

IMAGING THE IN-BETWEEN: THE SERIAL ART OF RICHARD TUTTLE

by

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(Under the Direction of Isabelle Loring Wallace)

ABSTRACT

This study reconsiders the perplexing abstract art of the American artist Richard Tuttle (b. 1941) by arguing that Tuttle's practice is a paradoxically serial one. As the first to insist upon the serial nature of his art, this study contends that since the beginning of his career in the mid-1960s, Tuttle has worked almost entirely and deliberately in series, producing at least three hundred series in a variety of media and demonstrating a commitment to serial art that is unrivaled within postwar art. While the term "series" has been used casually to describe some of Tuttle's projects, examinations to date have yet to interpret Tuttle's oeuvre within a framework of seriality, perhaps because Tuttle's series confound the rigidly systematic conventions of postwar serial art that yielded logical order, sequences and, in some cases, predictable conclusions. Although at times Tuttle's series employ identical materials and similarly formed objects, quintessential features of conventional serial logic, his series do not follow discernible patterns but rather appear unfinished and willfully unresolved, as if each object within the series represented a new and different moment in a provisional unfolding. Furthermore, the last object of any given series appears to be an arbitrary end, an abrupt break in the series that might have continued. Consequently, Tuttle's serial art can be said to privilege uncertainty and

irresolution. Hence this dissertation argues that Tuttle's seriality images a serial process that is purposefully and perpetually in-between beginnings and endings. This study also examines Tuttle's serial art within the broader framework of art history—the origins of art in antiquity and the Renaissance, the legacies of abstraction, and various movements in postwar art, namely Minimalism, Postminimalism, and Process Art. As this study contends, Tuttle's serial art functions as a form of philosophy, and it establishes important affinities between Tuttle's seriality and its philosophical counterparts, such as the processual and generative philosophy of Gilles Deleuze.

INDEX WORDS: Richard Tuttle, Serial Art, Series, Seriality, Postwar Art, Contemporary Art, Minimalism, Postminimalism, Process art, Philosophy, Gilles Deleuze, Abstraction

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by

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DEDICATION

To Helen and Carl, Jewel and Edwin—formative moments spent with you solidified early
on a love of learning, exploring, and discovering

and

To Christopher—for embracing with me all that might be found in the in-between

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CHAPTER ONE

POSING QUESTIONS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIAL ART OF RICHARD TUTTLE

I am interested in sustaining ambiguity in art.
—Richard Tuttle¹

Richard Tuttle (b. 1941) is an American artist whose work has been considered unconventional and challenging since his career began in the mid-1960s. Invariably abstract and constituted by everyday materials such as domestic fabric, cellophane, Styrofoam, paper clips, and wire, Tuttle's objects are, indeed, quirky, as cursory views of *3rd Rope Piece* (1974) (Figure 1.1), *Second Green Octagonal* (1967) (Figure. 1.2), or *44th Wire Piece* (1972) (Figure 2.46) attest. While much of his art takes the form of what could be called sculpture, in truth, Tuttle's objects defy categorization. This is primarily because within a singular object, Tuttle combines features of drawing, painting and sculpture, as with *Titel 3* (1978) (Figure 1.3), where the brown gestural brushstroke sweeps from the wall across the top of an already painted, relief-like piece of heavy-weight paper, and back onto the surface of the wall. These curious forms are further complicated by the fact that Tuttle's objects are typically small in scale and are, at times, installed in unconventional locations in a gallery, as with *Fiction Fish I, 15* (1992) (Figure 1.4), which is installed well below eye level and almost touches the floor.

¹ Richard Tuttle, in unpublished interview with Laura Lake Smith, August 1-2, 2009, Bar Harbor, Maine.

Consider more closely *3rd Rope Piece*, a work that comprises a three-inch piece of clothesline horizontally nailed to the wall, which retains its frayed edges on either end. At one moment of observation, the piece reads as though a whimsical line drawing, but at another point, and given the frayed ends of the rope and the nail that holds it carefully in place, it becomes more sculptural, somehow more concrete. Indeed, there is a sense of Tuttle's art as something that is in flux—seemingly in-between two things, such that a work like the *3rd Rope Piece*, it could be argued, is at once coming together and falling apart.

Something else the *3rd Rope Piece* bears out: although a small and subtle work, barely noticeable in its usual installation on a wall just below waist height, this object has caused great consternation. In a 1995 interview for CBS's *60 Minutes*, journalist Mike Wallace visited the small Upper East side apartment of the now famous middle-class collectors of modern and contemporary art, Dorothy and Herbert Vogel, a retired librarian and retired postal clerk, respectively, to view some of their legendary collection *in situ*. One of the Vogel's most prized pieces, they maintained to Wallace, was the *3rd Rope Piece*. Hunching over in his examination of the work (the piece in their home was installed as if it were in a gallery), Wallace was bewildered as to how *3rd Rope Piece*, so simple and commonplace, could be a work of art. Confused, Wallace posed to the couple the vexing question that haunts Tuttle's art: "But what does it mean?"² The journalist's puzzled reaction to Tuttle's seemingly commonplace work is not uncommon amongst viewers. Because Tuttle's art is highly abstract and devoid of overt subject matter, it can be challenging to find an entry point, difficult to discern its meaning.

² Mike Wallace, "The Vogels," *60 minutes*, CBS, January 8, 1995.

Tuttle's own explanations of his work do little to clarify matters. In fact, he is famous for discussing and writing about his art in a gnomic and opaque style. As he has insisted in lectures and interviews, he is against the idea of explicating his work. It could be argued that such an obscure way of communicating the ideas of his art derives from the fact that Tuttle is not trained as a conventional artist, that is, that he did not specialize in studio art while in college. Rather, while pursuing his Bachelor of Arts degree from Trinity College in Hartford, he took courses across the humanities, in art and its history as well as philosophy, religion, and literature. As we will find in this study, Tuttle is learned in many subjects, many of which will shape his artistic practice. But for all the obscurity surrounding his practice, Tuttle is insistent on a few points: he wants the viewer to look and think closely about his art, which he says is purposefully interdisciplinary, and, still more crucially, a means by which one might understand something about life.³ This project will take these insistences seriously.

That Tuttle's art is challenging is well documented in the literature, and I will say more will be said about the reception of Tuttle's art in Chapter 2. Here, suffice it to say that although Tuttle is now considered a canonical artist within the history of postwar art,

³ Regarding Tuttle's obscure communication style and his interest in exploring the intersection of art and life, consider an excerpt of an essay that Tuttle wrote for *Documenta 5* in 1972 about his then burgeoning artistic practice. Tuttle declares: "I hardly understand anything, much less anything important, but my inclination [for art] must, or seems to, have some significance in the world in which I am living...it is 'an exercise in the 'art of living'." As he continues his writing, and rather than making declarations about his art, Tuttle asks a series of abstruse questions: how does "the mind's viewpoint" conflate with the act of "observation"? and how might these conjoined acts of looking and thinking both affect [impress upon the mind] and effect [bring about] "reality"? As Tuttle contends, it is these kinds of questions that have "baffled the ancients as well as myself." See Richard Tuttle, "Work is Justification for the Excuse" [1972], *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, eds. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 608-609.

his work was initially perceived as incomprehensible, and this was the case, as we will see, even among his supporters. And, while many might have struggled with the question of meaning for Tuttle's art, as Wallace did, the critical writings on his work always maintained the perception of his art as something in flux and somehow unresolved. Importantly, the literature on Tuttle, the bulk of which is comprised of critical reviews of exhibitions and exhibition catalogues and essays, has established a basis for describing Tuttle's perplexing objects as well as the spectatorial engagement of them, wherein terms such as impermanence, transience, temporality, and fluctuation recur with notable regularity. Marcia Tucker, one of the first authors to examine Tuttle's work within a sustained art-historical framework, has described Tuttle's objects as not only "elusive," but also existing in "moments of change."⁴ Ideas of transience and change are also salient to Pamela Lee's analysis of Tuttle's art, which is, as she has argued, ultimately about "impermanence."⁵ Drawing on similar ideas, Richard Shiff has discussed how Tuttle's provisional objects evoke the sense of an event wherein "... a viewer is uncertain whether its construction is precarious or merely gives an impression of transient flow...."⁶ Likewise, Susan Harris has noted that "(c)hange figures prominently in Tuttle's process of making art.... He is fascinated by that very moment of transition from one thing or

⁴ Marcia Tucker, *Richard Tuttle* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1975), 12.

⁵ Pamela Lee, "Some Kinds of Duration: The Temporality of Drawing as Process Art," *Afterimage: Drawing through Process*, ed. Cornelia Butler (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1999), 47.

⁶ Richard Shiff, "It Shows," ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn, *The Art of Richard Tuttle* (San Francisco, Calif.: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in association with D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 2005) 257.

state into another....”⁷ Writing in a similar vein, Christine Jenny has argued that transition, transformation, and irresolution are central to the entirety of Tuttle’s oeuvre, that his objects willfully operate in a “between-like fashion”⁸ and sustain, as Madeline Grynsztejn has argued, a “state of being ‘in-between,’”⁹ “[refusing] any singular compositional resolution or final state.”¹⁰ There is consensus: Tuttle’s objects suggestively image an in-between-ness, as well as some sort of process.

Art historically, Tuttle's art is generally associated with Postminimalism, a branch of abstract art that emerged in the mid-to-late 1960s. Coined by the art critic and art historian Robert Pincus-Witten in 1971, the term Postminimalism aimed to designate a style of art that remained largely abstract even as it expanded beyond the reductive ideology and the obdurate materiality of Minimalism.¹¹ Also used to describe the art of Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Lynda Benglis, and Eva Hesse (among others), Postminimalism made use of malleable media such as film, domestic fabric, dirt, latex, and rope, all of which underscore the means of art making, foreground the facticity of materials, and incorporate temporality. As Pincus-Witten once wrote of Postminimalist art, it possesses an “emphasis on the process of making, a process so emphatic as to be

⁷ Susan Harris, “Twenty Floor Drawings,” *Richard Tuttle* (The Hague: Sdu Publishers, 1991), 50.

⁸ Christine Jenny, *Transformation im Werk von Richard Tuttle, 1965–1975* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2006), 17.

⁹ Madeleine Grynsztejn, “Universe of Small Truths,” ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn, *The Art of Richard Tuttle* (San Francisco, Calif.: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in association with D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 2005), 18.

¹⁰ Grynsztejn, 43.

¹¹ Robert Pincus-Witten first uses the term “Post-Minimalism” in the essay, “Eva Hesse: Post-Minimalism into Sublime,” *Artforum* (November 1971): 35-40.

seen as the primary content of the work itself....”¹² Thus, many of the Postminimalist artists were even sub-labeled as “Process Artists,” including Tuttle.¹³ As with other Process Artists, Tuttle also uses non-traditional materials, but it is important to note that Tuttle’s are the kinds of materials that were conventionally already in an artist’s studio. Indeed, quotidian materials such as wire, rope, and string were usually employed in making models or in creating a final object. That is to say, such materials typically were deployed only in the *processes of art making* but removed in the final object. However,

¹² Robert Pincus-Witten, “Introduction to Postminimalism” [1977], *Postminimalism into Maximalism: American Art 1966-1986*, ed. Robert Pincus Witten, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987), 10-11.

¹³ One of the first critical instances of Tuttle’s recognition as a Process Artist came with Emily Wasserman’s review of the Whitney Museum’s 1969 exhibition “Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials.” See Emily Wasserman, “New York: Process, Whitney Museum; Theodoron Awards, Guggenheim Museum,” *Artforum* (September 1969): 56-57. Along with “Anti-Illusion,” the exhibition “Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form,” which was curated by Harald Szeemann at the Berne Kunsthalle and was also in 1969, would cement Process Art as a legitimate (sub) movement in contemporary art. Notably, Process artists such as Eva Hesse, Robert Smithson, Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Robert Ryman, and, of course, Tuttle, participated in both exhibitions. More is said about Tuttle’s participation in these exhibitions as well as the work he showcased in each in Chapter 3. See also two essays in the exhibition catalogue, *The New Sculpture 1965-1975: Between Geometry and Gesture*, eds. Richard Armstrong and Richard Marshall (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1990): Richard Marshall, “Introduction,” and Richard Armstrong, “Between Geometry and Gesture.” In Marshall’s essay, Tuttle is viewed as one of ten important artists working from 1965-1975 who infused “abstract sculpture with gesture, content, and allusions through the use of the non-traditional processes, materials, and forms” (8). In Armstrong’s essay, he terms Tuttle’s work as “the most obviously pictorial of the early Process artists” (14). Tuttle is also acknowledged as a Process Artist in the entry in Tom Williams’ “Process art,” *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online*, (Oxford University Press), accessed February 24, 2017, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.proxy.remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T069795> and in the related entry by Karen Kurczynski, “Eccentric abstraction,” *Grove Art Online, Oxford Art Online*, (Oxford University Press), accessed February 24, 2017, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.proxy.remote.galib.uga.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T2094214>.

Tuttle's art retains these quotidian materials such that they are integral to his final objects, foregrounding, too, the notions of process that they connote.

And yet, for all the ways in which Tuttle's art aligns with Postminimalism and Process art, as we will find throughout this study, his work is no less indebted to Conceptual Art, the idea of art as thought. For, when Postminimalism, Process Art, and Conceptual Art are considered collectively, two shared interests (and recurring terms) stand out among the work of the artists therein: process and thinking, links that were forged initially by an important essay of 1967, "The Dematerialization of Art." Here Lucy Lippard and John Chandler wrote about an emerging trend of transitory art-making that championed intellectual concerns, giving way "to an ultra-conceptual art that emphasizes the thinking process almost exclusively." "The studio," they proclaimed, "is again becoming a study," a place of inquiry, examination, and exploration.¹⁴

Whereas the art of a number of Tuttle's contemporaries such as Eva Hesse, Robert Ryman, Richard Serra, and Sol Lewitt would occasion sophisticated, philosophically-engaged interpretations, examinations of Tuttle's art have remained comparatively stunted.¹⁵ Unlike the majority of his peers, Tuttle has received limited attention in academia, despite the fact that museums, galleries, and art history textbooks have afforded him a significant place within the history of postwar art. This study

¹⁴ Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International*, 12:2 (February 1968): 31–36.

¹⁵ As examples of these interpretations, see the following texts: Suzanne Hudson, *Used Paint: Robert Ryman* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009); *Eva Hesse* (October Files), ed. Mignon Nixon (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Rosalind Krauss, "LeWitt in Progress," *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 244–68; and Rosalind Krauss, "Richard Serra: Sculpture," *Richard Serra* (October Files), ed. Hal Foster with Gordon Hughes (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 98–145.

notwithstanding, Tuttle has been the subject of three dissertations. Jörg Johnen's 1977 dissertation at the University of Cologne considered Tuttle's early artistic practice as aligned with 19th-century notions of an artist's "absolute" freedom and individuality; Jennifer Gross' 1999 dissertation at CUNY explored Tuttle's art from the 1960s-1990s as a disavowal of Greenbergian Modernism and read Tuttle's art through the Eastern philosophy of Kitaro Nishida (1870-1941) and Nishida's ideas of "nothingness;" and Christine Jenny's 2001 dissertation at the University of Basel focused on Tuttle's early work of 1965-1975 and discussed how Tuttle's objects are in perpetual transformation.¹⁶

Although certainly indebted to extant scholarship, this study of Tuttle's art seeks to understand his elusive and puzzling objects in more pointed terms. In short, I ask: what does it mean for Tuttle to make objects that are constitutively indeterminate and palpably in-process? I believe this question may well provide that elusive entry point into his work. To answer this essential question, I begin simply—by reconsidering the titles of Tuttle's objects discussed thus far in this chapter: *3rd Rope Piece*; *Second Green Octagonal*; *44th Wire Piece*; *Titel 3*; and *Fiction Fish I, 15*. Given their use of numbers, these titles suggest the existence of other discrete but related objects. And, such objects do exist. In fact, each of the objects that has been described thus far is a part of a larger group of objects, related not only by title but also by materials and forms (see examples in Figure 1.5 and 1.6). And this raises another question: might Tuttle's art, then, be a

¹⁶ Although both Johnen and Jenny have published their dissertations in German, no scholarly English monograph exists on the art of Richard Tuttle. See Jörg Johnen, "Portische Punkte: Der Zufall als Erkenntnisprinzip im Werk von Richard Tuttle," Ph.D. diss., University of Cologne, 1977; Jennifer Gross, "Richard Tuttle: Reframing Modernism, 1965–1995," Ph.D. diss., CUNY Graduate Center, 1999; and Christine Jenny, "*Transformation im Werk von Richard Tuttle, 1965–1975*," Ph.D. diss., University of Basel, 2006.

serial art; might these objects be objects in series?

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Tuttle himself has occasionally referred to some of his groupings of objects as “series” in conversations, yet, save one early series, *Letters (The Twenty-Six Series)* (Figure 1.7) (1966), his titles never carry the term and he has never explicitly branded his practice as a serial one. Moreover, although the term “series” has been used by critics and scholars to casually describe some of Tuttle’s projects, examinations to date have yet to interpret Tuttle’s oeuvre within a framework of seriality (that is, the quality or concept of making things in series), perhaps because Tuttle’s series of art confound the conventions of postwar serial art.¹⁷ As the first to insist upon the serial nature of Tuttle’s practice, this study contends that since the beginning of his career in the mid-1960s, Tuttle has worked almost entirely (and deliberately) in series, producing at least three hundred series in a

¹⁷ Tucker, 15. I would argue that if not exactly an interpretative framework of seriality, Marcia Tucker’s description for the 1975 Whitney catalogue essay was not precisely casual either. (In her rather short essay, she uses the term “series” over twenty times to reference Tuttle’s art.) In fact, it seemed that Tucker seemed to be on the cusp of an interpretative framework that would be aligned with my own. She wrote: “Most of Tuttle’s works exist in groups or in open-ended series, in which each of the works varies subtly— and sometimes blatantly— from the others...” It is a brief but suggestive statement, yet as her paragraph continues, her subsequent points seems to undermine this very provocative point of his series and their insistence on difference: “(M)oreover, each group grows out of one or more works of another series. This is why grouping a cloth octagonal, a paper octagonal and a wire octagonal together... or a rope piece, a painted wooden work... is a more accurate way of seeing Tuttle’s work than in a homogeneous installation. Tuttle has used various materials toward similar ends, whereas certain of the wire pieces, when compared to each other, are about completely different issues and are often more closely related to pieces in another series, from another period of his career.” Indeed, Tucker’s points here almost encourage that Tuttle’s art be considered apart from there series or groupings. While not explicitly attributed in her text, Christine Jenny’s reading of Tuttle’s art seems to follow Tucker’s idea of Tuttle’s series building on each other, forming a progressive sequence—indeed, development—in terms of Tuttle’s conceptual program.

variety of media and demonstrating a commitment to serial art that is unrivaled within the postwar period.

Working against this interpretation is the fact that museums and collectors throughout the world buy and display his art as stand-alone pieces. For example, the permanent collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and of the Tate Modern, London, present his 44th *Wire Piece* (1972) and his 8th *Paper Octagonal* (1970), respectively, (and when on display) in just this fashion. To be sure, and for whatever reasons, Tuttle is complicit in breaking up his series, either for sale or for exhibition, and this has certainly obscured the perception of his work as a serial art.

This was especially the case with the 2016 exhibition at Pace Gallery entitled, “Richard Tuttle: 26,” which showcased a work from each of his 26 exhibitions in New York since his first in the mid-1960s (Figure 1.8). Of the exhibition, Tuttle has said that he “very consciously created a spinal column of my New York exhibitions.”¹⁸ If this show presented any insight into what has been the supposed backbone of his career, then Tuttle seemed, at first pass, the creator of isolated objects, albeit objects that sustained a curious fluctuation. And yet, if one assessed the titles of these works and recalled how they were *initially debuted*, one would note that almost all the titles in the “Richard Tuttle: 26” show conjured the series by use of either a number or a letter) and that all were *shown in series* upon their debut to the public. Apart from only a few objects that have been produced and then shown in isolation, Tuttle has always made and initially showcased his art in series, a practice that began with his first series of 1964. But perhaps

¹⁸ “Richard Tuttle: Staying Contemporary,” Art 21 *Exclusive*, July 2016, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://www.pacegallery.com/news/2777/video-art21-presents-richard-tuttle-staying-contemporary>.

Tuttle's comment about the spinal column was suggestive of this all along, albeit in Tuttle's usual enigmatic fashion. After all, a spinal column is composed of a series of vertebrae, one atop the other, and, as this study will contend, Tuttle's oeuvre is composed of series after series after series.

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In some ways, there is nothing surprising about the idea of an artist working serially in the 1960s. Throughout this decade, from Pop art and Minimalism to Postminimalism, Process art, and Conceptualism, the serial method was the dominant mode of making art.¹⁹ But as to what the "series" or "the serial" actually means as a method or how it is to be defined exactly, this is a subject that is still debated in the history of art.²⁰ And, I would argue that the idea of seriality has never been more debated or written about than when it has concerned the art of the 1960s.

For the most part, seriality in the postwar period was theorized and defined by the artists themselves through their practices and their writings. Indeed, it is agreed among

¹⁹ As Briony Fer has contended, what "seriality" means (and the variety of meanings and implications therein) typically is derived from its currency in American art in the 1960s. See Fer, *The Infinite Line: Re-Making Art After Modernism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 2.

