 18, Spring 1999, Creed answers the question “If you could own five works of art from the 20th century, what would they be?” Creed: “... erm... (Sighs)... erm... a ‘black’ painting by Frank Stella... erm... shit... (Laughs)... it’s difficult to say... 20th century did she say?... dunno... can’t choose five... maybe I’m thinking more about things that are considered to be art... erm... aye... my mind goes blank to questions like this... and I think the reason why I said a ‘black’ painting... is that I love Frank Stella’s work... erm... from what I remember at the time when I looked at his work... and I liked it a lot... I felt like I’d sort of learned a lot... at the time I did think that there were works of art... but I don’t really think about it like that anymore... you know... so it’s all just a blur...”. Creed seems to agree with Merleau-Ponty, who “insisted that art... be seen as embedded in the artist’s everyday interactions with the world,” quoted in Alex Potts, “Art Works, Utterances, and Things,” in *Art and Thought*, 91-110.

<sup>23</sup> Johns began using numbers, referring to them playfully as “figures,” in 1955.

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human\\_Genome/project/journals/insights.html](http://www.ornl.gov/sci/techresources/Human_Genome/project/journals/insights.html)

<sup>25</sup> Quoted by Paul Virilio in “A Terminal Art,” *The Art of the Motor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 61. Virilio is working from a French translation: Petrarch, *Mon Secret* (Paris: Rivages, 1991).