²⁰ Although it is not the aim of the dissertation to trace the full history of the series or the serial throughout the history of art, a few comments about the scholarship on the topic are worth mentioning. At present, many agree that the notion of seriality emerged with 19th-century photography. The essay that more forcefully argues this point (and is possibly the first to do so) is by John Coplans. See his "C.E. Watkins at Yosemite," *Art in America* 66, no. 6 (November-December 1978): 100-108. See also Lara Perry, "The Carte de Visite in the 1860s and the Serial Dynamic of Photographic Likeness," *Art History* 35:4 (September 2012): 728-749 and Peter Barberie, "Charles Marville's Seriality," *Record of the Art Museum, Princeton University* 67, (2008): 30-45. In Perry's essay, the serial is conceived as follow: "Usually, but not always, it denotes any cluster of work linked by a shared theme or subject matter, rendered in a similar technique, and the same size, as a means to confer sameness or likeness." For Barberie, the serial is a logical "order of observing" or a "systematic viewing."

multiple scholars of postwar art that the codification of serial art in this period is largely due to Pop Art and Minimalism, which utilized systematic techniques and organizational schema such as mechanization and standardization in as serial modes of production.²¹ As Hal Foster has argued, the serial art of the 1960s borrows from industrial “serial production,” and both this logic and technique are made “consistently integral” to the serial art of Pop and Minimalism.²² For example, series such as those by Pop artist Andy Warhol are based on the repetition of homogeneous things, like his famous, mechanically-printed images of Campbell’s Soup cans (1962) (Figure 1.9), while series by the Minimalist Donald Judd relied on pre-determined formulas, as found in the harmonious sameness of his stacks (Figure 1.10) or in his works generated according to the progression of the Fibonacci sequence, as with his *Untitled* (1969) (Figure 1.11).

For Sol LeWitt, writing in 1967 in his “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” the serial method was as though a ready-made plan “that eliminates the arbitrary, the capricious, and the subjective as much as possible.”²³ In the 1967 essay, “The Serial Attitude,” an essay generally considered to be another key theorization of seriality during this period, Mel Bochner professed that the serial method in art was not a mere “style” but rather “an attitude” -- one in which the work’s organization and execution was derived by means of “a numerical or otherwise systematically predetermined process.” By defining the serial in this way, Bochner was keen to distinguish it from “working in series,” which as he

²¹ See Fer’s *The Infinite Line* as well as Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001); James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Hal Foster, *Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996).

²² Foster, *Return of the Real*, 63.

²³ Mel Bochner, “The Serial Attitude,” *Artforum* (December 1967): 28-33.

argued, was simply working with variations on a theme (e.g. DeKooning's *Women* or Morandi's bottles). As Bochner contended, by "working in series" art was developed only during execution, whereas "serial art" was determined entirely in advance. The serial, Bochner claimed, is "systematically self-exhausting." When seen from the point of Bochner's and LeWitt's writings as well as from the production tactics of Judd, serial art is conceived and concluded *a priori*, merely illustrating (after the fact) a linear progression of thought and/or actions from beginning to end.

In 1968, the British art writer, curator, and once-editor of *Artforum* John Coplans wrote an essay entitled "Serial Imagery,"²⁴ which accompanied an exhibition of the same title that he curated at the Pasadena Museum of Art. Coplans' essay, which primarily focused on serial painting, aimed to examine the "remarkable extent" of serial art in modernity and it is arguably the first attempt to theorize seriality within the larger scope of art history. Coplans' essay begins by pinpointing Claude Monet's paintings of haystacks, popular trees, and the Rouen Cathedral as the first examples of serial art before moving to the square paintings of Joseph Albers as well as the then-more-recent work of Andy Warhol, Frank Stella, and Kenneth Noland.²⁵

It is important to stress at the outset that Coplans defines the "Serial" in solely *formal terms*—that is in terms of "forms" and "structures." (Note: Coplans capitalizes the term "Serial" and its associates throughout the whole of his essay). The requirements of "Serial Imagery," as Coplans understands it, are defined as follows:

²⁴ John Coplans, "Serial Imagery," *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*, ed. Frances Colpitt (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 26-47. All subsequent quotations from this essay are taken from page range.

²⁵ It is important to note that for Coplans the beginnings of serial art are revised from Monet to Carleton E. Watkins when he writes his 1978 essay on Watkins. See n20 of my study.

Serial Imagery is a type of repeated form or structure shared equally by each work in a group of related works made by one artist. To paint in series, however, is not necessarily to be Serial. Neither the number of works nor the similarity of them in a given series determines whether a painting or sculpture is Serial. Rather, Seriality is identified by a particular inter-relationship, rigorously consistent, of structure and syntax....

Coplans continues: “Central to Serial Imagery is the concept of a *macro-structure*,” (his italics) which is, as he stresses throughout his essay, “consistent.” Although Coplans provides some examples in his essay of “Serial Imagery,” his definition of “Serial Imagery” is largely theoretical, grounded less in specific examples of art, than in his own mathematical postulates (e.g. 1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1) of the “macro-structure” and the “controlling influence” of elements such as “symmetry” and “continuity.”

For Coplans, the “Serial” could employ variations on a formal theme, exemplified for him in Monet’s haystacks or Albers’ *Homage to the Square*. But it can also be about repetitive formal concerns that are either “open-ended” or “endless,” as Coplans contends for Warhol’s *Brillo Boxes*, Ad Reinhardt’s Black Paintings, or Frank Stella’s repetition of a symmetrical “module.” Coplans notes, too, that there is a problem with the term “series,” which for him is too loose or ambiguous in its associations.²⁶ Moreover, as Bochner does, Coplans also argues that the “Serial” is not about variations on a theme or a subject.²⁷

²⁶ Coplans admits that the series, as a term on its own, is complicated and should not be necessarily seen as equal to the “serial.” See Coplans, n1: “Serial Imagery, Seriality, Serial structure or form, etc. is used interchangeably throughout this text and refers to forms linked by a macro-structure. The use of the word series, on the other hand, refers to more simple grouping of forms in any kind of a set.”

²⁷ It is also worth noting that Coplans did not view Judd as a serial artist: “...Donald Judd has been described as Serial, this is incorrect. Judd, for example, replicates parts by having identical units manufactured; they are then positioned to form on sculpture, one

There are, however, significant differences between Bochner's and Coplans' theorizations. For Bochner serial art could be resolved or open-ended but it was essentially pre-determined, while for Coplans, the "Serial" (whether resolved or open-ended) had to follow a consistent, and, moreover, formal macro-structure.²⁸ Thus, the crux of seriality for many of Tuttle's Minimalist-, Postminimalist-, and Conceptualist-peers was understood to be rigidly systematic, a coherent scheme that yielded logical order, sequences and, in some cases, predictable conclusions. But what would it mean and look like to work in series without recourse to an underlying structure or *a priori* schemes? As we will find, the serial art of Richard Tuttle is the beginning of an answer to that question.

More will be said about Tuttle's relationship to the serial art of the 1960s in Chapter 2, when my study engages in detail with specific series, but, first, it is necessary say more about Tuttle's seriality and to define what the "series" is for his practice. It is already clear that the terminology associated with postwar seriality is complicated. But against any distinctions between "working in series," the "series," and the "serial," this study will maintain that in Tuttle's oeuvre the "series" and the "serial" are related and interchangeable terms—that to make series of art is to make a serial art, to have a serial practice, or to employ a serial method.

unit. Judd's images have a modular structure, and his range of similar sculptures relate [sic] more to sculptors' traditional use of editions than to true Serial forms" (32).

²⁸ Coplans' essay attempted to offer definition and insight into what serial art *had been* in the history of art and what it *was at that* time in artistic practices, but provocatively, it is an essay seldom cited by practitioners of serial art as well as by the scholars who would write on these serial practices.

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...[in the early 1960s] the general idea of achieving art was to 'find your image'," to make the same thing "over and over again.... until it was exhausted. It was so much about coming to the end of things. I was 22—I was interested in things beginning...."
—Richard Tuttle²⁹

By way of introducing Tuttle's peculiar form of seriality, let us begin by conceding that there are ways in which Tuttle's series are similar to the conventions of postwar serial art. First, in keeping with the idea that series consists of a number of related things, Tuttle's series consist of multiple objects grouped under one title. Typically, they are plural, as in *Wire Pieces* (1972) or *Systems* (2010-2012) but sometimes they are not, as with *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* (1996-1999). Moreover, in keeping with the notion that series consist of sameness, the majority of Tuttle's series employ identical materials and/or similarly formed objects, as seen in *Light and Colour* (2011) (Figure 1.12) and *Ten Kinds of Memory and Memory Itself* (1974) (Figure 1.13). Finally, in keeping with the idea that a series progresses sequentially and incrementally toward some discernible end, each object in most of Tuttle's series is chronologically sequenced by title in accordance with the order of its production, as with *Replace I*, *Replace II*, *Replace III*, and *Replace IV* in *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*. And yet, for all the ways in which Tuttle's series align with conventional postwar seriality, there are, at the same time, important differences. In fact, it is my contention that Tuttle ultimately aims to subvert and destabilize the conventional concept of the series from a position within its own systematic logic.

Unlike conventional series in postwar art, Tuttle's series do not repeat or progress in any discernible pattern, but appear meandering, incoherent, and willfully unresolved.

²⁹ "Richard Tuttle: Staying Contemporary."

In part, such an effect of ambiguity is due to the tenuous constitution of the individual serial objects themselves, which as earlier noted, are suggestive of an in-between-ness, a sense of “both” and “and.” This provisionality is amplified when viewed within the context of their serial groupings, as, again, a series like *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* attests (Figures 3.37-3.43; 3.44; 3.50; and 3.53), the four components of which read as neither consistent nor conclusive but rather as disjointed, as though each object in the series represents a different and emergent moment in an unfolding but still opaque process. Finally, I might note that the last object of any of Tuttle’s chronologically produced series – conventionally a moment of resolution—appears only as an arbitrary end, an abrupt break in a series that could have continued, if allowed, as exemplified again in viewing the four disparate components of *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*. Thus, in viewing any series by Tuttle, one always feels as if one is in the middle of something, witness to a process that is ongoing and amid a logic that remains obscure and uncertain.

Indeed, unlike conventional series of the postwar period (e.g. Judd and LeWitt), wherein art is presented as fully formed in form and idea, gratifying our looking and thinking with its coherency and resolution, Tuttle’s paradoxical series present an art that remains precisely unformed in form and idea, prompting us to look and think more actively. Taking such incoherence and irresolution to be a purposeful component of his series, this study argues that Tuttle’s seriality is one that is imaging a serial process that is in a perpetual in-between, as though always in-between a beginning and an ending. As this study will contend, Tuttle’s seriality unearths a sensibility that was always already at the core of the serial concept: that the series, in its multiple and different iterations, is

inevitably against *the one image*— it reveals the insufficiency of any *one gesture*, the incompleteness of any *one thought*, the inadequacy of any *one object*, and the impossibility of any *one resolution*.

With Tuttle's seriality, there is also the difficulty in finding *one definition of the series*. That is, efforts to describe the nature of his seriality are continually confounded by variances in his serial oeuvre. In certain cases, seriality for Tuttle seems as though a subversion of the typical tactics of repetition and/or progression, as with *Wire Pieces* (1972), which are discussed in Chapter 2. In other cases, it would appear that Tuttle's series employ what both Bochner and Coplans might disapprovingly term as "working in series," producing a variation of a theme/subject, as with the case of *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*, the four components of which, on the level of form (at least at first glance) seem divergent and are only brought together by a shared title. Thus, like the serial process imaged by his individual series, the very definition of what the series is for Tuttle's practice is ambiguous, resisting, as his serial objects will, *any one notion of identity*.

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*I've noticed that there is always a relation between what I make and the question
I am asking.*
—Richard Tuttle³⁰

Aside from an academic interrogation of seriality as such, what else might be at stake in Tuttle's reconsideration of the serial method? As earlier noted, Tuttle is learned and an avid reader. His interviews, lectures, and casual conversations are peppered with references to philosophers such as Lucretius, Spinoza, Rousseau, Francis Bacon, Alfred

³⁰ Molly Donovan, "Richard Tuttle and The Comfort of the Unknown," *American Art* 20: 2 (Summer 2006): 114.

Whitehead, and Gilles Deleuze. What these figures have in common is an interest in what might be called a “natural philosophy,” which conceives of philosophy in processual terms—as akin to the processes as they occur in life and in the nature of things more broadly.³¹ On one level, it is hardly surprising that Tuttle would be interested in philosophers whose work shares his own interest in process. Yet, I would maintain that Tuttle’s affinity for these philosophers leads us to a deeper possibility: that Tuttle’s serial art is a kind of visual philosophy, at once a set of ideas and a means of generating thought. As I contend, Tuttle’s seriality images a process that is not unlike philosophical inquiry—the questions it poses and the answers it seeks, but, importantly, and as we will find in more detail in the chapters to come, Tuttle’s seriality sustains that process *in its middle*, such that his series are imaging an inquiry that is ever in-between a question and its answer.

As this study will argue, Tuttle’s art serves as an occasion for thought, rather than a vehicle for the transmission of preformed ideas or mere receptacles of meaning. On this point, consider Madeline Grynsztejn’s contention that Tuttle’s art is made by the “stuff of our own world.” As Grynsztejn claims, in Tuttle’s art, paper clips or wire mesh remain recognizable as paper clips and wire mesh, that is, these materials, even in their construction of an object of art, remain both visible and identifiable: “... his works are effortlessly knowable in constitution—they are structurally transparent, willfully legible, and also fortified by the stuff of our own world, the distinctive and tactile properties of recognizable material, weight, and texture.” Yet rather than present themselves as

³¹ On Tuttle’s interests in philosophy and philosophers, see also Bill Brown, “The Object in American Art: Numinous Receptacle—An Interview with Richard Tuttle,” *Richard Tuttle*: 26 (New York: Pace Gallery, 2016), 60-61.

materials whose identity and meaning is already known, the quotidian materials in Tuttle's art, Grynstejn insists, ask us instead to reconsider "received wisdom" by giving us the occasion to look and think about the world and "its stuff" more closely and carefully.³²

For Christina von Rotenhan, Tuttle's art always occupies "(m)oments of transition," what she understands as "a space between vision and cognition."³³ Her statement here certainly links to Grynstejn's insistence that Tuttle's work requires us to look and think carefully but von Rotenhan's phrase of "a space between vision and cognition" also suggests an uncertainty between seeing and knowing. When taken together, Grynstejn's and von Rotenhan's ideas raise the questions: Might Tuttle's seemingly fluctuating and unresolved objects, within their respective series, image that the world as well as how we understand it is in flux?

Attempts at such questions are central to this study, as it will read Tuttle's incoherent and unresolved seriality at the intersections of art, life, and philosophy. As we will see, in one sense, Tuttle's series of art question the traditional concepts of art as fixed in both forms and ideas, suggesting that rather than a means to solve problems, art-making is a means to unearth and celebrate problems. At other points in this study, Tuttle's serial art can be seen to ask the big, confounding philosophical questions: What is life? What does it mean to exist in the world? What is knowledge? Indeed, these are

³² Grynstejn, 19.

³³ Christina von Rotenhan, "Something In-Between: An Introduction to the Prints of Richard Tuttle," *Richard Tuttle: Prints*, ed. Christina von Rotenhan (Maine and Zurich: Bowdoin College and JRP|Ringier Kunstverlag AG, 2014), 11. Something similar has been noted by Thomas McEllivey, who understands Tuttle's work as a balance of "visuality and cognition." See Thomas McEvelley, "Richard Tuttle: Accountant of the Invisible," *Richard Tuttle: Triumphs* (Dublin: The City Gallery The Hugh Lane, 2011), 32.

daunting questions to answer, but to look at them from the viewpoint of Tuttle's work, which is grounded in the "stuff of our own world," is to be reminded that investigations of such abstract concerns must begin with the conditions of life. Unlike much of the philosophy since Plato, which has asked such questions based only on the premise of "What is?," Tuttle's art, as with the natural philosophy he privileges, devises contingent questions of "How?," "Who?," "In what way?," "When?," and "Where?," which interrogate the *ways we know* as well as *what we know*, in fact, the very possibility of *knowing at all*.

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In an approach aligned with Tuttle's seriality, this dissertation proceeds by considering various questions raised by his series of art. Over the course of three thematic chapters and a postscript, this study will examine a selection of series created from 1964 to 2014 and will do so by relying on close formal analyses, historical, artistic, and philosophical contextualization as well as Tuttle's own commentary. Moreover, because I read Tuttle's seriality as one of perpetual in-between-ness, the title of this dissertation, as well as those of its constitutive chapters, employ gerunds in their examinations of Tuttle's artistic endeavors, a methodology that is intended to signify both the processual nature and the irresolution of Tuttle's seriality.

The arc of this dissertation will move from a consideration of the technical and contextualized origins of Tuttle's seriality to its more abstract and metaphorical engagements and will consider too how his seriality might function more broadly as a meditation on life. While seriality allows me to access Tuttle's work—indeed, provides that elusive point of entry—this project is not only about the series as such but also about

the presumptions for which the series stands. As we will see throughout this study, there is something homologous on the level of theme with the other subjects with which Tuttle's seriality engages, such as models, methods, and systems as well as geometry, linear perspective, and abstraction. When considered together, all of these are means that are conventionally put in the service of knowledge. For example, the notion of making a model of a structure creates a kind of knowing in advance of the doing, making the doing but a perfunctory action that only proves the end, which already had been established at the beginning. In the hands of Tuttle's seriality, however, such assured presumptions are questioned and tested. In his later series especially, Tuttle seems to become more aware of how his seriality can function to undermine the logics of the conventional notions of systems and structures, models and methods, that, as with the conventional notion of series, are intended to provide clarity and distillation while also offering resolution, if not a certainty of knowledge.

Chapter 2 will establish how seriality becomes both a method and subject for Tuttle's art. Concentrating on the origins of Tuttle's serial practice in the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter considers in greater detail how Tuttle's earliest series are at once of and distinct from the art of this period, which is largely mired in serial production and the broader phenomenon of a "systems art." This chapter examines how Tuttle's series undermine the serial method from within its own logic, by adopting some of its most recognizable features such as similarity and repetition but all the while critiquing and upending ideas of sameness and resolution that conventional serial practice claims to manifest. This chapter also explores the in-between-ness of Tuttle's objects *within* the series, focusing on their oscillation between the different mediums of drawing, painting,

and sculpture, and their seeming fluctuation between images and ideas, art and thought, indicating that Tuttle's seriality, at its very origins, is deeply invested in philosophy, which establishes his paradoxical seriality as a mode for philosophical inquiry.

If Chapter 2 examines Tuttle's series in light of his contemporaries and their ideas about seriality, Chapter 3 considers Tuttle's engagement with the history of abstraction. Typically associated with notions of essentialism, perfection, and absolutism, conventional narratives of abstraction are concerned largely with reduction, purification, and distillation. Yet, Tuttle's serial abstractions complicate these conventions creating abstract forms that appear as if in they were in metamorphosis, sometimes meandering from one form to another in different media, color and scale, as if the very concept of abstract art for Tuttle was necessarily fluid and ever-emergent. As I will argue, Tuttle's seriality engages with a notion of abstraction based on exploration and expansion rather than extraction, purification, and distillation. Additionally, this chapter considers how Tuttle's concept of abstraction in art can be aligned, more abstractly, with the processes of thought as a creative function.

Building on the conclusions of the previous chapters, Chapter 4 investigates series that are made in the latter half of Tuttle's career, series that are more overtly interested in systems, methods, and models. Although conventionally these modes, like the series, conjure certain measures of predictability, consistency, and coherence, those considered in this chapter aim to thwart such notions of certainty and stability by illustrating how Tuttle's seriality models a method of flux. Ultimately, the series examined herein solidify how Tuttle's seriality questions the very concept of ideal models and methods and how

his paradoxical deployment of the serial method, typically an ideal mode itself, is a deliberate provocation for thinking differently about both art and life.

To pronounce any conclusive ends for the serial art of Richard Tuttle would, in some sense, work against the logic of my study's examination. Moreover, Tuttle is still producing art, thus forestalling any attempt to resolve the significance and meaning of his oeuvre. Instead, and as befitting the open-endedness and irresolution of Tuttle's serial art, I have included a postscript. which as an add-on at the end of a letter, offers an addendum to a narrative, a continuance of a thought, or, perhaps, a question. This final chapter-as postscript will focus on a (uncharacteristically) large-scale installation, provocatively titled *I Don't Know, Or The Weave of Textile Language* (2014), which was debuted in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern, London in October 2014, as well as the "studies" made leading up to its unveiling. While many have regarded the massive work as simply an installation comprising several parts, I argue that it comprises five separate pieces, which I then treat as a series. Made fifty years on from his first series, *I Don't Know*, as we will find, suggests that the progression of Tuttle's career has only deepened his commitment to uncertainty. Hence this study will conclude with questions, ending, as it were, where my project and Tuttle's first began.

CHAPTER TWO

QUESTIONING ORIGINS: THE EARLY SERIES

People like something that lasts; I like something that vanishes.
—Richard Tuttle³⁴

Richard Tuttle is deeply interested in the ideas of origins and has often remarked that humanity thrives on the ability to trace its identity and its knowledge back to specific beginnings that are fixed, if not absolute.³⁵ But as we will find, Tuttle's view of origins differs from these conventional notions, just as his conception of the series substantially departs from contemporaneous engagements with this method. Dedicated to series produced within the first decade of his practice, a period that culminated, moreover, in his first major exhibition, this chapter sees Tuttle self-consciously turn to a number of origins, taking as his early serial subjects the first forms in geometry, the foundations of Western philosophy, and the founding myths of art. As I will argue, Tuttle does so in order to rethink and unsettle the primal logic of origins and, analogously, the pervasive, systematic logic of serial art in the 1960s and the early 1970s.

³⁴ *Richard Tuttle: Portland Works 1976* (Köln: Galerie Karsten Greve, 1988), unpaginated.

³⁵ Richard Tuttle, "The Novel of Observation," lecture at Lipscomb University, Nashville, Tennessee, May 4, 2009.

I.

I begin this chapter not with a series as such, but rather with a painting that no longer exists. In the summer of 1963, Richard Tuttle, recently graduated from college, made what one might call his first mature painting. Although this painting is now lost and was never photographed, Tuttle recalled the process by which it was created in a 2005 interview. He noted that he began the painting by transcribing an excerpt from a philosophical text in the center of small, unprimed canvas and then covering the text as well as the rest of canvas with a semi-transparent paint. Tuttle remarked during the interview that he associated the completed painting with “ambiguity.” On the one hand, the words were “obscured” by the layer of paint; on the other, and in spite of the semi-transparent paint, the words underneath remained detectable.³⁶

As much as the text remained in Tuttle’s painting, it was nullified, or made provisional by the diaphanous shrouding of paint. Neither referential nor purely abstract

³⁶ Katy Siegel, “As Far as Language Goes,” *The Art of Richard Tuttle*, edited by Madeleine Grynsztejn (San Francisco, California: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in association with D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 2005), 334. On the occasion of his 2005 SFMOMA retrospective exhibition, while Tuttle recalled certain details of this early painting in a documented conversation with Siegel, details such as the size of the canvas as well as the type and color of semi-transparent paint were not recalled. When discussing this first painting in a 1992 interview with Bob Holman, Tuttle said: “A lot of it is speculation about what “it” is—whether or not language is really at the base of visual art or whether language came along and made such an impact that it changed visual phenomena completely. And whether or not one can re-trace that. On the first real painting that I made in New York, I wrote out three different texts from the philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, and then painted them out. At the time I thought, okay, I’m going to eliminate language from my efforts to communicate. But as I went on I saw that there had to be words there *before* I painted them out. In a way, words were the structure in which I made the decision not to use words.” See Bob Holman, “Richard Tuttle: An Interview,” *Bomb* 41 (Fall 1992), accessed February 24, 2017, <http://bombmagazine.org/article/1580/richard-tuttle>.

and favoring neither image nor text, Tuttle's painting seems non-committal and skeptical of the idea that word and image function as a means for clarity. Foregrounding the additive process by which it was made, the 1963 painting suggests a resistance to fixity in form and to coherency in concept. Indeed, it would seem that Tuttle's "painting" is non-declarative in both medium and meaning, continually toggling between two modes or states, refusing resolution as either. As an origin point of the career to come, this first painting is made all the more significant by the fact that these same characteristics of ambiguity, doubt, process, and irresolution will endure throughout Tuttle's career. And, in its now-lost status, it can be seen as foreshadowing a practice in which the art object is perpetually, if not literally elusory.

If incoherence, ambiguity, and process are privileged by the painting's formal components, these characteristics are no less relevant to the passage that Tuttle transcribed (and obscured). Tuttle, who earned a Bachelor's degree that focused on art, literature, religion, and philosophy, has since been a devoted reader of both Western and Eastern philosophy,³⁷ and in the interview with Siegel cited above, he claimed that the transcribed passage came from *The Function of Reason* (1929), a famously difficult text written by the early 20th-century British mathematician and philosopher, Alfred Whitehead. When the artist recalled certain details of the 1963 painting in the 2005 interview, he referred to a passage from *The Function of Reason* that he said he read prior to making the painting; however, the work to follow included only three sentences excerpted from that longer passage. Which sentences those were exactly, Tuttle did not disclose. Nevertheless, a brief examination of the passage from which the excerpt derived

³⁷ For an insightful reading of Tuttle's art alongside his interests in Eastern philosophy, see Jennifer Gross, "Richard Tuttle: Reframing Modernism, 1965–1995."

will gesture toward ideas that I believe underwrite not only Tuttle's first painting, but also the whole of his oeuvre.

Juxtaposing two epistemological strategies, deduction and induction, which are associated with the ancients and moderns respectively, Whitehead's passage rejects them both on the basis of their inability to "clearly and distinctly" explicate lived experience. Notice in the relevant passage Whitehead's emphasis on difficulty, inconclusiveness, and ambiguity, which in turn resonate with the formal properties of Tuttle's now-lost painting:

...the Greek and the medieval thinkers were under the impression that they could easily obtain clear and distinct premises which conformed to experience. Accordingly they were comparatively careless in the criticism of premises, and devoted themselves to the elaboration of deductive systems. The moderns have, equally with the Greeks, assumed that it is easy to formulate exactly expressed propositions. They have also assumed that the interrogation of experience is a straightforward operation. But they have recognized that the main effort is to be devoted to the discovery of propositions which do in fact conform to experience. Thus the moderns stress induction. The view which I am maintaining is that none of these operations are easy. In fact they are extremely difficult. Apart from a complete metaphysical understanding of the universe, it is very difficult to understand any proposition clearly and distinctly, so far as concerns the analysis of its component elements.³⁸

Whitehead goes on in *The Function of Reason* to champion what he calls "speculative reason," a mode of logic that attempts to bridge inductive and deductive modes by conflating abstract conjectures with more concretized facts. As Whitehead reminds readers throughout this text, this "speculative reason" is a kind of philosophy that constantly functions in-between oppositions, one that gives insight and yields a measure of knowledge but also retains problems and questions—indeed, irresolution. Thus, the

³⁸ Katy Siegel, n2. [Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 68]. Tuttle told Siegel that the three sentences were drawn from this larger passage.

appeal for Tuttle, who uses speculation in his “first” painting to declare and perform his allegiance to the in-between. Indeed, the act of painting over Whitehead’s abstruse text seems to manifest and extend the philosopher’s own queries about reason and the limits of knowledge, as if Tuttle’s application of a semi-opaque paint were a like-minded promulgation of speculation. As Tuttle has stated: “The job of the artist is to speculate. Speculation is half a question and half a declaration.”³⁹ And, in this first painting, as much as there might have been declarations, there were also questions.

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Within the literature of almost every artist, there is an origin story or an origin work, but in Tuttle’s case, the painting is lost and now exists only as an immaterial idea.⁴⁰ But as we will see throughout this dissertation, this fact is both inconvenient and apropos, as the idea of origins in Tuttle’s career is ever-fraught and beginnings are always elusive. Hence the 1963 painting, precisely in its metaphoric and then literal elusiveness, is best read as the initial, poetic gesture of a practice that values the entanglement of art and philosophy, ambiguity and questions, speculation and irresolution.

At the time of his first painting, Tuttle could not have known that Whitehead’s philosophy of speculation and process would so perfectly encapsulate his own emergent ideas about art. And yet, looking back over the course of Tuttle’s expansive career, the now-lost painting seems to have signaled the beginning of a career in which art would serve as a mode of philosophical inquiry. In fact, I contend that the first painting can be said to have hinted at Tuttle’s ideas of the serial process, and can, indeed, be read as a

³⁹ Molly Donovan, 119.

⁴⁰ Siegel also terms this painting as Tuttle’s “first painting” in her essay. See page 334 of her essay.

series of gestures. While perhaps ineffective in isolation, these seemingly separate steps, the transcription of text and the overlaying of paint, become, when considered together in a temporal succession, a symbolic expression of what the series, as a method, might ultimately achieve—a way to recognize the ambiguity, provisionality, and incoherence inherent in any given process.

Although Tuttle does not cite Whitehead again in his career (in his work or in interviews), the philosopher seems to have been a significant influence on Tuttle's thinking and therefore there are further parallels worth noting between the philosopher's ideas and what will become central attributes of Tuttle's serial practice, especially given that, in the near future, Tuttle's art will be described in terms of "process" and that he will be considered a Process Artist. In his opus *Process and Reality* (1929), which followed soon after *The Function of Reason*, Whitehead develops what he will call his "process philosophy," for which he would become most well-known. It is an approach encapsulated in his famous metaphor of an airplane flight: "The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation."⁴¹

As Whitehead illustrates, the process of thought begins on the ground with the concrete facts of lived experience. From here, however, thought takes off and loses contact with the grounding of fact, soaring into an imaginative speculation. During this metaphorical flight, imagination combines with rationalization, forming hypotheses and theories. Whitehead insists that these hypotheses and theories must be tested then against

⁴¹ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* [1929], corr. ed., eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 5.

the authority of experience, which eventually returns thought to the ground, to the observable facts. Importantly, Whitehead encourages that neither a single flight nor multiple attempts will render conclusive solutions. Instead, in his process-based philosophy, inquiries must be repeated incessantly, as if they were an endless series of thought flights, each of which can yield only a provisional sense of knowledge. Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge is, in Whitehead's mind, a serial process.⁴² If uncertainty and speculation about knowledge ultimately engendered a processual, serial approach to philosophy for Whitehead, it seems that similar philosophical convictions led Tuttle to create a processual seriality in art. For, as much as Tuttle's 1963 painting might have conveyed process and irresolution, such ideas, it would seem, were ultimately better-suited to a serial method of art making.

II.

In 1964, Richard Tuttle created his first series of art, *Untitled (Paper Cubes)* (Figure 2.1). It comprises ten three-inch cubes, each of which is hand-formed from a single sheet of standard cardstock by means of precisely scored lines and intricate foldings. Small in scale and light in weight, the cubes were meant to be held in one's hands and carefully scrutinized (Figure 2.2). In close proximity, one can see some of the detailed handicraft by which these cubes were made as well as certain features of their making that remain visible on their surfaces. Pencil markings that served as guidelines in

⁴² As Whitehead writes in *Process and Reality*, it is process that generates reality, creating a world that is, in turn, ever emergent. It is in the process of living that the "creative advance" emerges, what Whitehead understands as the creation of the new (e.g. new ideas, new forms of knowledge, and ever-renewed senses of reality). See page 21.

composing the cubic forms are still evident, some of which have been subsequently smudged on the cubes' clean creamy surfaces, while errant fibers of cardstock protrude from the otherwise pristinely scored edges (Figures 2.3-2.5). In Tuttle's paper cubes, there is a noticeable tension between a preened aesthetic of perfect and idealized geometry and an imperfect aesthetic of the handmade, which favors flaws and subtle irregularities.

There are, however, more obvious irregularities in Tuttle's cubes. Although identical in shape and basic formation, each of the ten paper cubes contains a curious feature: at least one recessive opening in its surface. Most of the openings in Tuttle's cubes are made in the recessive shapes of squares, triangles, and rectangles. Many of these recessions seem to mimic the orthogonals of linear perspective, as if their diminishment in size were an advancement toward a vanishing point in the interior but, notably, one that is never reached. In one cube (Figure 2.5), two identical openings are as if staircases that simultaneously recede and ascend toward the interior, only to be blocked by an intersecting plane while in another cube, passages are made through the very centers, one of which permits the viewer to see clearly through its center (Figure 2.4). Differing in size and shape across the series, these invasive recessions also evoke an unusual mutability in an ancient geometric form that is, as I will argue, otherwise associated with origins and attendant ideas of essentialism, fixity, and solidity. If, with his first series, Tuttle turns to the age-old form of the cube, he does so, I argue, in order to reconsider originary forms and how origins are made.

In February of 1965, Tuttle's series of paper cubes debuted in "The Box Show" at the Byron Gallery in New York. Writing on behalf of the Byron Gallery in the press release for "The Box Show," artist and critic Brian O'Doherty contended that the box had become a dominant trend in art, the locus of artistic activity. "(T)his show," O'Doherty wrote, "presents for definition the role and particulars of the box in modern art now."⁴³ Attesting to the prevalence and significance of this dominant trend in recent years, "The Box Show" featured the work of over 100 artists. Seen alongside Joseph Cornell's famous shadow boxes as well as boxes that would light-up, project movies, make noises, and open onto miniature worlds, Tuttle's paper cubes must have seemed small, fragile, and simple, especially in comparison to other objects featured in the show: Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* (Figure 2.6); an untitled rectangular light-box by Dan Flavin (Figure 2.7); and Sol LeWitt's *Muybridge II*, a ten-foot long rectangular black box with ten peep holes, which when viewed in succession from left to right, shows a female nude as though she were gradually approaching.

Like Tuttle at that moment, a large number of the artists in "The Box Show" were associated with an emergent movement that in early 1965 was as-yet unlabeled. By the end of 1965, however, this movement would be called "Minimalism" and it would include a group of loosely associated artists who had begun to make art that favored simple geometric forms.⁴⁴ For Minimalist artists, the deployment of geometric forms was

43 "Byron Gallery Press Release," for "The Box Show" by Brian O'Doherty, February 2, 1965, Box 12, Folder 2, Byron Gallery Records, 1959-1991, The Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

⁴⁴ Even before its "Minimalist" label, several attempts were made to name this aesthetic and often in contrast to Abstract Expressionism. The sleek new geometric paintings and

an opportunity to expunge the cerebral weight and emotional expressivity of Abstract Expressionism that had held sway in recent decades, whether in the form of the loaded drips of Jackson Pollock or the tempestuous brushstrokes of Willem de Kooning. Signaling a return to the basics of art or to the root principle of form, Minimalist objects made as a box, rectangle, or cube were prevalent throughout New York's contemporary gallery scene, which Tuttle often visited with his friend and art mentor Samuel J. Wagstaff, then a curator at Hartford's Wadsworth Athenaeum.⁴⁵

That Tuttle's paper cubes share certain commonalities with the geometric tendencies of Minimalist sculpture was noted by critics of the time, most famously in Barbara Rose's essay "ABC Art" in the fall of 1965, which reproduced Tuttle's small cubes alongside other Minimalist cube-like forms by artists such as Anne Truitt, Lyman Kipp, and Jan Evans (Figure 2.8).⁴⁶ Notice that all but one of these objects are

sculpture were regarded in 1963 by the critic Irving Sandler as a "deadpan" style and labeled as part of a larger group of "cool-art," which also included current practitioners of Pop Art such as Warhol and Lichtenstein. In January of 1964, curator Samuel Wagstaff, Jr.'s "Black, White, and Gray" exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum showcased artists whose work was reduced to the minimum in both color and form in an effort to categorize this new art style. Hence "Black, White, and Gray" exhibition is considered to be the first exhibition to examine the Minimalist aesthetic and to identify some of its adherents. For a discussion of these labels and a more comprehensive history on early Minimalism, see James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*.

⁴⁵ For example, in 1961 Robert Morris exhibited variations on the cube/box/rectangle, as in his *Untitled (Column)* and *Box with the Sound of its Own Making*. In January of 1963, the Green Gallery featured "New Work: Part I," an exhibition which included cubic-based works by Donald Judd, Robert Morris, and Dan Flavin. Within weeks after the closing of "New Work: Part I," Anne Truitt was given a solo show at the Andre Emmerich Gallery, which displayed numerous sculptures of hard-edged geometric forms. In October of 1963, Morris exhibited more cubic works at a solo show at the Green Gallery while in the winter of 1964, Judd debuted a number of boxes and rectangles in his first solo show, which was also at the Green Gallery.

⁴⁶ Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," *Art in America* (October/November 1965): 57-69. "ABC Art" is now credited as one of the defining texts of the Minimalism. Rose, like other critics of the period, sought to understand the prevalence of austere geometric forms

cubes/boxes. It is important to observe that in spite of their technical distinctions, the box, the rectangle, and cube became entangled in the critical writing of the 1960s and eventually all of these disparate forms became known as the “Minimalist cube.”

Although the reasons remain unclear, it would seem, on one level, that the term broadly accommodated a simplistic six-sided geometric form. On another, the cube seemed to reflect the Minimalist’s interest in essential and known forms, which were meant to refer to nothing beyond their obdurate materiality, exteriority, and presence, ideas most famously underscored at the time by Donald Judd in his 1965 essay “Specific Objects” and, in the near future, by Robert Morris’ “Notes on Sculpture, Parts 1, 2, and 3” (1966-1967), as well as (albeit disparagingly) by Clement Greenberg’s “Recentness of Sculpture” (1967) and Michael Fried’s “Art and Objecthood” (1967).⁴⁷ As Morris contended of the new Minimalist forms in his “Notes on Sculpture, Part 3:”

found in the art of the time and she reflected on how the “genealogy” of Modernist art might have brought about the “minimal” art seen at this point. Rose discusses what she views as “the polarities of twentieth-century art.” Kasimir Malevich’s Suprematism and its reduction of art to the “transcendent, universal, absolute” and Marcel Duchamp’s readymades, an art that conceptually rejects the “existence of absolute values.” Despite their differences, however, Rose writes that the two artists are importantly similar: each artist ultimately favored, in both style and concept, “an art stripped to its bare, irreducible minimum.” It is the return to the reductive and the minimal that Rose understands as fundamental to the new art of the mid-1960s. In her brief discussion of Tuttle’s work, Rose writes that Tuttle’s art is closer to Malevich than Duchamp, as are other artists such as Jan Evans and Anne Truitt, whose work is featured alongside Tuttle’s in reproduction in Rose’s article. However, Rose does not specify as how Tuttle’s art is precisely similar to Malevich’s.

⁴⁷ See Donald Judd, “Specific Objects,” *Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975* (The Press of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and New York University Press, 2005), 181-189; Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 1,” *Artforum* (February 1966): 42-44, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2,” *Artforum* (October 1966): 20-23 and “Notes on Sculpture, Part 3: Notes and Nonsequiturs,” *Artforum* (Summer 1967): 24-29; Clement Greenberg, “Recentness of Sculpture,” *Minimal Art*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968), 180-186; Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-172.

“Morphologically there are common elements: symmetry, lack of traces of process, abstractness, non-hierarchic distribution of parts...general wholeness....The most obvious unit, if not the paradigm... is the cube or rectangular block.” Morris goes on to argue that it is necessary to use forms that have “independence,” or, in other words, forms that can stand alone as “clearly objects.” He writes: “It is not the cube itself which exclusively fulfills this role of independent object - it is only the form that most obviously does it well.”

Consider the boxes (or cubes) contributed by Donald Judd and Robert Morris to “The Box Show” (Figures 2.9-2.10). Judd’s *Untitled* (1964) is a highly-glossed plywood piece, coated in a high-definition red paint from Harley Davidson, and is typically considered the first of Judd’s famous “progressions.”⁴⁸ It comprises semi-circular pieces that extend from a rectangular form, giving the appearance of notches or incisions that progress in width from right to left. However, in spite of cutting into the wood, the notches reveal nothing internal but only show yet another level of a glossy surface. In Morris’ work, two lock boxes have been fashioned from concrete and connected by a heavy chain. Each box is cast in two separate pieces, which are then stacked on top of one another with a palpable seam. Yet, in spite of attached latches at the seam, which might suggest that something is contained and protected therein and, therefore might be accessible, the boxes remain impenetrable.

As many Minimalist objects would also do, Judd’s progression and Morris’ boxes complicate the box’s commonplace binary of inside/outside, attesting to the box-like form as a purely externally-constructed entity. In their aforementioned essays, both

⁴⁸ Richard Shiff, “Donald Judd, Safe from Birds,” *Donald Judd*, ed. Nicholas Serota (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, 2004), 46-47.

Morris and Judd would elaborate how geometric forms such as the box proved to be neutral forms—ubiquitous and consequently devoid of profound or revelatory meaning. The notion of the “interior” has been long associated with ideas of origins and essentialism, “Truth” and “Being.” In one sense, the interior is thought to be that from which one is formed, the generative source of being, and in another, it is ultimately what *one is*, a constant and enduring inner self. But in the wake of Abstract Expressionism, interiority gained renewed notoriety, especially in the expressive work of the “action painters,” who, according to Harold Rosenberg, were emptying themselves onto their canvases, interlacing “the self” with “the art.”⁴⁹ This notion of the interior is typically contrasted with the notion of surface or exterior, which is traditionally associated with deception, superficiality, and even mutability. However, in seeking to rid art of deeply internal meaning, the Minimalist artists made objects that shifted focus from the inside to the outside, to surface conditions and the experience of the object as such. Indeed, it was, in part, the literal hollowness of Minimalist sculpture that the Modernist critic Michael Fried would (disapprovingly) seize on in his 1967 essay, “Art and Objecthood,” about which more is said in Chapter 3.

In some ways, Tuttle’s paper cubes likewise complicate this inside-outside binary. Consider how in each of the paper cubes, the edges of the cavernous voids are scored in a way that they fall inwardly, such that the external surfaces are enfolded into the cube in order to forge their interiors. Such a production of internal space suggests not only a literal collapse between the distinctions of interior and exterior but also that the interior is ultimately only exterior. As Tuttle has encouraged, the series of paper cubes “might be a

⁴⁹ Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” *Art News* (December 1952), 22.

harbinger of deconstruction,” indeed, a dismantling of the age-old exterior/ interior binary.⁴

However, in spite of such similarities, significant differences remain between Tuttle’s cubes and the broader notion of the Minimalist cube. Unlike the large and sometimes overwhelming scale of Minimalist cubes, Tuttle’s paper cubes are small. While Minimalist cubes often deploy industrial and/or prefabricated materials, as in the Harley Davidson paint of Judd’s piece and the concrete and iron of Morris’ boxes, Tuttle’s cubes are laboriously handmade from the perishable material of paper, which, in turn, signals a fragility. Additionally, Minimalist objects were seen to privilege “wholeness” (Morris) and “objectivity” (Judd) and, therefore were closed-off, not porous or permeable like Tuttle’s cubes.⁵⁰ While the cube as an obdurate form may have

⁵⁰ In an incomplete essay that was to appear in a never-realized catalogue on “The Box Show,” O’Doherty also writes of the various lures of the box, considering it from the vantage points of art, myth, psychology, and consumerism. Entitled “Boxes: Organs of Concealment and Rejection,” his essay ultimately explores the ambiguous possibilities of the box— a simple form imbued with varied, and, at times, complex meanings. However, O’Doherty’s essay contends that at this moment in art-making, “box-making” has distanced itself from the responsibility of progression and development. The box, O’Doherty says, is a form that “seems to side-step time into a more or less fixed state,” a space of intimacy and limits that has gained recent popularity “after so much emphasis on continuity, process, expansion.” As O’Doherty’s essay (in its incomplete state) makes clear, the box in art, although charged with “imagination,” remains a “closed and intimate space,” a form that maintains the “locus of inside/outside dialectics.” Indeed, O’Doherty’s ideas on the box are curious, if not delimiting. For, as we have already begun to see, Tuttle’s porous paper cubes seem to undermine this very dialectic commonly associated with the box and so too do some of the boxes by other artists within the show. See his essay, Box 12, Folder 1, Byron Gallery Records, 1959-1991, The Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C. It is worth mentioning that also in this same folder is a letter from O’Doherty to Charles Byron, the gallery owner. Dated December 6, 1965, the letter relays the fact that O’Doherty has finished a 7000-word essay “on the whole box idea.” However, there is no indication that the essay was ever enclosed with the letter nor is there evidence that O’Doherty published this particular essay elsewhere. This leads me to suspect that the version of the incomplete essay within the Byron Gallery records is an earlier draft.

appealed to some of Tuttle's Minimalist contemporaries, the cube for Tuttle is a mutative entity, which, as we will find, is made even more evident in light of the fact that his cubes are conceived and produced in series.

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In the Byron Gallery records, the paper cubes are referred to as a “set of objects” rather than a series, and it is unclear as to whether this is Tuttle's terminology or the gallery's.⁵¹ In any case, it would seem that this early nomenclature for the paper cubes partially explains why these objects have been seldom discussed as a series. Often referenced as a group or a set, the paper cubes are typically considered Tuttle's debut into the art world, wherein he was briefly aligned with the aims of Minimalism.⁵² While the paper cubes are, indeed, another of Tuttle's origin moments, I argue that this first series – a series which is barely legible as such—inaugurates Tuttle's series *as paradox*, amidst a moment that is consumed by serial methods.

Although Tuttle's series of paper cubes was the *only series of discrete elements* to be shown in its entirety in “The Box Show,” they were not the only serial pieces in “The Box Show.” To take a well-known example, there was Andy Warhol's singular *Brillo Box*, a box that was part of a larger series, also made in 1964.⁵³ Warhol exhibited his first

⁵¹ See the pricelist of works for ‘The Box Show’, February 1965, Box 12, Folder 2, Byron Gallery Records, 1959-1991, The Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.

⁵² Tuttle's paper cubes were first termed a “series” by Marcia Tucker in the 1975 Whitney Museum of Art exhibition catalogue. See Tucker, 5. Madeleine Grynsztejn has discussed them as a “group” and gives a thorough account of how the paper cubes mark the beginning of Tuttle's career. See Grynsztejn, 23-24.

⁵³ The authentic number of the “original” *Brillo Boxes* remains debated as the series supposedly was continually produced from 1964-1969/70. Some estimate that there are hundreds of authentic Warhol *Brillo Boxes*. Hence it is unknown whether or not the

series of *Brillo Boxes* at a solo show at New York's Stable Gallery in 1964 alongside other boxes meant to replicate the packaging for Del Monte Peach Halves, Campbell's Tomato Soup, and Heinz's Tomato Ketchup. Each of the *Brillo Boxes* was constructed of wood in the dimensions of the actual box and with the label from the respective brand silk-screened on its surfaces, produced in his aptly named studio, "The Factory." To connect the work of art further to the original consumer product, the *Brillo Boxes* were stacked within the gallery as though they were on a shelf for sale or stored in the warehouse. Warhol *Brillo Boxes* would have been well-known by the time "The Box Show" opened in February 1965 and were already seen by many as emblematic of serial art at this time. It was a serial production that was not unlike the industrialized mass culture that produced the very subjects that Warhol's series replicated, which, in turn, grounded serial art in ideas of sameness and repetition.

But it can also be argued that there were other series within "The Box Show"—Judd's first progression, *Untitled* (1964) and LeWitt's *Muybridge II* (1964), for instance. Much of the literature on Judd's oeuvre not only cites this particular work as the first of his "progressions" but also considers these progressions to be the beginning of his serial art. While Judd's series of art, as well as other Minimalists (serial practitioners or not), will entangle, like Warhol's, techniques of mass culture and art making (and while Judd's seriality will turn, at times, to the means of repetition and sameness), Judd's first progression here in "The Box Show" is generated according to mathematical patterns, what Judd later admitted was a way to obviate personal decision making processes in art. Of his serial work, Judd later said: "... I think that you do understand that there is a

Brillo Box of "The Box Show" was one shown in the series at Stable Gallery in 1964 or not.

scheme there.... it's not conceived part by part, it's done in one shot.... The point is that the series doesn't have anything to do... with the nature of the world."⁵⁴ Although contained within a larger peep hole box, LeWitt's *Muybridge II* likewise presents a progression in a series of discrete photographs of a female nude, which when seen through successive oculi, reads as a progressive sequence of movement (i.e. the female nude moves ever-closer to the viewer), a clear nod to Muybridge's own locomotion photographs of humans and animals. Similar to the system-like methods of Warhol's and Judd's, LeWitt's seriality is dependent on a logical and ordered sequencing, one which moves from a beginning (the nude far away) to an end (the nude close up).

Series such as Warhol's, Judd's, and LeWitt's have become the serial art that is most familiar to us in the postwar period, and thus it can be difficult to recognize seriality in other forms. But if it can be said that in 1964, Warhol, Judd, and LeWitt make quintessential postwar serial art, it must also be said that at the same moment, Tuttle, with his paper cubes is already undermining it, and doing so from within its own conventional logic. Indeed, Tuttle's founding series of the paper cubes aims to subvert certain ideas about seriality in the postwar period by entangling salient features of conventional seriality like consistency and repetition alongside more paradoxical elements. Consider, for example, how his cubes are consistent in size and media across the series, but also

⁵⁴ "Don Judd: An Interview with John Coplans," *Don Judd* (Pasadena: Pasadena Art Museum, 1971), 41. Judd's commentary on seriality is confusing at best, namely because his writings and conversations on the subject are cryptic, laconic, and mercurial. At times, Judd regards his seriality as rational, and at other points, irrational. At one point, Judd supposedly claims to have invented the serial method. On this later point, see James Meyer, 182. Meyer's book is also useful in that it objectively analyzes Judd's seriality, understanding it as the result of predetermined mathematical formulas such as Fibonacci's Series or inverse natural numbers. For this particular analysis, see page 172 of Meyer's same book.

how each cube is formed by the consistent and repetitious means of scoring and folding. And yet, as we have seen differences inevitably emerge. Unlike the mechanized repetition of Warhol or the consistency of predetermined plans of Judd and LeWitt, there is a sense that in Tuttle's method the process is key. That is, whereas other serial artists will rely on fixed methods and/or schemes, Tuttle's process of making is unplanned; it takes its cues from the process as such, from the different possibilities that emerge in and over time, in the repetitive action of scoring and folding, which, in turn, yields different results, varied centers and surfaces.

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As much as Tuttle's series of paper cubes intervene in the contemporary notions of seriality, it is also a series that intervenes in the question of origins, a subject deeply embedded in the history of philosophy. As we have already seen in this chapter, many Minimalist artists privileged the cube/box because of its associations with a given and timelessly known form. Indeed, in the theoretical field of geometry, the cube has long been thought of as immutable, and, in philosophy, the cube is often associated with essentialism and origins, an idea advanced by Plato (c. 429-347 B.C.E.), who is, in turn, considered a point of origin for Western philosophy. As with Tuttle's first series of paper cubes, Plato's ideas of origins involved geometry and, interestingly enough, seriality. Yet unlike Tuttle's, Plato's understanding of these phenomena was entrenched in the concept of an eternally ordered and teleologically oriented universe. As Plato writes in

his *Republic*, geometry “is pursued for the sake of the knowledge of what eternally exists and not of what comes for a moment into existence and then perishes....”⁵⁵

In the *Timeaus* that Plato provides his most detailed account of geometry.

Through his eponymous philosopher Timeaus, he describes how the material world was ordered by a divine being who fashioned the four primal elements into three-dimensional geometric forms, otherwise known as “Platonic Solids”: fire (tetrahedron); air (octahedron); water (icosahedron) and, most notably for Tuttle’s series, earth (cube).⁵⁶ For Plato, these forms are aligned with fundamental, eternally-known building blocks.

While the forms of water, air, and fire can be transmuted into other forms, the earth is an exception.⁵⁷ Chosen to represent the earth for its durability and stability, the cube, at its philosophical origins, is already a terminus, an end-form.⁵⁸ But unlike Plato’s eternally-known and given cube, which encapsulated the notion of an immutable beginning, the cube for Tuttle is a form from which beginnings continually emerge. Indeed, in the paper cubes, origins are revealed as constructions that are demonstrably

⁵⁵ Plato, *Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, 3rd ed, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), 368.

⁵⁶ Plato, *Timeaus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, 3rd ed, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1892), 473-478. Of course, Plato develops five Platonic solids. However, the dodecahedron is to be representative of the universe as a whole, as it best approximates the shape of a sphere. While Plato is often afforded the honor of being the first to attach geometry to the four primal elements, it should also be noted that Plato was not the philosopher who in fact discovered them. That discovery is attributed to the Greek philosopher and physician, Empedocles (c. 495-435 BCE). See M.R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments*, 2nd ed, (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1995).

⁵⁷ Ibid. Understanding them as interconnected geometrically, Plato expounds on how the forms of the four primal elements evolved and eventually terminated in a serial progression. As Plato explains, a mathematical ratio is successively maintained between them such that a serial equation like this can express their relations: fire→air: air ↔water: water→earth. It is notable that Plato’s progressive series of originary elements ends with the earth-as-cube.

⁵⁸ Plato, *Timeaus*, 477.

mutable. With their pencil lines and smudges, scores and folds, Tuttle's cubes assert the process of making and remaking over time, suggesting that rather than being a static entity, the notion of origins is an ongoing process, is that which is forged in-process.⁵⁹ In this sense, it is as if the very concept of origins were ever provisional and contingent, differently emerging as one thing after another, much like the artist's concept of seriality.

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In part, my conclusions above are borne out by Tuttle's own commentary. Tuttle has described his thinking about origins as both emergent and provisional, an approach that he has termed the "non-originary."⁶⁰ In Tuttle's non-originary, origins are forged in the "multiplicity of experiences," which for Tuttle describes the divergent yet still indivisible moments of thought, action, or observation that comprise any one

⁵⁹ From this point of view, Tuttle's construction of the paper cubes by folding finds correspondence to Gilles Deleuze's concept of the fold and one might even say anticipates Deleuze's concept of the fold. Although "the fold" as a concept is already present in texts such as *Difference and Repetition* [1968], trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) and *The Logic of Sense* [1969], trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), it is central to his books on Michel Foucault and Leibniz. See *Foucault* [1986], trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) and *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* [1988], trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993). (In the latter text, Deleuze draws his concept of the fold as such from the work of Baroque philosopher Leibniz.) Throughout Deleuze's oeuvre, the fold as a creative function by which something or someone is formed (e.g. identity, thought, and subjectivity). Rather than discerning *any one* origin at any given moment, the fold, in the act of folding after folding, subsumes, for Deleuze, the "one" origin into "multiple" origins, obscuring any sense of the origin as such but also boundaries between inside and outside. Indeed, in Deleuze's concept of the fold, the folding upon folding, exteriority becomes interiority, which in turn dismantles the ideas of essence and origin conventionally associated with interiority. As Deleuze writes in the final sentences of *The Fold*, "What always matters is folding, unfolding, refolding."

⁶⁰ Richard Tuttle, in unpublished interview with Laura Lake Smith, August 1-2, 2009, Bar Harbor, Maine.

experience.⁶¹ This is a concept of origins that muddles specificity and makes it difficult to pinpoint precisely where something begins. Instead of understanding origins as singular and always already in the past, Tuttle's idea of the non-originary celebrates the notion that origins are mutable and always (or never) to come, that origins be constructed anew at every moment, *ad infinitum*. And, of course, if the origin is provisional, so is all that follows.

In this respect, the lack of sequencing in Tuttle's first series seems meaningful, imbuing the work with an ambiguity or uncertainty as regards the question of primacy: where or with which cube did the series of ten begin or end? Rather than providing a sequencing or order or a demonstrative line of causality and effect whose development could be traced back to one to the essential, all-determining point of origin, Tuttle's series of paper cubes remain unclear in their ordering. But this, I argue, is a purposeful tactic on Tuttle's part. For, what emerges instead is a sense of pure process, a perpetual in-between-ness wherein beginnings enfold into ends and ends into beginnings. It would seem, then, that for Tuttle's seriality, the crucial point, one implicit in each and every box, is how something continues on – a fact the paper cubes make manifest via their association with doorways, windows, and passageways, all of which are liminal by definition. Just as a doorway opens onto another space and conjures the idea of passage, so each of Tuttle's cubes is a means to egress from one point or thing to another. In this sense, Tuttle's series of paper cubes, with its multiple and different origins and its sense of passage in its differently fashioned openings, can be seen as imaging a process of continual genesis. As with the artist's first, and now lost painting, the paper cubes are a

⁶¹ Richard Tuttle, in unpublished interview with Laura Lake Smith, August 1-2, 2009, Bar Harbor, Maine.

point of origin that works to unsettle the origin's association with fixity and essence. This interest in origins is a trend that continues in Tuttle's oeuvre, finding renewed expression in the *Constructed Paintings* (1964-1965), a series that immediately follows the paper cubes and once again engages the foundations of philosophy.

III.

Ranging from two to three feet in total dimensions, *Constructed Paintings* (1964-1965) is a series comprised of seventy curious objects that are individually titled with reference to specific subject matter. Tuttle's titles reference natural phenomena such as flower (Figure 2.11), storm, sunlight, mist, and shadow (Figure 2.12); elements of fire and water (Figures 2.13-2.14); earthly formations like stones, mound, and hill (Figure 2.15); man-made things such as a sail, bridge, table, (Figure 2.16) or house; and the colors of blue, pink, white, yellow, and green (Figure 2.17). But as much as the titles reference specific subjects, the forms of the objects do not necessarily correspond; that is, they do not obviously signify what their titles indicate. Consider *Hill* as a representative example an object that seems to toggle in-between mimesis and abstraction. With its rainbow-like form, this object could be seen as either *the likeness* of a hill or as an inexact iteration of "hillness." Indeed, if not for the referential titles, Tuttle's objects would remain obscure, and an object like *Hill* might well be assumed to be a rudimentary arch or an abstracted rainbow.

The majority of the series' objects, even with their referential titles, is far more ambiguous and obscure. For example, eight of the objects are titled or subtitled as

“abstract” or “abstraction” (Figure 2.18). Moreover, some objects, while given leading and suggestive titles are not as easily associated with their descriptors, as with *Chelsea* (Figure 2.19), *Ash Wednesday*, and *Children at Play*. Because the *Constructed Paintings* are enigmatic in this way, many critics and scholars have understood the *Constructed Paintings* to refer to the *idea of the things* rather than specific, concrete phenomena, and as a result, they have termed this series of objects “ideograms,” symbolic images that represent the generality of a given idea.⁶² On this account, the t-shaped form of *Table*, for example, references the general idea of “table,” via its essential, if abstracted forms: a horizontal plane resting on a vertical plane. Likewise, in *Water*, “water” is connoted not by a particular pond, or stream, or by clarity in a glass, but by a fluid-like form and its conventional association with the color blue. Thus, to regard the *Constructed Paintings* as ideograms, I would contend, is problematic.

An ideogram requires a measure of directness and clarity for its efficacy, as is the case, for example, with conventional ideograms such as the symbols of “=” and “&” or, in another instance, icons on a map. And yet, the objects in Tuttle’s series seem to resist directness and clarity. Given their amorphous and ambiguous forms, especially evident in the objects of *Hill, Mist* (Figure 2.20), or *Mountain* (Figure 2.21), the *Constructed Paintings*, I contend, do not ably communicate any clear-cut idea, any one distinct image, but rather insist, by means of their fluctuating forms, on an in-between-ness that exists somewhere between the two-dimensional world of signs and the three-dimensional world

⁶² For accounts of Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings* as ideograms, see the aforementioned texts by Tucker, who was the first suggest an ideographic account, and also Grynstzejn. See also Robert Pincus-Witten, “The Art of Richard Tuttle” [1970], *Postminimalism into Maximalism: American Art 1966-1986*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987), 71-75. Here, Pincus-Witten briefly suggests the ideogram as an interpretative framework.

of things and their experience. Indeed, given the divergent nature of the subjects in this series (e.g. natural phenomena, man-made objects, and abstract ideas), one begins to suspect that the *Constructed Paintings* series is less about any one thing or concept and more about the means by which anything, anything at all, might be known. In short, as we will find, this is a series about knowledge, in which art serves to revise essential ideas about the origins of knowledge and, more specifically, the means by which knowledge is constructed.

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As intimated by its amalgamated title, which seems to reference both sculpture and the two-dimensional medium of painting, the *Constructed Paintings* is indebted to both sculptural and painterly processes and hence two- and three-dimensional forms. Each object in the *Constructed Paintings* series began with a freehanded outline of an abstract form on paper, which, in some cases, bears a perceptible relation to the subject matter nominated in Tuttle's title. The drawn outline is then cut-out by hand and serves as the template from which two identical wooden forms are made, hand-cut too with a fretsaw. Next, these identical plywood forms are conjoined by strips of wood, varying in width from one to two inches, meticulously set in place with hundreds of small, hand-driven nails, so that the gap between the plywood pieces is concealed. Thus, as with the series of paper cubes, in every step of their making, the *Constructed Paintings* retain Tuttle's touch, what Madeline Grynsztejn has called the "vibrancy and tremor of the hand at work."⁶³ Put otherwise, the construction of these objects necessarily incorporates

⁶³ Grynsztejn, 28.

subtle shifts of the hand-made—the variations that inevitably occur between Tuttle’s hand-drawn contours and the unsteady cut-outs of the paper and the wooden forms.

The application of paint to the plywood is the final step in Tuttle’s process, and here too, the process privileges the hand-made touch. The objects are hand-painted with a matte acrylic and, while these brushstrokes cannot be described as gestural, at least in the mode of the Abstract Expressionists, they preserve the back and forth motions of Tuttle’s hand, visible in the subtle striations of paint, which along with the wavering edges and the oscillation between mediums, lend the *Constructed Paintings* a strange animation. Briefly consider *Hill* once more. In a cursory glance, it looks to be a flat, painted object, an appearance that is amplified by the matte, monochromatic color with which it is painted. Yet, upon closer examination, and particularly from its sides, *Hill* also is sculptural, as it is roughly two inches thick. Whether displayed on the wall or on the floor, the *Constructed Paintings* are as ambiguous in medium as they are referentially.

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In its conflation of the painterly and the sculptural, Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings* series once again aligns with certain features and ideas of Minimalist art. In fact, Tuttle’s series is produced, more or less, over the yearlong gap between Judd’s writing of “Specific Objects” in 1964 and its publication in 1965, an essay that effectively became a manifesto for Minimalism.⁶⁴ Understanding the two once-privileged mediums of painting and sculpture as outmoded and irredeemably bound to illusionism, Judd declares that the “new art” of the 1960s is “neither painting nor sculpture,” but the “real space” of

⁶⁴ Judd, “Specific Objects,” 181-189.

the three-dimensional, which renounces narrative, illusion, and expression. Decisive and declarative, specific objects, Judd insists, demonstrate formal unity as well as an “obdurate” materiality that refers to the forms only in and of themselves. At essence, it can be said that Judd’s specific objects embraced the literalness of sculpture, its status as an object in its own right, which could, in Judd’s mind, exist outside the burdensome confines of representation.

Although Judd does not reference Tuttle in his essay and although it is unlikely that Tuttle knew about Judd’s essay before its publication in December of 1965 (Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings* were exhibited in September of this same year), the contemporaneity of essay and series seems significant. While it can be argued that the *Constructed Paintings* share similarities with Judd’s specific objects, most notably that Tuttle’s objects are also “neither painting nor sculpture,” the *Constructed Paintings* are also neither obdurate nor declarative. That is, unlike Judd’s specific forms, which are seemingly devoid of reference and based only in the artistic essentials of color, form, and space, Tuttle’s objects in this series are, as Susan Harris has elsewhere noted, strangely *un-specific*.⁶⁵ It is as if Tuttle’s objects emerged alongside, and in opposition to, Judd’s doctrine of “specificity.”

In their shaped forms, one could also argue that Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings* have precedents in the history of art, be they the contemporaneous hard-edged and shaped canvases of Frank Stella or Ellsworth Kelly. But, as Christine Jenny has argued, Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings*, although similar in shape, significantly differ from Stella’s and Kelly’s work, namely because the latter are divorced from experiential processes.

⁶⁵ Susan Harris, 49-51. Conversely, Grynsztejn has argued that Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings* are “highly specific” and “self-evident.” See Grynsztejn, 27.

Drawing from statements by Kelly, Jenny writes that Kelly's conflated forms are made by copying known forms of the world. On Kelly's account, "lines on a road map" or "a glass roof of a factory" are forms that are "already made" and easily abstracted. Given these kinds of ready-made forms, Kelly insisted that "(t)here was no longer the need to compose,"—no need to draw, we might add, from experience.⁶⁶ Turning to Stella, Jenny argues that while not derived from existing forms, Stella's shaped canvases are created according to a methodical predetermined and rationalized system that is unwaveringly repeated from canvas to canvas. In this way, she writes, Stella's practice is like Kelly's—separated from experience. Conversely, Jenny insists that Tuttle's *Constructed Paintings* revel in the handmade processes by which they are formed, ultimately manifesting the "shifting processes of thought and imagination" from which they were borne.⁶⁷

At their initial exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York in September of 1965, similar connections were made between Tuttle's curious objects and thought. In her review of the show, art critic Lucy Lippard remarked on the *Constructed Paintings*' "quavering 'drawn' contours," which led her to pronounce ultimately that the objects "have an air of indecision."⁶⁸ Gordon Washburn, Tuttle's friend and the then-director of the Asia House Gallery, wrote the exhibition's leaflet and, like Lippard, he maintains that the series also underscores a sense of fluctuation in the objects' forms that can be linked to intellectual processes: "Their shapes, and particularly their edges, follow the trembling

⁶⁶ Christine Jenny, *Transformation im Werk von Richard Tuttle, 1965–1975*, (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2006), 70-73.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 53-62.

⁶⁸ Lucy Lippard, "New York Letter," *Art International* (November 1965): 45.

sensibility, the delicacy of thought....⁶⁹ Washburn goes on to note that these objects are “the map, not of a place but of an experience.” Although Washburn does not explore this last point further, it is an interesting proposition and warrants additional consideration.

Like Jenny’s aforementioned argument, Washburn’s comment positions Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings* in opposition to the shaped canvases of Ellsworth Kelly, who openly borrowed existent forms and sometimes the literal “lines of a road map.” To map a place is to re-present a place according to certain relationships such as form or scale and in various detail or simplification. However, the idea of mapping experience seems much more fluid; it implies that, like the notion of experience itself, this map would always be contingent and fluctuating. Perhaps this reference to Tuttle’s objects as maps of experience can be further explicated by another observation found in Washburn’s leaflet: that their subtle modulations in forms give the objects “the air of faintly breathing, making them seem to expand and contract like tender living things.” Curiously, and in spite of the fact that the then-Whitney curator Marcia Tucker advanced the idea of series-as-ideogram, she nevertheless posits a similarly experiential reading of Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings* in a 1975 essay that accompanied the artist’s first major exhibition. Here, she observes that Tuttle’s objects in this series seem to be “shorthand references to real images or experiences.”⁷⁰

When taken together, these disparate accounts by Jenny, Lippard, Washburn, and Tucker situate the *Constructed Paintings* as engaged with processes of thought, and thus, I view their accounts as a helpful starting point in reconsidering *what it is* that Tuttle’s series of ambiguous objects both depict and signify. Building on this scholarship and

⁶⁹ Reprinted in appendix, *Richard Tuttle* (The Hague: Sdu Publishers, 1991), 86.

⁷⁰ Tucker, 6.

considering it in conjunction with the series' refusal to refer directly, I propose that the *Constructed Paintings* manifest a purposeful tension between two ideas—the ideas of these objects as maps and the idea of them as living entities, not unlike the spectators they address.

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Consider more closely *Fire*. Given its title and its positioning on the floor, we begin to view the object in several associative ways. On one level, the object connotes fire pits as well as the sense that one is standing or gathering around a fire. In its suggestive hot pink hue, one of the medial hues in a flame's spectrum of colors, *Fire* reads as if it is burning, a flaming ring of fire, as it were. But as much as we are encouraged to find familiar tropes of “fireness” in this object, something about the piece nevertheless seems unfinished or in-process, as evidenced by its shaky contours, which imbue the object with an imperfect and wobbly form, as if the very idea of “fireness” were quivering. Of course, it could be argued that a flickering fire is, by definition, contingent and inconsistent and therefore well suited to forms that image it in this way. Perhaps, but given the series' diverse subject matter and the curious un-equivalence between many of its titles and its forms, it would seem that Tuttle has more in mind.

To wit, consider *Any Ideas* (Figure 2.22), the contours of which are strangely twofold. Those of the upper half are shaky and wavering, as with the contours of all *Constructed Paintings*, but in this object, they are more so, making a contrast between the upper and comparatively more hard-edged forms of the lower half all the more disparate. Moreover, as with other works in the *Constructed Paintings* series, *Any Ideas* lacks a direct or obvious correlation between its title and form. Yet, the overall shape of the

object is evocative of a rudimentary cloud, suggesting a provocative correlation between the nature of clouds and the nature of “any ideas.” As I will argue, *Any Ideas* is a key work, one that serves as an epistemological model for the whole of this series as well as for Tuttle’s thinking about art and knowledge more broadly.

In meteorological terms, clouds occupy the space in-between the realms of the *terra firma* and the celestial. When seen in this way, it is as if the lower, straighter contours of *Any Ideas* face the *terra firma*, while the amorphous upper half faces the celestial realm. Given such an alignment as well as the subject matter of “any ideas,” it would seem that the lower part of *Any Ideas* is connotative of the realm of concrete experience and its upper part is connotative of the realm of abstruse concepts. If this can be said to be the case, then *Any Ideas* images a palpable toggle between the concept itself and the experience of it, echoing Whitehead’s insistence in his airplane metaphor that concepts be tested against experience. Indeed, against conventional Western philosophy, *Any Ideas* suggests that concepts—the degree of truth and the knowledge they impart—are as fluctuating as one’s experience of them.

In the history of philosophy, it is Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) that serves as a founding analysis of concepts and their relationship to experience, reason, and knowledge. Therein, the German philosopher writes that our knowledge of the world depends not only on objective things in the world, but also on our subjective experiences of those things. For Kant, there is the “noumenon,”—the *a priori* “thing-in-itself” or the thing as it really is—and the “phenomenon”—the thing as we experience

it.⁷¹ According to Kant, the things that we experience are merely manifestations of something that is ultimately unknowable to us, and thus, in his view, we can never know a “thing-in-itself.” Rather, we can only comprehend things by their appearances and their subsequent processing by the faculty of understanding. For Kant, experiential knowledge is ultimately a systematization of the subjective; it is a way, through our faculties, to know a reality but not the “Real,” a means to know *a sense of truth* but never “Truth” in its essence. Although Kant’s analysis demonstrates that empiricism and rationalism (i.e., sense and reason) are both necessary to understand our existence in the world, his critique nevertheless revives and maintains the age-old distinction between appearances and reality. But in Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings*, as we will find, there is no distinction between appearances and reality.

If Kant’s philosophy understands concepts as absolute, Tuttle’s *Any Ideas* images the opposite. Here, in the object’s shaky striations of paint and quavering edges, Tuttle seems to insist that concepts are both emergent and always under revision. Thus, knowledge of the world, *Any Ideas* would suggest, is not based on a fixed source of truth—an unchangeable concept—but rather is contingent upon ephemeral appearances that drift and shift, *like a cloud*. As a mass of water and vapors that is suspended in the

⁷¹ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781], edited and trans by P. Guyer, and A. Wood (Cambridge University Press, 1998). In this text, Kant seeks to synthesize the competing philosophical traditions of rationalism, typified according to Kant by the German philosopher Leibniz (1646-1716), and empiricism, exemplified according to Kant in the Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776). While Leibniz argues that objective knowledge can be attained through reason, Hume insists that this is not possible and that the only knowledge to be attained is subjective, gained through our experiences. Kant’s philosophy aims to reconcile this 18th-century philosophical stalemate by examining how both reason and experience contribute to our knowledge of the world.

Earth's atmosphere, a cloud is contingent on its atmospheric environment (e.g. temperature, humidity, and altitude) and hence always fluctuating in its constitution.

Ultimately *Any Ideas* images that the formation of knowledge is ever emergent. It is an ongoing creative process that once again echoes Whitehead's series of thought flights in his "process philosophy," wherein knowledge must always be understood as contingent and changing, a toggling in-between land and sky, the inductive and deductive.⁷² When seen in this light, and *contra* Kant, the *Constructed Paintings* manifest that the *thing-as-experienced* is ultimately the *thing-in-itself*.

Of course, clouds and fire are by nature contingent things, well suited to Tuttle's provisional, fluctuating aesthetic. But, what about works like *Hill* and *Table*, whose titles lead us to concrete or material things but which are imaged in the same quavering forms as the more inconsistent subject matter? As we will see, like *Fire* and *Any Ideas*, they serve as evidence of the same pervasive truths about the contingencies of perception and thereby the fluctuation of knowledge.

On this point, consider *Equals* (Figure 2.23), which unlike *Fire* and *Any Ideas* and even *Hill* and *Table*, employs a concept well known ideographically and one that is, moreover, expected as symbol to signify equivalence and sameness. At first glance, *Equals* looks to be a typical equal sign, the mathematical symbol used to indicate equivalence. Yet, when observed more closely, it becomes apparent that Tuttle's object

⁷² With this toggling between the inductive and deductive, there is a sense throughout the objects within *Constructed Paintings* that the inductive plays a (more) significant role. Bill Brown has argued a similar point for the objects in Tuttle's oeuvre more generally. As Brown understands them, Tuttle's objects can be seen, in part, as "a mode of calling us back to... or holding a place for... something like the inductive." See Bill Brown, "The Object in American Art: Numinous Receptacle—An Interview with Richard Tuttle," 57.

is willfully different from the conventional equal sign. Firstly, Tuttle's *Equals* is unevenly displayed, mounted on a bias, obstructing the sense of balance and symmetry so crucial to the very idea of equality. Moreover, the two dash-forms, which are importantly identical in the mathematical symbol, are dissimilar as Tuttle has imaged them, differently shaped as they are in their edging, making them, effectively, two distinct forms. With Tuttle's *Equals*, we observe inequity and difference, expressed not only by the internal difference of one dash from the other, but also by the distinction between the *idea* of the equal sign and the object that we observe in its material appearance before us.

Indeed, the act of reference – the presumed equivalence between sign and referent – is precisely at issue here. Whereas most art works, as representations, serve as an equivalent for their referent in the world (be it conceptual or material), Tuttle's objects in *Constructed Paintings* insist on the impossibility of equivalence between image and referent, between the idea of a thing and the thing as experienced or manifested. It is an *in-equivalence* economically stated by Tuttle in an equal sign, which in the hands of his aesthetic, is itself an image of disparity.

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If the paper cubes investigated the origins of form and the means of formation, the *Constructed Paintings* consider the origin of thought and how it mutates. As Madeline Grynsztejn has noted, one of the most remarkable features of Tuttle's *Constructed Paintings* are that they are “built,” signifying that “each (object in the series) is a truly invented form.”⁷³ But as we have seen, as much as the immaterial ideas and processes that these forms obliquely reference are *constructed* by us, they are also ever-mutable

⁷³ Grynsztejn, 27.

constructions, morphing in- between a complicated nexus of mimesis and abstraction, appearances and observation, experience and cognition, ideas and knowledge.

As though an effort to underscore further the notion that ideas and knowledge are fluctuating or drifting, Tuttle inserts another series amid the divergent subjects of the *Constructed Paintings*. It is a subseries that comprises six sequentially titled pieces known collectively as the “drift pieces,” highly abstract objects fashioned with forms and contours that underscore a sense of mutability (Figures 2.24-2.29). As Christine Jenny’s research on Tuttle has determined, the *Constructed Paintings* are, in fact, a chronologically produced series of seventy objects.⁷⁴ While the sequential titles of the drift pieces would suggest that they were produced one after the other, this was not the case. The first drift piece emerges in the series’ overall chronology as the twentieth object but the second of the drift pieces does not appear until the thirtieth object. However, it is chronologically followed by the remaining drift pieces, which occupy objects thirty-one to thirty-four. Like the other kinds of objects within *Constructed Paintings*, the titles of the drift pieces also suggest their subject matter, but this subseries’s connections to its titles are especially ambiguous, namely because the forms are themselves quite ambiguous. “Drift” can be both a verb (to be carried slowly) and a noun (a gradual movement). Any and all of these are possibilities, for as played out in their disparate and mutable forms and, moreover, their sequencing, the six pieces, from the first to last, seem to demonstrate, without any specificity, a continual process of drifting. In doing so, the

⁷⁴ Christine Jenny’s research on the *Constructed Paintings*, seen in an appendix to her text, not only established a chronology for the series but also sought out and photographed all the series’ constitutive pieces. In the rare cases, when certain objects could not be located, Jenny included Tuttle’s drawings or sketches in their stead. See pages 169-176 of her text.

“drift pieces, as with all the objects in *Constructed Paintings*, ultimately image how our perception and knowledge of *anything* is formed in-time and in-process, instantiating that what is observed, thought, and known at one point is, at that very moment, gradually becoming something else, drifting, as it were. Thus, Tuttle’s *Constructed Paintings* series, in its quavering objects, remind us of how our understanding of the world and, indeed, the world itself, is always fluctuating, constantly generated, as it were, in a perpetual in-between-ness.

IV.

While it is with the philosophy of Whitehead that Tuttle’s career begins, his practice increasingly corresponds to the immanent philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, who was likewise a reader of Whitehead and whose career is largely contemporaneous with Tuttle’s artistic practice. As we will see, Tuttle’s and Deleuze’s seriality share significant affinities, the first of which is the concepts of the series. Emerging coincidentally in the mid-1960s, and, moreover, during the period in which serial art was codified by artistic practices, art exhibitions, and theorizations, both Tuttle and Deleuze, I would argue, invent a radical concept of seriality within their respective disciplines—a seriality that is compellingly linked, as we will see, by an interest in the in-between. But, in order to understand the radicality of their ideas, first it will be necessary to say something about the series as it was more commonly defined at the time.

In 1966, art critic Peter Schjeldahl declared that year to be the “Year of the System.”⁷⁵ From Warhol’s soup cans to Judd’s progressions and stacks, systematic serial logic was, indeed, systemic in art. Moreover, it would also seem that Schjeldahl was prompted in his pronouncement by Lawrence Alloway’s fall exhibition the same year at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. Entitled “Systemic Painting,” this survey of contemporary abstract painting highlighted the repetitive and reductive canvases of Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella, Robert Ryman, Larry Poons, and Kenneth Noland, among others. In the exhibition’s catalogue, Alloway explained his use of the term “systemic” by commenting that in these works, “the end-state of the painting is known prior to completion (unlike the theory of Abstract Expressionism).” Although Alloway admits that the systemic approach in painting is a process that can be idiosyncratic and can allow for “modifications in progress,” such “trial and error” changes occur before the work’s execution and thus are not visible in the final work itself. For Alloway, systemic painting is above all evidence of “an organized whole” or “a unified whole,” what he terms as a “system.”⁷⁶ While Alloway’s “Systemic Painting” did not focus precisely on the series, it

⁷⁵ Peter Schjeldahl, “Systems ’66,” *The Village Voice* (September 29, 1966) 12-13. For a historiographic account of Minimalist series and serial strategies within this year as well as throughout the sixties, see also James Meyer’s *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties*, 153-183.

⁷⁶ Lawrence Alloway, *Systemic Painting*, (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1966), 11-21. All of the included quotes are taken from this essay. In many ways, the Guggenheim’s exhibition as well as Alloway’s essay is aligned with the aesthetic theories of Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. Systemic painting, Alloway insists, relies on “unitary fields” of frames, forms, and color, making recursive reference to painting’s support and emphasizing painting’s autonomy. Incidentally, Schjeldahl’s earlier noted essay, in part, complained about this exhibition for this very alignment.

tethered systematic modes of thinking to the art of 1960s, especially to contemporary serial painting.⁷⁷

In the art world, the idea of the system, the structure, and the series was, indeed, in the air in 1966. Even before Alloway's exhibition at the Guggenheim that fall, Elayne Varian of the Finch College Museum produced an exhibition in May 1966 entitled "Art in Process: The Development of a Structure," which considered the serial methodology of the Minimalists. It included several of Judd's notched extensions from the wall (these were not progressions) as well as box-like pieces from Sol LeWitt and Robert Smithson. Although it was created for pedagogical purposes for students at Finch, "Art in Process" ultimately became a touchstone, one that announced the dominance of seriality in contemporary art and, moreover, provided one of the first curatorial examinations of this method. Varian's strategy showed the completed objects alongside the models and diagrams employed to achieve their execution. Although a sense of a process was highlighted, the exhibition also exposed the extensive pre-planning and fabrication that

⁷⁷ Some of Alloway's ideas about predetermined methods in "Systemic Painting" anticipates Mel Bochner's thinking on the serial and systems (as discussed in the introductory chapter) that were to be published the following year. It is worth noting, however, that in his review of Alloway's "Systemic Painting," Bochner criticized Alloway's reliance on painting, noting that Stella's shaped canvases and "their materiality... suggest three-dimensional work, which is probably why most of the interesting work being done today is not being done in painting." And on the point of the three-dimensionality, Bochner was right. Indeed, it was in sculpture or three-dimensional objects that phenomenon of seriality was being played out and moreover, according to systems that were, like Alloway's "Systemic Painting," conceived in terms of order and wholeness, as we have already begun to see in the cases of Judd and LeWitt. See Bochner's review of Alloway's exhibition in "Systemic," *Arts Magazine* 41:1 (November 1966): 40 as well as his essay, "The Serial Attitude" as discussed in the introductory chapter of this study and "Serial Art, Systems, Solipsism," *Arts Magazine* 41:8 (Summer 1967): 39-43.

much Minimalist seriality entailed. For here, as the exhibition's subtitle suggests, was, indeed, a development of a process from a beginning to an end.

In November 1967, Varian mounted another exhibition entitled "Art in Series" and she was belatedly joined by Mel Bochner in the project. In fact, it was alongside this exhibition that Bochner published his essay "The Serial Attitude" (1967) in *Artforum*. As discussed in the introductory chapter, Bochner's essay provided an important theorization of seriality in the 1960s, distinguishing between those artists who were "working in series" and the "serial method," the latter of which was preferred by Bochner in terms of both terminology and the systematic approach. Because Bochner joined the project later, the title of the exhibition had already been established by Varian and thus, "Art in Series" reads as contradictory to Bochner's claims in "The Serial Attitude." (It could be argued too that the existing title only compelled Bochner to work even harder to distinguish the terms of "series" and "serial" and the methods they implied.) However, if the works included in "Art in Series" speak for themselves in defining what serial art was in 1967, then serial art was not as systematic or predetermined as one might have thought. While there were, to Bochner's taste, a 1964 floor box of Judd's, replete with precise repetition, as well as LeWitt's systematically devised and executed *Serial Project #1* (1966), there were series that were contrived as variations on a theme such as Jasper Johns' *White Numbers* or Rauschenberg's *White Paintings*, which, of course, contradicted Bochner's own definition of the serial but had remained in the exhibition because Varian had chosen them before Bochner joined the project. Moreover, the exhibition also included Robert Smithson's pyramidal glass stacks (1966) and Eva Hesse's *Addendum* (1967) which Bochner admitted in his essay were works that suggested "future possibilities of serial

methodology.” Bochner does not say more about these “future possibilities,” but James Meyer has argued that these very works by Hesse and Smithson in “Art in Series” “challenged” Minimalist assumptions “that repetition and structural legibility went hand in hand” when it came to seriality.⁷⁸ Thus, it can be argued that even as postwar seriality was being systematically theorized, there were already harbingers of a counter-seriality, and notably in addition to Tuttle’s own.

And yet, throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, conventional notions of systems as well as its cousins, structures, retained a hegemony, in both the theorization of art by critics and practitioners. In 1968, Jack Burnham’s *Artforum* essay “Systems Esthetics” predicted how the “systems esthetic” “would become the dominant approach to a maze of socio-technical conditions....”⁷⁹ Burnham’s claim was that a burgeoning interest in systems, ranging from systems theory to advanced technological systems, would enact a paradigm shift from object to system. Spurred on by what he has witnessed in the trend of “post-formalist” art (postmodernist but, more specifically, Postminimalist and Conceptual art), Burnham wrote that artistic practices might soon open up to “such concerns as maintaining the biological livability of the Earth, producing more accurate models of social interaction, understanding the growing symbiosis in man-machine relationships, establishing priorities for the usage and conservation of natural resources, and defining alternate patterns of education, productivity, and leisure.”⁸⁰ Lawrence Alloway’s essay “Network: The Art World Described as a System” (1972) also represented an attempt to describe the effects of systems on art, but his essay was focused

⁷⁸ Meyer, 182.

⁷⁹ Jack Burnham, “Systems Esthetics,” *Artforum* (September 1968): 35.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 31.

on a larger art-world system, what he understood as a decentralized network of curators, collectors, and artists (among others).⁸¹

But in the late 1960s especially, the idea of systems was not solely the province of the art world. In 1966, the same year of Schjeldahl's "Year of the System," the Johns Hopkins Humanities Center hosted an international symposium broadly focused on "the sciences of man." As art historian Eve Meltzer has written:

So it was 1966 when—just as so many artists and critics were struggling to think of art and its world as systems of varied sorts, to question the nature of systematicity in the world, and to interrogate with artistic form the habits, limits, and possibilities of systems—over one hundred humanist and social scientists from the United States and eight other countries convened in Baltimore to inaugurate a two-year program of seminars and colloquia to explain, and in some cases, contest structuralism before an American audience for the very first time.⁸²

Generally speaking, Structuralism insisted that nothing is meaningful in itself but that meaning is determined in relation to other components of a system, as when a word has no sense outside of language. Believing that man—*the cogito*—was not the center of knowledge, Structuralism thus attempted to secure firmer foundations, to ascertain the structures in which any knowledge was produced and how it functioned. But such ideas of foundational systematic structures in turn found contestation in Poststructuralism, a

⁸¹ Lawrence Alloway, "Network: The Art World Described as a System," *Artforum* (September 1972): 28-29.

⁸² Eve Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 15-16. Meltzer continues: "*The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* included presentations by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Rene Girard, Jean Hyppolite, Jacques Lacan, Guy Rosolato, and Tzvetan Todorov, among others, and represented the full range of disciplines." Meltzer's text is an excellent study of systems as deployed in art making throughout the 1960s and 1970s, well-balanced in its artistic, philosophical, and cultural contextualizations. It is also worth noting that in her comments on the Johns Hopkins symposium, Meltzer draws on an essay by Jean-Michel Rabate, "Introduction 2003: Are you History?," in John Sturrock, *Structuralism*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 1-16.

movement of thought that emerged, too, in the 1960s, at what is arguably the apex of Structuralism. Among the more prominent Poststructuralist thinkers were Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze, both of whom aimed to de-center ideas of secure structures of knowledge.⁸³ In part, Deleuze's philosophy will achieve such a de-centering in his concept of the series, which, like Tuttle's seriality, questions the objectivity of structures and systems.

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The concept of the series plays a central role in several of Deleuze's books.⁸⁴ However, in spite of its prevalence and its interconnections with his other concepts, the series, as a concept in and of itself, remains undertheorized in the literature on Deleuze, which, curiously sets up yet another parallel between Deleuze and Tuttle, whose investment in the notion of seriality is, as I have noted, similarly understudied. Perhaps this is because Deleuze's concept of a philosophical seriality is much like Tuttle's serial practice in art—it is obscure, resists cohesion, and, moreover, seems to shift, if only slightly, in form and function from book to book, from serial explication to serial explication. Indeed, we might say that Deleuze's seemingly mutable discussion of the

⁸³ Ronald Bogue has written that Deleuze rejected the “scientific objectivity” of Structuralism and questioned its reliance on impersonal structures and essential models: “...just as Derrida accepted the terms of the Saussurian analysis of linguistic structure and then used them to decentre the very notion of structure, so Deleuze incorporated a mathematical model of structure within his philosophy of difference, but through a theory of ‘singular points’, ‘metastable states’, and ‘nomadic distributions’, thoroughly problematized that model.” See Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 3.

⁸⁴ Most of Deleuze's ideas on seriality are discussed in the following texts: *Logic of Sense, Difference and Repetition, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, and *Proust and Signs* [1964], trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

series is a manifestation, ultimately, of what he regards as the very nature of the series as such.

Arguably, the clearest explication of the series by Deleuze is found in *Difference and Repetition* (1968). Here, Deleuze writes of the series as constituted by a dynamic of difference:

Each term of a series, being already a difference, must be put into a variable relation with other terms, thereby constituting other series devoid of centre and convergence. Divergence and decentering must be affirmed in the series itself. Every object, every thing, must see its own identity swallowed up in difference, each being no more than a difference between differences. Difference must be shown *differing*. We know that modern art tends to realise these conditions: in this sense it becomes a veritable theatre of metamorphoses and permutations. A theatre where nothing is fixed....⁸⁵

What ultimately matters in a serial conception, Deleuze later notes in *Dialogues*, “are not the terms or elements” as such, but what exists “between” them, what “grows” from their “middle,” or put otherwise, what emerges in the in-between.⁸⁶

As with many of Deleuze’s concepts, his ideas of genesis within the series and the in-between are interconnected with his famous concept of “becoming.” Deleuze’s becoming is synonymous with emergence but, more pointedly, it is a process motivated by difference. Drawing from the philosophy of Henri Bergson and Friedrich Nietzsche, Deleuze’s concept of becoming articulates the continuous generation of difference that emerges in the in-between, a series of changes that can occur in the realms of the physical, the intellectual, the psychological, and elsewhere. Importantly, becoming is not merely a medial moment in-between two states or terms but rather it is a dynamic force of metamorphosis and continual generation. As argued by Deleuze with Felix Guattari,

⁸⁵ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 56.

⁸⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* [1977], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (Althone Press: London, 1987), viii.

becoming is not an entity but a verb, and in its form as a gerund, *becoming* signifies something that is ongoing: “a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination.... A line of becoming has only a middle.”⁸⁷

When taken together, these key concepts—the series, the in-between, and becoming—reflect Deleuze’s commitment to notions of difference, metamorphosis, and process. As with other Poststructuralist concepts such as Derrida’s well known *différance*, Deleuze’s concepts of the series, the in-between, and becoming, each in their own way, celebrate the instability and contingency of structures and systems, of thought and knowledge—indeed, of life. In this way, Deleuze’s philosophy is not only like Tuttle’s series of art but is akin as well to Whitehead’s process philosophy. For, what Tuttle’s seriality and Deleuze’s and Whitehead’s philosophy ultimately image, and each in its own way, is the perpetual in-between-ness of life—its uncertainty and its transience, the questions that this ongoing process engenders and the problems within it that remain unresolved.

By 1966, there was already a sense that the rigid, systematic approach to art (serial or not) was untenable and, notably, from within the ranks of Minimalism. In fact, less than a month after Schjeldahl declares 1966 the “Year of the System,” the sculptor Robert Morris, who originally participated in the Minimalist movement, wrote what amounts to a polemic against systematic art. In “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2,” Morris derides the use of the “scientistic element” in sculptural practices and “the application of mathematical or engineering concerns,” suggesting that such methods were not

⁸⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* [1980], trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 293.

exploratory enough for the aims of “new sculpture,” which are, on Morris’ account, meant to investigate sculptural form and to engage experientially with the viewer.⁸⁸

It would appear that Morris was not alone in his concerns. In the late 1960s, a number of younger artists emerged in opposition to the systemic restraints of Minimalism, participating in what Pincus-Witten would call Postminimalism and what others would term as Process Art in the coming years. By 1968, a concerted artistic reaction to the reductive ideology of Minimalism was evident, and one that seemed, no less, to address the earlier articulated concerns of Morris. Consider an excerpt from an

⁸⁸ See Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2.” While Morris does not explicitly reference Donald Judd, many then and now take Judd to be his veiled target, namely Judd’s series of progressions and stacks and strident “specific objects.” These concerns are reminiscent of those expressed earlier his “Notes on Sculpture, Part 1,” published in February of 1966. Here, Morris criticizes those who would impose the limitations of painting (e.g. purification of the painterly practice and its emphasis on the “support”) on contemporary sculpture and that such limitations, and, indeed, expectations of untenable for sculpture. As Morris insists, “the sculptural facts of space, light, and materials have always functioned concretely and literally” and sculpture retains an “essentially tactile nature.” What Morris goes on to discuss in this first article, and to amplify in the second one, is a concern about the separation of form from content, of art from experience, a distinction that can be traced back to abstract art of the mid-19th and early 20th centuries. And for Morris and his generation, of which Tuttle is a part, this separation is maintained and, moreover, inculcated, by the critic Clement Greenberg and his contemporary writings on Modernist art as well as those of his intellectual disciple, Michael Fried. As curious as it might be in the kind of exhibition and essay that Lawrence Alloway produces, Alloway also seems to worry along the same lines as Morris. In the last paragraph of the “Systemic Painting” essay, Alloway remarks on a “pressing problem” that he finds in the criticism of contemporary abstraction: how “to re-establish abstract art’s connections with other experience.” Admittedly, Alloway does not spend much time searching for solutions but it is as if, in the end, he was troubled by the reductive interpretations of systemic abstract art, distilled examinations which of course his exhibition (and essay) only reinforce. Alloway goes on to suggest the possibilities for interpreting systemic repetition in terms of the experiential and for finding meaning in abstruse abstract forms but these efforts are neither thorough nor sustained. Nevertheless, contextualized in the fall of 1966, Alloway’s comments are prescient. While in one regard they foreshadow an interpretative shift in art history in the 1970s (the re-connection of form and content), in another regard they prefigure the alternatives to the rigid systems of Minimalism that were emerging even as Alloway, and coincidentally Morris, wrote—that of the convergent movements of Process art, Postminimalist art, and Conceptual art.

anonymous, one-page article that appeared in *Time Magazine* in November of 1968, which attempts to articulate a shift emerging in contemporary art (Figure 2.30):

Robert Ryman... covers rectangles of metal, canvas or paper with white paint and then, instead of framing them or stretching them, he mounts them as close to the wall as he can get them, sometimes stapling them directly to the plaster.... Moreover, Ryman is no longer alone. For the past year or so, a dozen-odd other, younger artists have been producing pictures or sculptures that share his work's maddeningly artless look. Bill Bellinger, 29, makes dumb-looking sculptures that consist of a piece of rope slung from floor to ceiling. Keith Sonnier, 27, puddles flimsily sensuous Dacron on the floor. David Lee, 31, hangs clear sheets of plastic from the rafters. Richard Tuttle, 27, tacks up wrinkled octagons of canvas. In enlightened 1968, even New York's moderately avant-garde critics are prepared to agree with Tuttle that, yes, indeed all this may be art. But what kind of art? Some call it "antiform," for its outlines—or rather, its conspicuous efforts to avoid them. Others call it "process art," for it proudly shows off the marks of the process by which it was made. Another term is "conceptual art," for in every case, the concept behind the piece is infinitely more impressive than the workmanship. And "conceptual art," everybody agrees, is deliberately made hard to understand: subtle, cerebral, elusive, private, intense....⁸⁹

As the brief article continues, the author aims to emphasize the processes of this art. For example, the author cites Robert Morris, who regarded the drip canvases of Jackson Pollock as a model for the artists of his generation to “record the act,” the very processes of art making. But prior to this *Time* article, Morris, in fact, had already articulated the strategy of highlighting process in art in an essay from earlier that year, which was entitled “Anti-Form.” In this essay, Morris called for an open-ended mode of art that stands in opposition to the finality of forms, namely Minimalist forms.⁹⁰ Yet as much as this new art of the late 1960s is invested in a visibility of process, there remains, as the author of the *Time* article suggests, something mysterious about an art that processes.

⁸⁹ “The Avant-Garde: Subtle, Cerebral, Elusive,” *Time Magazine* (November 22, 1968): 70-77.

⁹⁰ See Robert Morris, “Anti-Form,” *Artforum* (April 1968): 33-35. Most likely, it was Morris’ earlier article that leads the anonymous author of the *Time* article to use the labels of “anti-form” or “process art.”

Indeed, as Richard Tuttle terms it elsewhere in the *Time* article, this new art is “an esoteric thing.”⁹¹ Perhaps the ubiquity of an art that was mysterious and ambiguous was what made Jack Burnham reconsider his stance on systems and the systematic and, more importantly, its ambitions to tame uncertainties. In a curious turnabout in the introduction to his own anthology of systems essays in 1974, Burnham poignantly writes: “Ultimately systems theory may be another attempt by science to resist the...ambiguity that remain(s) an unavoidable aspect of life.”⁹²

To be sure, much of the systematic serial art in the 1960s and 1970s aimed to control what seemed uncontrollable, to dismiss the unknown in favor of the known. As discussed thus far in this chapter as well as in the introduction, Tuttle has a keen awareness of seriality at this moment, of its ambitions as well as its limits. Perhaps that is why in the midst of what is arguably seriality’s heyday, Tuttle begins to make series of art that embrace ambiguity and irresolution, to make explicit that, in spite of any systematic, structural, and, indeed, serial method, something always escapes and remains elusive and esoteric.

V.

The series that follow the *Constructed Paintings* extend Tuttle’s concerns with the esoteric and in-between-ness as seen in series such as the *Cloth Pieces* (1967-1968) and *Blocks* (1973), both of which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Indeed, within the first

⁹¹ “The Avant-Garde: Subtle, Cerebral, Elusive.”

⁹² Jack Burnham, “Introduction,” *Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art* (New York: Braziller, 1974), 11.

decade of his practice, Tuttle's series seem to dematerialize increasingly in form and structure, oscillating evermore between appearance and disappearance, visibility and invisibility, fixity and movement. In an eponymously titled exhibition in 1971, at the then Dallas Museum of Fine Art, Tuttle displayed pieces from series executed in the latter half of the 1960s, but the show was designed as much to feature a selection of new work that was made solely for the purposes of this exhibition. Included in this new work were a number of wall drawings and four large-scale sculptures, reminiscent of the earlier paper cubes series but larger and made for display on the floor (Figure 2.31). Yet, neither the sculptures nor the wall drawings exist today. Like detritus on the floor or paint on the wall, they disappeared after the exhibition, supposedly destroyed, as if a symbolic gesture of his esoteric conceptions of art and his commitment to unfixed forms of art. On the impermanence of this Dallas exhibition, and of his art more generally at the time, Tuttle later recalls an incident while installing this show. After being approached by a critic who seemed to mock Tuttle's interest in an esoteric and impermanent art, his gallerist Betty Parsons responded, according to Tuttle: "What's more permanent than the invisible?"⁹³

If forging a place for invisibility and transience in art was part of Tuttle's artistic aim, then it must be conceded that such ambitions were not always well-received, a fact most dramatically instantiated in the circumstances surrounding his 1975 early-career survey, "Richard Tuttle," at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Here, what was already considered an unconventional art was also unconventionally displayed. At times,

⁹³ Charles Wylie, "1971 Exhibition at the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts," *The Art of Richard Tuttle*, ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn (San Francisco, Calif.: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in association with D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, New York, 2005), 134-135.

wall pieces were arranged on the floor and, rather than being installed within vitrines on pedestals or at eye level on the walls, tiny sculptures were set along baseboards, risking invisibility and forcing the observant viewer to lean over, almost forcing one to kneel.

Although the Whitney exhibition granted Tuttle and his art significant exposure to broader national and international audiences, its reception by the public was rarely celebratory. In fact, the response to the exhibition was mostly derogatory. Many museumgoers to the 1975 exhibition were perplexed as to what Tuttle's art was about. They found his abstract objects too abstract and his descriptive titles unhelpful and somewhat insulting. They complained about his art's strange installation. They disapproved of the fact that the exhibition catalogue was to be published several months *after* the exhibition ended, in order to explicate better, as curator Marcia Tucker insisted, the experience of working with Tuttle and his "unique art." (In fairness to Tucker, she did give a handout that explained this decision to museumgoers). They lashed out at gallery guards and made phone calls to the museum's trustees, who terminated Tucker as a curator at the Whitney. Some even questioned the status of his work *as art*.

Critics were unequally unsympathetic. Subverting Mies van der Rohe's famous dictum "less is more," the *New York Times* critic Hilton Kramer mercilessly mocked Tuttle's art: "In Mr. Tuttle's work, less is unmistakably less. It is, indeed, remorselessly and irredeemably less. One is tempted to say that, so far as art is concerned, less has never been as less as this."⁹⁴ Kramer declared the exhibition a "debacle" and pronounced Tuttle's art as "egregiously subordinate to the most minor of minor art." *The Village Voice* critic David Bourdon chastised Tuttle and Tucker for producing an

⁹⁴ Hilton Kramer, "Tuttle's Art on Display at Whitney," *New York Times* (September 12, 1975): 21.

“underwhelming” and “overblown” retrospective. Bourdon wrote that the art appeared “niggardly, if not always precious” and that the scale of Tuttle’s elusive work, with its quirky installations, was as if a treasure hunt that was “merely geographic, instead of aesthetic.”⁹⁵ Seizing on the seemingly insignificant scale and unartful aesthetic of Tuttle’s work, most of the reactions to the exhibition were scathing and, in the years following it, Tuttle would speak about how this critical maelstrom was, in some sense, a personal tragedy.⁹⁶

However, in other ways, the Whitney exhibition was productive for Tuttle’s career, even if this can only be seen in hindsight. To be sure, the Whitney survey provided the first opportunity for Tuttle’s art to be considered in a larger critical context of art making and art history. As noted in Thomas Hess’ review of the exhibition: “When you read such words as ‘remorselessly and irredeemably’ ... from a critic who once called Jackson Pollock ‘second-rate’ and Willem de Kooning a ‘pompiere,’ then it’s probable that something importantly different has come to notice.”⁹⁷ Indeed, something about Tuttle’s art had been noticed, for whether negative, positive, or ambivalent, wittingly or unwittingly, almost all of the critical reviews and even the frustration of the museumgoers pinpointed what are, ultimately, the significant features of Tuttle’s art—

⁹⁵ David Bourdon, “Playing Hide and Seek in the Whitney,” *The Village Voice* (September 29, 1975): 97-98.

⁹⁶ On several occasions since the Whitney exhibition, Tuttle has described how the exhibition was exhilarating initially but that it ultimately became a source of discouragement and dejection. So crushing was the negative response to the Whitney show that Tuttle’s artistic practice slowed for the next few years and, in fact, he hardly made anything in 1976. According to Tuttle, during the exhibition, when his face was especially recognizable from the current media surrounding the show, it was common for strangers on the streets of Manhattan to approach him and verbally attack him for what they perceived to be the senselessness of his art.

⁹⁷ Thomas Hess, “Private Art Where the Public Works,” *New York* (October 13, 1975): 76.

that his objects are purposefully bewildering, elusive, and ephemeral. Therefore, from the beginning, and even by his detractors, Tuttle's art has been associated with elusiveness, ambiguity, and mystery.

Of all the critical responses to the Whitney exhibition, perhaps the most astute assessment came from a staff writer of the *Los Angeles Times*, who rather perfectly encapsulated what I contend to be a central aim of Tuttle's serial oeuvre. Writing on the occasion of the installment of the Whitney exhibition at the Otis Art Institute Gallery in Los Angeles, the author proposed that when Tuttle's small art is seen in the context of its large spaces, it seems "to convey an impression of philosophical speculation. His small, almost childishly simple paintings, drawings, and objects suggest overtones of mankind trying to fathom the universe as a touching, helpless gesture, like striking a match in infinity."⁹⁸ As I have argued, Tuttle's series and the objects therein are not receptacles in which meanings are placed and then transmitted. Instead, his is an art that images the incessancy and, moreover, the necessity of various processes—of asking questions, of gesturing toward ideas, and of grappling with changing states of knowledge. As Tuttle has suggested elsewhere, his art is not a means to arrive at a goal but rather a way by which he might come to understand what it means to live with and through the mystery that is life: "I'm still finding that you can't go on without asking, why is this so? For what reason? Even if I'll never find out, I think that I get a chance to be aware. [By making art], (s)omething is not so obscure or as hidden as it would have been before."⁹⁹

⁹⁸ William Wilson, "Adrift in the Wide Open Spaces," *Los Angeles Times* (February 9, 1976). Reprinted in Tucker, 92.

⁹⁹ Harris, 49.

VI.

There is one more series to consider in this chapter, that of the *Wire Pieces* (1972), which is not only Tuttle's most famous series, but is also best suited to conclude a chapter that has been concerned with his serial beginnings and the larger questions of origins. Although my analysis of the *Wire Pieces* will also engage with the question of Tuttle's seriality and his preoccupation with origins, impermanence, and invisibility, I briefly consider, by way of an introduction to the *Wire Pieces*, the series of the *Paper Octagonals* (1970), which, at the time of their making, were Tuttle's most ephemeral objects to date. As we will see, the *Paper Octagonals* effect an important transition, chronologically and conceptually, between the transience and contingency as discussed thus far in Tuttle's seriality and what emerges subsequently in the *Wire Pieces*.

Hand-cut from a heavy but brilliant white paper, the series of approximately two-hundred *Paper Octagonals* are pristinely barren of any pencil marks or smudges, a rarity in Tuttle's oeuvre (Figure 2.32). Moreover, unlike many of his series, Tuttle created the *Paper Octagonals* especially for domestic spaces, as pieces with which one is to live with on an intimate, daily basis. In one of the bills of sale from March 30, 1970, Tuttle instructs the buyers as to how these delicate works should be installed. Tuttle writes: "The paper works are meant to be white pictures for white walls. The *colour* of the whites is unimportant. It is, however, of extreme importance that the wall on which the white paper is placed *registers* white."¹⁰⁰ As is evident in the various installation shots, with the *Paper Octagonals*, it is difficult to discern where the piece ends and the wall

¹⁰⁰ Reprinted in *Richard Tuttle* (The Hague: Sdu Publishers, 1991), 89.

begins. Efforts to disentangle the art object from the wall space are made more problematic because the works image nothing in particular. Indeed, in these abstract pieces of irregular white paper plastered onto white walls like wallpaper, one might mistake any of the *Paper Octagonals* for an errant spackle and paint job, where the “whites” were just mismatched.

Yet there remains something else about the *Paper Octagonalsthat* confounds and unsettles. Caught in-between a play of light and shadow, they appear to flutter out of the corner of one’s eye as one walks past them. In spite of the fact that they remain in the same location, they are utterly changeable in our regard, at one moment, this, and at another moment, that, at once appearing and disappearing, opaque and transparent. It is this seemingly impossible fluctuation of what we know to be inanimate objects that makes the *Paper Octagonals* appear as if phantasms sent to haunt us, which seems all the more plausible given another of Tuttle’s instruction for the installation of these works: “Hang the piece as an obvious and direct confrontation with the viewer.”¹⁰¹ Because they make it difficult to distinguish between where art ends and the space of the real (the actual wall) begins, and because one is meant, moreover, to *live everyday* with these pieces, these seemingly spectral objects, full of ambiguity and uncertainty, may well prompt equally haunting questions for us in our life. Might the continual fluctuation and self-difference of the *Paper Octagonals* be telling us something about our own circumstances? Might their seemingly shifting and ambiguous identities reflect something of our own constitution as well as the imperfect nature of knowledge?

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

As with the *Paper Octagonals*, Tuttle's *Wire Pieces* inspire viewers to wonder if they have seen anything at all. At first glance, this series of forty-eight objects seems to be but gossamer apparitions (Figure 2.33). Measuring roughly three feet tall, these small and delicate pieces consist of only three lithe lines of wire, pencil, and shadow, which in passing moments barely register against the luminous white walls of the gallery. Because they are similar in their grey tonality and sinuous forms, the three lines appear entangled, making it difficult to differentiate between them. When observed from varied viewpoints, the three lines of a piece appear to fluctuate and flicker, as if its components were simultaneously appearing and disappearing. It is a sense of mutability that is manifested differently throughout each of the forty-eight *Wire Pieces*, a series that, notably, was sequentially produced throughout 1972 and given a numerical sequencing in the titles of its individual pieces.

The process by which the *Wire Pieces* are created is idiosyncratic and is very much linked to Tuttle's body, the range of motion in his arm and the tremulous touch of his hand. In one fluid motion, Tuttle begins by drawing a line in pencil on a wall, a mark that varies in configuration and in length with each piece. Next, he uncoils floral wire from a spool and cuts a segment that is a little longer than the length of the pencil line. Placing it over the pencil line, Tuttle secures the wire at either end of the drawn line with two nails, wrapping its ends a few times around the nail-heads. Tuttle then manipulates the wire in an effort to make it conform with the pencil line, as if the wire were its sculptural correlate. Once the wire is fitted in place, the shadow line, the final element, emerges on the wall, an ephemeral and largely uncontrollable component created by the

play of surrounding light on the wire.¹⁰²

In February of 1972, Tuttle debuted the first ten *Wire Pieces* at the Betty Parsons Gallery. Insubstantial and illusory, the pieces were regarded by many critics as perplexing and difficult to categorize. Baffled too by what exactly the *Wire Pieces* were meant to represent, critics instead spent a considerable amount of time simply describing them, their constitutive elements of wire, pencil, and shadow as well as the step-by-step process by which they were created. Looking back on these early responses to Tuttle's *Wire Pieces*, it was apparent that authors were struggling to pin down what these works might image and, more importantly, what they might signify.

In her review for *Artforum*, Lizzie Borden's thoughts on the *Wire Pieces* seem to vacillate. At certain moments, she suggests that the objects are concerned with ideas, while, at other points, she understands them to be investigations of surface.¹⁰³ Ellen Lubell's response to the series is similarly mixed and likewise oscillates between conceptual and formal readings. In one instance, Lubell claims that the merit of the *Wire Pieces* lies in their innovation. As pieces of art that conflate and confuse the two-dimensional (pencil and shadow) with the three-dimensional (wire), the *Wire Pieces*, she contends, make it difficult to settle on one specific medium. But Lubell also suggests that the pieces to possess a "mystical/metaphysical tone," an assessment largely

¹⁰² Of the shadow in his art, Tuttle has said: "Notice that our cultures, the Western cultures, think very much in terms of the image. We love to make something an image, where the shadow falls outside of it. But there is a whole other part of the world, and here I point mostly to the Polynesian and Indonesian cultures, where the idea is exactly the opposite, to make an image where the shadow falls inside of it. And this is part of the polarities that I spoke of earlier. It is exciting, challenging, interesting, to find these polarities which could be very invisible or taken for granted to such a degree that we lose them." See Laura Lake Smith, "'Simply what my work has told me:' An Interview with Richard Tuttle," *The Brock Review* 11:1 (2010): 63-69.

¹⁰³ Lizzie Borden, "Reviews: Richard Tuttle at Betty Parsons," *Artforum* (May 1972): 80.

predicated, she insists, on the shadow element. As Lubell writes, the shadow within each of the *Wire Pieces* is as if “a fading echo reheard but each time with a slight qualitative difference,” evoking a sense of “transient states.”¹⁰⁴ As we will find, when taken together, Borden’s and Lubell’s early observations of the *Wire Pieces* as evocative of ideas, surfaces, and transience will be crucial to my own reading of the series.

Much of the writing following on the initial response to Tuttle’s *Wire Pieces* is also laden with observations of transience and mutability. Madeline Grynsztejn has described the *Wire Pieces* as bordering between the permanent and the impermanent, while relatedly, Richard Shiff has argued that they are pieces in constant motion.¹⁰⁵ Considering the series from an embodied perspective, Cornelia Butler has contended that the *Wire Pieces* “force viewers to bend, to shift,” to interact in a kinesthetic fashion with an art object that seems itself strangely in motion.¹⁰⁶ Curator Margrit Brehm has written that the *Wire Pieces* allow us the ability to see something in art that is quite “terrifying”— their inherent “chaos” of form.¹⁰⁷

My own analysis will begin with the 1st *Wire Piece* (Figure 2.34). As an installation photograph from 1986 demonstrates, in this work a piece of wire has been manipulated such that it mimics the pencil line, itself a shaky diagonal stroke. The wire and its consequential shadow are not precise in their imitation of the artist’s mark, but they are relatively congruent with the pencil line, so much so, that at first glance it is

¹⁰⁴ Ellen Lubell, “Wire/Pencil/Shadow: Elements of Richard Tuttle,” *Arts Magazine* 47 (November 1972): 50-52.

¹⁰⁵ Madeleine Grynsztejn, 41; and Richard Shiff, “It Shows,” 253-274. Shiff never precisely articulates what *that* “something” is.

¹⁰⁶ Cornelia Butler, “Kinesthetic Drawing,” 170-177.

¹⁰⁷ Margrit Brehm, “...it comes from art,” *Chaos, Die/ The Form*, ed. Jochen Poetter (Stuttgart: Edition Cantz, 1993), 17-23.

difficult to separate the lines and register their differences in medium. That the series begins with a work that conveys a sense of congruity and harmony is important to acknowledge, for we might consider it as a model that anticipates similar alignment in the rest of the sequence as it unfolds.

However, the 2nd *Wire Piece* (Figure 2.35) is markedly different from the first piece. Here, the pencil line is arced, but the wire, which is secured with only one nail and notably at its center, cannot possibly mime the pencil line. Indeed, the wire wholly fails to conform to the drawn line, falling downward instead and coiling back on itself, a mimetic errancy that is likewise echoed in the shadow. For, as subsequent *Wire Pieces* reveal, the correspondence found in the 1st *Wire Piece* gradually gives way to varying degrees of difference.

Moving along in the sequence, the wire's failure to conform to the contours of the pencil lines is variously elaborated, as instantiated in the 4th, 6th, 9th, 10th, 13th, 14th, 26th, and 31st *Wire Pieces* (Figures 2.36-2.43). In each of these, the three distinct elements are somehow unable to coalesce, to bear out the logic of equivalence. Despite obvious attempts to shape the wire so that it conforms to the nature of the pencil line, either the configuration of the pencil lines or the lack of support by nails or, at times both, prevent the wire from achieving alignment, a self-differing that is always amplified by the shadow on the wall. Over and over again, in repeated but slightly different iterations, the pencil line and wire inevitably fail to mimic each other in accordance with the terms established by the initial piece in Tuttle's series. It also bears underscoring that this failure does not proceed in a progressive or causal fashion, as might be expected with a sequencing of a series. Instead, like the series previously discussed in this chapter,

Tuttle's *Wire Pieces* once again deploy important features of the conventional serial logic—identical materials and a repetitive process of making—in order to demonstrate that each piece, no matter its similarities, is produced, one after the other, by and in difference.

That there is no detectible logic or pattern is exemplified in a rather dramatic and unexpected shift that emerges in the 38th *Wire Piece* (Figure 2.44). Reminiscent of the 1st *Wire Piece*, its elements are closely aligned with each other, even to the point that the wire almost precisely follows the curvature of the pencil line and even mimics an acute angle at the top of the pencil line. It would appear as if this piece, and perhaps even the subsequent pieces as well, might endeavor a return to the congruence and the coalescence with which the series began—indeed— might “right” itself by the end. But any conformity between the three elements of the 38th *Wire Piece* is quickly unsettled by the 39th *Wire Piece* (Figure 2.45) and, for that matter, by the remaining nine pieces, which continue to exacerbate, and in a myriad of non-progressive ways, the failure of the three elements to bear out the logic of imitation, as is especially evident in the 44th *Wire Piece* and the 47th *Wire Piece* (Figures 2.46-2.47).

In the final piece of the series, the 48th *Wire Piece* (Figure 2.48), the synthesis between the wire and pencil line is pragmatically unfeasible, given that there are two parallel pencil lines, one nail, and one inadequately short piece of wire. As the last in the series, the 48th *Wire Piece* is, in fact, the most incompatible in terms of its given elements, a purposeful ploy by Tuttle: “In this last piece, the wire has become the same as

the pencil line. In a way, it is a contradiction.”¹⁰⁸ And indeed, this seems to be the case. Here, the wire is especially defiant, acting as though *it* were the establishing element rather than the pencil line, or as though it were a competing point of origin. As imagined by Euclidian geometry, parallel lines are always equidistant and, as such, they will neither converge nor diverge. In other words, the lines will never change. But in its curling upwards against the two parallel lines, the piece of wire seems to reject their predictable path, forging at the series’ end, as it were, another beginning, yet another kind of difference.

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As we have already begun to see in his early series, a difference in repetitive making is paramount to Tuttle’s seriality, but the *Wire Pieces*, with their simple and ephemeral components are a series of objects that perhaps allows us to observe this feature of Tuttle’s seriality more clearly. While it could be argued of any of Tuttle’s discrete series, I suggest that the *Wire Pieces*, in their refusal of mimesis, make manifest in explicit terms Deleuze’s interconnected concepts of “difference and repetition” and “becoming,” both of which are developed throughout the whole of *Difference and Repetition*. As Deleuze writes, “becoming” is never a process of imitation or resemblance but a ceaseless and, in the context of this study, a *serial process* of differentiation. “Becoming,” then, is a force in metamorphosis and generation, as though it were a sequential unfolding of that which is ever different and new, never the same. To be sure, the 48th *Wire Piece* is anything but a pronouncement of finality. Instead, it is a necessarily arbitrary but dramatic gesture, which suggests that difference would always

¹⁰⁸ Sylvie Couderc, “An Interview with Richard Tuttle,” *Richard Tuttle: Wire Pieces* (Bordeaux: CapcMusée d’art contemporain, 1986), 37.

occur in and though the iterations of these pieces *ad infinitum* if the series were allowed to continue, a phenomenon that Deleuze, drawing on Nietzsche's philosophy, terms in his own philosophy as the "eternal return" of "difference and repetition."¹⁰⁹ In its imaging of a thoroughly repetitive and differentiated unfolding, I contend that Tuttle's sequenced *Wire Pieces*, then, manifests a serial process in which one thing gives way to something else, both within its individual pieces and between them. It is a series, like the whole of Tuttle's oeuvre, that images something that is always *becoming* something else, becoming difference. To repeat what Deleuze and Guattari write together in *A Thousand Plateaus*: "becoming has only a middle"; it is concerned with in-between-ness and what might be produced in the middle, albeit fleetingly.

More will be said on *what is becoming* in the *Wire Pieces*, what I will contend that these pieces both image and signify, but, before advancing any further toward these conclusions, I pause here to acknowledge a possible objection in light of my most recent claims about this series. It could be argued that, however contradictorily, the *Wire Pieces* are, indeed, a finished series of art, which calcifies and fixes its esoteric ideas of a mutable, differing art. However, this is not the case, as the difference *and* repetition in Tuttle's *Wire Pieces* do not hinge solely on the unfolding of the discrete objects in its serial sequencing. In fact, in their inherently fragile materials, the individual *Wire Pieces* quiver, affected as they are by the movement of the viewer, sound, or airflow, and are therefore self-different even in a seemingly fixed installation. Moreover, their idiosyncratic making – the fact that they are made anew with every installation—always ensures difference of the series from itself, as any *Wire Piece* is inevitably different in

¹⁰⁹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 54-57.

each of its reinstallations. Briefly consider the following examples. Between two installations of the *10th Wire Piece* in 1972 and 1986 (Figures 2.49-2.50), there are noticeable changes between the pencil line and wire. Redrawn with each installation by freehand, the pencil line always varies, while the wire operates differently too, for it is recoiled around its spool when not on display. Similar differences can be seen other pieces, as in the installation of the *44th Wire Piece* between 1986 and in its recent installation at LA MOCA (Figures 2.51-2.52) and in the *48th Wire Piece* between 1972 and 1986 (Figures 2.53-2.54). And of course, as with the wire and pencil, differences likewise surface in the works' cast shadows, the ephemerality and contingency of which return us to an anxiety that was registered long ago at *and as* the very origins of art.

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In Book 35 of *Natural History*, Pliny tells the story of a maiden preoccupied with her lover's imminent departure.¹¹⁰ Wanting to preserve his image before he traveled abroad, she traced the outline of his shadow, thrown by the light of a nearby lamp. In order to give her tracing permanence, the maiden's father, a potter, created a three-dimensional clay relief atop her two-dimensional rendering, a sculpture that, as Pliny's tale reveals, was preserved for some time in a Corinthian shrine. In this foundational myth, one said to describe the origins of drawing, painting, and sculpture, art is curiously aligned with absence; moreover, it emerges as a solution to the intractable problems of loss, disappearance, and transience, dilemmas that for the maiden and her father are resolved by fixing an ephemeral, contingent image with a silhouette and then a still more faithful relief—in short, by art-as-mimesis.

¹¹⁰ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), Book 35, 371-373.

A line, a relief, and a shadow on a wall; impermanence and disappearance: there is much to recommend a comparison between Tuttle's *Wire Pieces* and Pliny's tale of the Corinthian Maiden. Yet, I argue that it is their differences that are ultimately most significant. For, if it can be said that the *Wire Pieces* recall the story of Pliny's maiden, Tuttle's series does so with revision in mind. Through this series, I argue, Tuttle invites us to entertain a different way of thinking about art and its long associations with mimesis, presence, and fixity. Indeed, the *Wire Pieces* can be seen as an exemplary series within Tuttle's oeuvre, one that revises received ideas about the origins of art as well as origins *writ large*.

In Pliny's tale, the ephemerality of the shadow provoked an anxiety in the Corinthian Maiden that effectively became the impetus for the art. Let us consider once more the artistic process as relayed in Pliny's narrative. It is a process that moves from model, to shadow, to line, and finally, to a fixed simulation of the cast—full circle, as it were, from the real to its compensatory representation. Here again, the idea of art making is one of imitation, equivalence, and fixity. For, in tracing her lover's shadow, the Corinthian Maiden means to capture and preserve something of his presence amid what she recognizes in his shadow as his impending absence. Indeed, the shadow's tracing by the young maiden is ultimately predicated on an art of the index, a representation based on a material trace of a fleeting subject.

Not surprisingly, Tuttle understands the function of art differently. Unlike the art made by the Corinthian Maiden and her father, the *Wire Pieces* have neither a model with which to begin nor do they offer a solution to impending absence and loss. Consider that Tuttle begins with an abstraction in the form of an esoteric pencil line. From the pencil

line, Tuttle then moves to the relief of the wire, as though an attempt to concretize the two-dimensional abstraction, to fix in a three-dimensional form. But, as we have seen, this attempt to copy the drawn line fails, a failure that is then amplified by the emergence of yet another abstract form—the ephemeral shadow. Like Pliny’s process, Tuttle’s too comes full circle, but it must be emphasized that it is a process that compels vastly different conclusions, if any conclusions at all. For, Tuttle’s process in the *Wire Pieces* effectively moves from abstraction to abstraction, from ephemera to ephemera and unlike the art made by the Corinthian Maiden and her father, the *Wire Pieces* have neither a grounding model with which to begin nor a palliative solution to the problem of impermanence.

Tuttle once remarked that the *Wire Pieces* “were found when everyone wanted to take mystery out of art.”¹¹¹ As images of seemingly unfixable significance, the *Wire Pieces* do seem mysterious, if not outright fantastic. When pressed by Margrit Brehm as to what the *Wire Pieces* were about, Tuttle responded that they “are about the relation between art and knowledge,” a relation, I contend, that is further qualified by the fact of the tellingly-fleeting shadow. Indeed, in the *Wire Pieces*, there is no anxiety over the transience and contingency that shadows have always signified, but rather a validation of the shadow, which, in its ephemerality, becomes a truth-telling agent that serves to revise received ideas about the fixity of origins as well as ideas of flux and impermanence in art and life.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Brehm, 17.

¹¹² Thomas McEvilley, 22. McEvilley argues that the shadow in this series is not ephemeral or immaterial but, instead, is an entity that has implications for the real, though what that might imply is not specified in his text.

Shadows, Plato once warned, are deceptive. As he tells us in his “Allegory of the Cave” in his *Republic*, shadows of puppet figures, created by the light of the fire in a deep cave, are cast onto the wall in front of chained prisoners. The prisoners, however, are unable to turn around, and consequently they miss the fact that it is puppeteers who produce these shadows on the wall.¹¹³ Without this knowledge, Plato says, the prisoners believe these spectral-like appearances *to be real*. But as Plato famously insists, the prisoners are mistaken and the shadows are not real. The real, Plato contends, is to be found outside of the cave, in the full light of the sun, where shadows and half-truths fade, and where the prisoners can see finally that the puppets and their shadows were merely different ways of imitating and mediating reality, a deceptive mimesis that Plato also finds in the particular kind of image-making known as art.

But shadows and art, Plato says, are problematic both because they are deceptive, and because they are derivative, degraded copies of an immutable realm of essential Truth. Throughout his philosophy, Plato warns of the dangers of mimetic representation by means of his theories of Forms and Ideas, both of which strictly understand true knowledge to exist in a “world of being,” wherein all is selfsame and unchanging. This world of being, Plato writes, is in contrast to the sensible world of experiences and appearances, the realm of life, wherein all is ever-changing. And this Plato terms as the “world of becoming.” Of course, shadows, always unpredictable in their emergence, are antithetical to Plato’s understanding of knowledge as essential and so too is art, which for Plato is but a derivative version of what is ultimately the indescribable and inimitable

¹¹³ Plato, “The Allegory of the Cave,” *The Republic of Plato*, ed. Francis MacDonald Cornford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), Book 7, 227-235.

Ideas of the Good, Beauty, and Truth, all of which are fixed and immutable. For this reason, Plato's goal, as articulated in his *Republic*, is, in some sense, a world without shadows and art. In contrast, Tuttle's *Wire Pieces* privilege the world of becoming and do so by admitting an often feared element of life into the sacred construction of art—the shadow, which in its fleetingness, faithfully images the inherent flux that is reality, and, simultaneously, exposes the falsity of essential origins and unchanging knowledge.¹¹⁴

Since Plato, conceptions of art have been founded, almost exclusively, upon the relationship between the model and its copy, the original and the reproduction, or the likeness of an image to its source. Moreover, beyond Platonic thinking, the mimetic image, as the image of equivalence and identity, is often celebrated as an affirmation of the real. It is worth noting that the *Wire Pieces* emerge at a time when contemporary art in America was turning anew to making art by means of copying. Reproducing readily available images from advertising, movies and television, and other sources of popular culture, Pictures Generation (1974-1984) artists such as Richard Prince, Sherry Levine, and Cindy Sherman deployed appropriation in such clever ways that the distinctions between the original and the reproduction are problematized. In other words, the art of the Pictures Generation was an art of replication, not unlike the triumph of Pygmalion as

¹¹⁴ Arguably, it is the work of Marcel Duchamp that first deploys the shadow as medium. In his *Tu'm* (1918), Duchamp includes three shadowy tracings: one of a never-made readymade, the “corkscrew” and two of his extant readymades, *Bicycle Wheel* and his (three) *Standard Stoppages*, which include both the three-dimensional stoppages and their two-dimensional tracings. Of course, it is the latter that most resonates with the components of Tuttle's *Wire Pieces*. As Isabelle Loring Wallace has argued, the inclusion of the standard stoppages (a unit of linear measurement, which was distorted in the hands of Duchamp) and their shadows is suggestive of the “impossibility of reifying the readymade” and hence representation as finite and fixed. On this point see n12 in “From the Death of Painting to the Death in Painting. Or, What Jasper Johns found in Marcel Duchamp's *Tu m'*/Tomb,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 7:1 (August 2002): 133-155.

Ovid relays it: to make an art so real that it becomes *the real*, where the distinction between the image and the thing itself disappears. But, unhappily in this scenario, so too does art. Perhaps this is why, in part, Tuttle's serial art such as the *Wire Pieces* images an art without models, based, instead, on what Deleuze would term "simulacra."

In his reading of Plato, Deleuze argues that while Plato writes most about the distinction between the model and the copy, it is the distinction between the copy and the simulacrum that matters most for the ancient philosopher. As Deleuze insists, Plato ultimately seeks to distinguish "between good and bad copies, or rather copies (always well founded) and simulacra (always engulfed in dissimilarity)."¹¹⁵ In Plato's understanding, good copies have a resemblance or likeness to a model, but simulacra have no relation to a model. Indeed, simulacra are images without origins or, as the term would translate from Plato's original Greek, simulacra are "phantasms," spectral appearances that spook us in their refusal to resemble an original. As Deleuze scholar Ronald Bogue has written: "What Plato fears in illusory simulacra, claims Deleuze, are entities with no fixed identity, contradictory or disguised entities in which the dimension of an unlimited and illogical becoming is revealed...."¹¹⁶ Indeed, as Deleuze understands Plato, it is simulacra that challenge most forcefully the existence of essential origins and model, a challenge made explicit, I contend, in the sequencing of the *Wire Pieces*, which demonstrates neither a gradual degeneration away from an origin nor progression toward a model. When seen in this way, the *Wire Pieces* are multiples without originals, which, in turn, open up identity to self-differing. Perhaps it was this unmooring from models and a constitutive self-differing that led Brehm to regard the *Wire Pieces* as having an

¹¹⁵ Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, 257.

¹¹⁶ Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, 56.

inherent “chaos” of form, which she had termed as quite “terrifying.” For, conventionally speaking, an image against identity or equivalence, at least in the history of art, may well amount to just this.

Deleuze scholar Daniel Smith has argued that “Deleuze's analysis of the simulacrum entails more than a reading of Platonism; it also constitutes one of the fundamental problems of contemporary thought.” (At this point, Smith cites Deleuze):

Modern thought [Deleuze writes in the preface to *Difference and Repetition*] was born out of the failure of representation, as the loss of identities, and the discovery of all the forces that were acting under the representation of the identical. The modern world is one of simulacra All identities are only simulated, produced like an "optical effect" by a more profound play [*jeu*] which is that of difference and repetition. *We would like to think difference in itself, and the relation of the different with the different, independent of the forms of representation that lead it back to the Same.*

“Deleuze's entire philosophical project,” Smith goes on to write, “can be seen as an explication of this declaration of intent.”¹¹⁷ So too can Tuttle’s serial art. For, if any “essence” can be said to govern his series, it is an essence, as Deleuze would insist, that “is always difference,” and a difference, moreover, that differs from itself every time it is repeated.¹¹⁸

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When looking back on his oeuvre in 1979, Tuttle insisted: “My work is an effort to overcome identity.”¹¹⁹ Indeed, such an effort has been central to the creation of Tuttle’s objects from the beginning: from the ambiguity of the lost, untitled painting of

¹¹⁷ Daniel W. Smith, “The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism,” *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 25-26.

¹¹⁸ Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 75.

¹¹⁹ Jurgen Glasesemer, “A Talk with Richard Tuttle,” *List of Drawing Material of Richard Tuttle & Appendices*, ed. Gianfranco Verna (Zurich: Annemarie Verna Galerie, 1979), 352.

1963, to the multiplicity and difference of origins in the paper cubes, to the refusal of the *Constructed Paintings* series to “equal” a referent, to the self-differing of the *Paper Octagonals*, and now, to the un-equivalence of the elements within the *Wire Pieces*, which likewise have no models to reference or resemble. As with all his series, making art for Tuttle is a means of exploration and discovery, a way of finding and creating something new. Hence rather than reify certainties or express knowledge, as art has conventionally aimed to do, Tuttle’s serial art, unfixed in identity, aims to affirm possibilities for art.

As much as they comment on art, the mysterious *Wire Pieces*, like the *Paper Octagonals* before them, also indicate something about our own circumstances, but make this connection between art and life much more explicitly. Consider how when standing before any given *Wire Piece* and under the strong spotlighting, our figures register too as shadows within these works, which, in turn, become entangled with the shadows of the wire. It seems a purposeful condition of viewing that Tuttle deploys to insist that we are as the *Wire Pieces* are, as everything else is.

CHAPTER THREE

RECONSIDERING THE IN-BETWEEN: ABSTRACTION AS PROCESS

I'm interested in surface conditions rather than essentialist conditions.
Richard Tuttle¹²⁰

This chapter considers abstraction as an integral component of Tuttle's serial oeuvre. Indeed, it could be argued that his work intervenes in the history of abstraction as much as it does in postwar serial art. Of course, abstraction in Tuttle's oeuvre is most obviously a style, as he has never made objects that are representational or referential in any straightforward sense. But, as this chapter will explore, abstraction in Tuttle's oeuvre is more than mere style; like seriality, it is also a method and a subject.

Within the history of art, abstraction often is or has been understood as a rebellion against conventions and/or a retreat from reality, positions that were arguably borne from its origins in the early 20th century. Renouncing recognizable imagery and discernible subject matter for non-representational means, early abstraction challenged traditional techniques of art making but it also questioned ossified concepts of art. For example, many early abstract artists thought carefully about how abstraction might operate theoretically or be relevant to idealist ideologies or spirituality, as evidenced by tracts on early abstraction that are largely composed by the artists themselves.¹²¹ Thus, many

¹²⁰ Brown, 61.

¹²¹ Kirk Varnedoe, "Why Abstract Art?," *Abstraction*, ed. Maria Lind (London and Cambridge, MA: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2013), 48. As Kirk Varnedoe has written, the invention of "abstract or 'non-objective' art coincided with the cataclysm

scholars understand the origins of abstraction as rooted in the dualistic concerns of transcendence and formalism, as an art associated with timelessness and transcendence and an art that meditates on its aesthetic autonomy.¹²² And yet, such notions of abstraction as aligned with autonomy and transcendence, purification and timelessness seem at odds with Tuttle's abstract series of art, which privilege temporality, ambiguity, and process, in both form and concept.

Because this study does not aim to chart a straightforward development of Tuttle's serial art (much like Tuttle's seriality itself), this chapter will draw on exemplary

of World War I, and the artists involved explained their innovations in terms of contemporary revolutions in both society and consciousness, proposing in numerous manifestos that their art laid bare the fundamental, absolute and universal truths appropriate to a new spirituality, to modern science, or to the emergence of a changed human order.”

¹²² To be sure, scholarly discussions on the origins and development of abstraction are legion but it is important to note abstraction is often discussed as rooted in the dualistic concerns of formalism and transcendence. On this topic, see Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), Mark Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) as his *Abstract Art Against Autonomy* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). While the latter of Cheetham's text takes the 1960s and beyond as its focus, he begins with an important account of abstraction's origins as mired in autonomy, transcendence, and formalism, a legacy that contemporary abstraction must contend with even now. In recent years, scholarship on the origins and development of abstraction has expanded abstraction's early interests beyond mere painting to include other mediums of art such as sculpture, music, and film. For a discussion on the multiple modes of early abstraction, such as “medium transgression,” “mobility,” “tactility,” see Leah Dickerman, “Inventing Abstraction,” ed. Leah Dickerman, *Inventing Abstraction 1910-1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 13-37. For a similar but slightly different discussion on abstraction's origins, its co-development with and interdependence on the early arts of movement such as dance, theater, and film, see Nell Andrew, “The Medium is a Muscle: Abstraction in Early Film, Dance, Painting” *Film, Art, New Media: Museum without Walls?*, ed. Angela Dalle Vacche (Palgrave, 2012), 57-77, and Juliet Bellow and Nell Andrew, “Inventing Abstraction? Modernist Dance in Europe,” *The Modernist World*, eds. Stephen Ross and Allana Lindgren (London: Routledge, 2015), 329-338.

abstract series throughout his career and will consider how Tuttle's serial art challenges some of abstraction's most enduring legacies. As I will argue, Tuttle's seriality engages in the history of abstraction for the purpose of reconsidering it, ultimately aligning abstraction with the very concepts and modes that it has historically opposed. As we will find, abstraction for Tuttle's serial art is a means by which possibilities are generated and ideas are expanded. In short, abstraction in the hands of Tuttle is a processual mode, another means of imaging the in-between.

I.

Precisely when abstraction originated remains a contested subject, but whether it began with Vasily Kandinsky's spiritually expressive canvases in 1911 or the geometric paintings of Kazimir Malevich in 1915, it was the medium of painting that heralded this radical invention in art.¹²³ Indeed, the received history of abstraction is largely one of painting and it has been the picture plane, the flat surface of painting, that has most often been tasked with the responsibility of manifesting the artistic practice of abstraction. The picture plane was first conceived by the Renaissance humanist Leon Battista Alberti as an

¹²³ With the term "abstraction," I mean to reference non-representational/non-objective art, the origins of which remain contested. Regarding the date (or dates) of abstraction's origins, scholars and critics have cited that in the years from 1910-1913, artists from the Europe, the Soviet Union and the United States almost simultaneously began creating works of non-representational art, a non-objectivity that would become known in the historiographic legacy as "abstraction." Such a historiographic legacy was reinforced, in part, by the objects in the Modern Museum of Art's 2013 exhibition, "Inventing Abstraction," as well as in its accompanying catalogue. However, it must be noted that as much as "Inventing Abstraction" aimed to also complicate and revise the ossified history of abstraction, it nevertheless maintained some of that history, endorsing, as some established versions before it, the painting of Kandinsky as the origin of abstraction proper.

“open window through which the subject to be painted is seen” or, put otherwise, the surface on which the painter’s realistic illusion is depicted.¹²⁴ Writing in his famous treatise *On Painting* (1435), Alberti stressed that the picture plane’s surface must be made transparent, that the task of painting is to imitate the natural world as if the painted surface were invisible. But if Alberti aimed to make the picture plane inconspicuous and thereby insignificant to a painting’s meaning, it was Modernist artists, particularly the early abstractionists, who embraced the painterly surface and imbued it with significance.

Arguably, the most significant of early abstract picture planes is the monochrome, which is often regarded as abstract painting *par excellence*. Present, as some accounts argue, at the very origin moments of the movement in the 1910s with Malevich’s early “square” paintings, the monochrome has become abstraction’s most enduring form, re-emerging at various points throughout the art of the 20th century as well as in more recent years.¹²⁵ Thus, it is fitting that Tuttle’s oeuvre begins its reconsideration of abstraction with the legacy of the monochrome in his *Cloth Pieces* (1967-1968) (Figure 3.1), an early series of monochromatically dyed pieces of unprimed canvas cloth.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* [1435], trans. Cecil Grayson, ed. Martin Kemp (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 54.

¹²⁵ For a succinct but insightful discussion on the monochrome at the origins of abstraction as well as its persistence throughout the 20th-century, see Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* and Francis Colpitt, “Systems of Opinion: Abstract Painting Since 1959,” 151-203, as well as Mark Cheetham’s texts, *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century* and *Abstract Art Against Autonomy*. Moreover, each of these accounts discuss Malevich’s early monochromes such as *Black Square* not only as one of the possible beginnings of abstraction but also how his monochromatic paintings aided in establishing abstraction’s ideology of autonomy and purity.

¹²⁶ It could be argued that the monochromatically painted *Constructed Paintings* (made in 1964-1965) were Tuttle’s first reconsideration of the monochrome. But as this analysis will argue, the *Cloth Pieces* more explicitly engage with monochromatic painting due to their use of canvas as a material.

It is said that the first monochrome was Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) (Figure 3.2). Contemporaneous with the beginning of Russia's revolutionary stirrings, *Black Square* signaled an analogous revolution in painting. Empty of obvious content, Malevich's painting is also utterly reductive in color and form. It consists of only the most fundamental (and opposing) colors—a black square within a white field, such that the white would further emphasize the black. For Malevich, this painting was indicative of a return to the basics or what the artist called the “zero of form,”¹²⁷ a formal ambition that was entangled too with Malevich's ideas of Suprematism, his personal conception of abstract art. Here are some of Malevich's Suprematist declarations as they relate to art:

To the Suprematist, the visual phenomena of the objective world are, in themselves, meaningless; the significant thing is feeling, as such, quite apart from the environment in which it is called forth.... the appropriate means of representation is always the one which gives the fullest possible expression to feeling as such and which ignores the familiar appearance of objects.... No more 'likenesses of reality.'¹²⁸

As Malevich announced in his writings, Suprematism and its non-objectivity no longer served “the state and religion” but rather was derived from and focused on the individual. It was an abstract art capable of establishing a new “spiritual idealism” that would be expressed solely by the “absolute truth” of pure forms and feelings.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ "From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism: The New Painterly Realism," *Russian Art of the Avant-Garde: Theory and Criticism, 1902-1934*, trans. of 3rd ed., ed. and trans. John E. Bowlit (New York: Viking Press, 1976), 118.

¹²⁸ Kazimir Malevich, “Suprematism,” *Theories of Modern Art*, ed. Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 341-346. From Malevich, *The Non-Objective World*, 67-100 *passim*.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Like much of early abstraction, Malevich's monochrome, with its putatively idealist self-expression and formal self-reflexivity, aimed to image clarity, stability, and truth in what was increasingly becoming a rapidly changing and fragmented world. In doing so, early abstraction often seemed to withdraw from the world as it were, creating a refuge from the reality of modern life. Yet these ideas of retreat and rebellion in abstraction were not solely those of Malevich and his fellow artists working in the 1910s. Indeed, even before Malevich's *Black Square* aimed to block out the world in 1915, the defensiveness of abstraction had already been theoretically established in 1908 by the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer in his text *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*. Here, Worringer considers "abstraction" and "empathy" as distinct but viable approaches in the creation of art.¹³⁰ He associates "the urge to empathy" with representational art, a style that expresses the "confidence between man and the phenomena of the external world." In contradistinction, Worringer writes, the "urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world," such that the abstract artist retreats from the world of appearances. On the urge to abstraction, Worringer expounds:

It seeks after pure abstraction as the only possibility of repose within the confusion and obscurity of the world-picture, and creates out of itself, with instinctive necessity, geometric abstraction. It is the consummate expression and the only expression of which man can conceive, of emancipation from all the contingency and temporality of the world-picture. ...to purify it of whatever it has of life and temporality, to make it as far as possible independent both of the ambient external world and of the subject—the spectator."¹³¹

¹³⁰ Wilhem Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* [1908], trans. Michael Bullock (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1997), 13-16.

¹³¹ Ibid, 44.

As Worringer understands it, abstraction is an artistic manifestation of uncertainty and anxiety in the world, but rather than image the world in this apparent contingency and confusion, Worringer writes that abstraction is a means by which such conditions are defeated, wrangled instead into an “absolute form.”¹³² Although Worringer’s text focuses primarily on geometric abstraction, it can be said that much of early abstract painting, from the expressive forms of Kandinsky to the primary-colored grids of Mondrian, endeavored, indeed, to image a more perfect and purified reality than was evident in the world, endeavors of early abstraction that Tuttle’s monochromatic *Cloth Pieces* will challenge.

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Over the course of 1967-1968, Tuttle created a series of monochromatic works that would eventually become known as the *Cloth Pieces*. The series began with ten pieces in a variety of irregular geometric forms, some of which could be considered as irregular polygons while others defy geometric definition (Figures 3.3-3.5).¹³³ While these first ten pieces differ in shape, the pieces of the series that follow (the final number of which remains unknown) consist entirely of irregular octagons as in the examples *Purple Octagonal*, *First Green Octagonal*, and *Octagonal Cloth Piece* (Figures 3.6-3.8).

To make the *Cloth Pieces*, Tuttle began with a large paper template of the irregular form, which he then used to hand-cut the pieces of cloth.¹³⁴ The cloth was then

¹³² Ibid, 20. Here, Worringer also expounds on the virtues of geometric abstraction.

¹³³ These ten pieces were exhibited at the Betty Parsons Gallery in January of 1968 in a show simply titled, “Ten New Works by Richard Tuttle.”

¹³⁴ Grynsztein, 36. Grynsztein notes that Tuttle was encouraged to create the *Cloth Pieces* after observing certain results in the watercolor studies, which were made on newsprint paper, a material highly susceptible to liquids. When saturated by his watercolor drawings, Grynsztein says that Tuttle noticed how newsprint responded in “a surface

roughly sewed with double-edged hems to secure their fraying sides. Next, using single, muted colors such as yellow, purple, and blue, Tuttle dyed the cloth in vats of Tintex, a common dye for domestic fabrics. However, instead of dyeing them evenly, the pieces were first wadded into balls before their immersion into the dye. Afterwards, the pieces of cloth were simply unfurled and left to dry naturally on a clothesline with clothespins, and notably without smoothing or straightening of the fabric. Consequently, a work like *Purple Octagonal* has both two-dimensional wrinkles from the dyeing process as well as tangible, three-dimensional wrinkles that formed during air-drying. So that the pieces would retain these tactile wrinkles and to coax out even more, Tuttle wadded up the pieces again and stored them in either boxes or bags. Indeed, in a few respects, the process by which the *Cloth Pieces* are made seems akin to the commonplace task of doing laundry, of handwashing garments and setting them out to dry, as well as the task of hemming clothing.

Lumpy and wrinkly and as sculptural as painterly, the *Cloth Pieces* seem at first pass unconnected to the monochrome. Rather than being stretched and framed as monochromatic canvases (or any painted canvases) typically are, Tuttle's cloths, as final objects, remain unstretched and unframed. Thus, when displayed, the *Cloth Pieces* are either tacked onto walls by nails or simply laid out on the floor (Figure 3.9). In either installation, the pieces can flutter with the movement of a passer-by or the airflow within the gallery.

But the *Cloth Pieces* manifest other, less literal features of movement and temporality too. Whether tactile or optical, the wrinkles in the *Cloth Pieces* convey both rippling and slight relief” and it was this response by the materials that Tuttle wanted to replicate in his dyed cut-canvases.

an incompleteness and a dynamism. In the *Purple Octagonal*, for example, the wrinkles appear as activated lines that seem to disperse in different directions, animating the surface in subtle ways, as if it were shaking, shifting, or still forming. In works such as *Bow-Shaped Light Blue Canvas* (Figure 3.10), *Dark Blue Canvas* (Figure 3.11), and *Yellow Triangle with Three Thicknesses* (Figure 3.12), the incompleteness suggested by the wrinkles is amplified by cut-outs, which, in turn, complicate the wholeness—the absolute nature—often associated with the monochrome. Moreover, in a work such as *Yellow Triangle with Three Thicknesses*, it appears that the triangular form is rotating in space, a perception that is further encouraged by the different thicknesses of its edges, as though the form were just glimpsed in a transient moment. But Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* also manifest a sense of movement and time in that they *change over time*, an element of self-differing that especially corresponds to the evolution of various *Wire Pieces* over time. As a brief example, note the appearance of the *Purple Octagonal* behind Tuttle in a *Time* magazine photograph (Figure 2.30) and then again as it was photographed within the past decade (Figure 3.6). There is a dramatic difference in the tone of the purple hue, primarily because Tintex has no long-term preservative. Consequently, the color of all the *Cloth Pieces* gives way over time to light and oxidation.

There too is the matter of shape in Tuttle's monochromatic pieces. Typically, the historical monochrome consists of regular geometric shapes such as Malevich's *Black Square* and this was no coincidence for early abstraction. As with other artists who employed geometric forms, Malevich's beliefs in the purity and zero-ness of forms convey that the monochrome is intimately linked with geometry, a branch of mathematics concerned with first forms in its own right. As we found in the previous chapter with

Tuttle's series of paper cubes, geometry has long been associated with ideas of purity, essence, and fixity, and as such its inclusion in the earliest types of abstraction such as geometric abstraction (e.g. grids and monochrome) reinforced a shared idealistic and essential ideology between the two disciplines. However, rather than regular geometric forms, Tuttle's monochromatic pieces, as we have seen, are wonky in shape, purposefully irregular in form, and yet, irregularity in this series extends beyond shape. For, when the *Cloth Pieces* are considered in terms of the slapdash dyeing, the wrinkles and/or cut-outs, and the seemingly ragged manner in which the pieces have been hemmed, the idea of irregularity is seen to permeate all formal aspects of the work. In fact, irregularity is even found in Tuttle's titling of the individual *Cloth Pieces*. Phrases such as "bow-shaped," "dark-blue canvas," or even "untitled" are general and ambiguous at best, while the majority of the series are entitled as varied "octagonals," which is an especially curious term. Conventionally, the term "octagonal" is an adjective. However, Tuttle's usage of "octagonal" in his titles is as a noun, which calls to mind a form that is octagon-like or has an octagon-ness, but one that remains somehow indeterminate or inexact.

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At the origins of abstraction, monochromatic paintings such as Malevich's *Black Square* sought to replace the indeterminacy of the immediate reality by imaging an idealistic and absolute certainty, an aim of abstraction in its practice that Worringer likewise shared in his theorization of it. For the German art historian, as earlier noted, abstraction was an attempt to defeat the fluctuating conditions of life. Thus, as he argues, and with the whole of art history in mind, abstraction is "the only expression of which man can conceive" to emancipate himself from the dreaded "contingency and temporality

of the world-picture”—a form of art that is “independent” of the “external world” as well as “the spectator.”¹³⁵ But as we have already begun to see, there are features in Tuttle’s monochromatic *Cloth Pieces* that admit something of temporality and indeterminacy.

Consider again the creative process by which this series is constructed, how it purposefully conflates art with features of non-art. By using domestic dye rather than paint, by refusing to purify the canvas of its wrinkled imperfections and irregular hems, and by leaving the material support of cloth unstretched, unframed, and therefore unfixed, and by aligning the overall creative process with commonplace tasks, the *Cloth Pieces* suggest that abstraction and the once purified monochrome is a form of art that can register something about the fluctuating conditions of life. Because they depict neither timelessness nor totality, neither purity nor perfection, Tuttle’s *Cloth Pieces*, I argue, image that the monochrome, and perhaps the endeavor of abstraction more widely, are well-suited to imaging the uncertainty and unfixity of what Worringer would term the “world-picture.” Indeed, fluctuation and indeterminacy are made all the more apparent in these irregular monochromes because they are created with Tuttle’s processual seriality, as one after the other, none of which, notably, result in a conclusive form or solution to that uncertainty. Instead, as the multiple and different iterations of Tuttle’s irregular geometric monochromes evince, at every moment in which an image of the “world-picture” is attempted, it can only be captured on the canvas by means of a paradoxical unfixity. For, in the hands of Tuttle, abstraction is not a means to register the absolute, but like the world around it, is something that is ever-changing.

¹³⁵ Worringer, 44.

In this way, I argue, Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* unearths something about early abstraction that, perhaps, was always already there, even if unwittingly so. Many scholars have noted that Malevich's once innovative *Black Square* now appears as a relic of the past. As Briony Fer has aptly described the *Black Square*, while "it was once a utopian gesture pointing the way to the future, its cracked surface gives it the appearance of a modern ruin."¹³⁶ Indeed, time has aged the top layer of paint so that its once pristine surface has gradually become like crackle-paint, wherein the black paint has given way to a seemingly white-ish surface underneath it. But it is more complicated than black and white. For, what becomes partially visible in the cracks of the surface of *Black Square* in close inspection are glimpses of pink, red, blue, and yellow geometric shapes because the canvas had already been used for other paintings prior to the one we see now on as its top most layer. Thus, in less than a century, this famous monochrome has mutated from being an opaque black square that signaled the absence of color to becoming a painting that admits white, which indicates the presence of all colors. Just as any of Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* over time, in their fading color or the acquisitions of new wrinkles (which are visually analogous to Malevich's cracked paint-lines), the *Black Square* can now be regarded as a painting that is becoming something other than itself, always differing. Becoming-other, self-differing: to be sure, these are uncharacteristic (if unintended) features of early abstract painting. Yet, in Tuttle's rethinking of the monochrome, such features of temporality and difference are illuminated as seemingly irrepressible.

¹³⁶ Fer, *On Abstract Art*, 7.

To be sure, Malevich's paintings and Worringer's ideas have become emblematic of the ambitions of geometric abstraction, but there is one more instantiation of the early monochrome to consider, one that is less idealistic but no less absolute. In the aftermath of the Soviet Revolution, Russian leaders as well as other members of the artistic avant-garde considered Suprematism to be too abstruse, too aligned with the high-minded intellectualism of the bourgeoisie. Malevich was criticized for creating an art that was barren of politics, particularly amid the political climate of an emergent socialist state. With a resolve to move Russian art and culture forward, the Russian artist Aleksandr Rodchenko created his triptych of three square monochromes, *Pure Red Colour*, *Pure Yellow Colour* and *Pure Blue Colour* (1921) (Figure 3.13). Like Malevich's *Black Square*, Rodchenko's triptych insisted on the reduction of form (the uncomplicated square) and the distillation of color (the primary colors of red, yellow, and blue). However, while Malevich's *Black Square* aimed to image the "zero" of abstract painting and thus its absolute beginning, Rodchenko's *Pure Red Colour*, *Pure Yellow Colour* and *Pure Blue Colour* aimed to image its end.

Several years on from the 1921 exhibition, Rodchenko famously declared: "I reduced painting to its logical conclusion and exhibited three canvases: red, blue and yellow. I affirmed: it's all over. Basic Colors. Every plane is a plane and there is to be no representation."¹³⁷ For Rodchenko, the monochrome was the death of painting, abstract

¹³⁷ Rodchenko's famous quote on his triptych in context: "I reduced painting to its logical conclusion and exhibited three canvases: red, blue and yellow. I affirmed: it's all over. Basic Colors. Every plane is a plane and there is to be no representation." Qtd in *From Painting to Design: Russian Constructivist Art of the Twenties* (Cologne: Galerie Gmurzynska, 1981), 191.

or otherwise. As he and his fellow Constructivists would go on to advocate, painting's death made way for a more useful art that was aligned in the mid-1920s with the Soviet Union's ideology of utilitarianism.¹³⁸ But if it can be said that Tuttle's monochromatic *Cloth Pieces* undermine the idealism and absolute beginnings of Malevich's *Black Square*, this series likewise challenges the nullifying, absolute ends proclaimed in Rodchenko's monochromatic triptych. Indeed, the temporality and difference, unfixity and uncertainty as imaged in Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* series are suggestive, as with all his series, of an emergent and ongoing process, which, in turn, questions the presumed finality of Rodchenko's painted panels. When considered in light of both Malevich's and Rodchenko's monochromes, it could be argued that the *Cloth Pieces* reconsider the history of the monochrome by taking a position that is in-between the spectrum of its earliest ideologies, once more in-between the conventional markers of beginnings and ends.

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If in the early 20th century the monochrome is a mode of abstraction by which established ideas of painting are simultaneously upended and new ones are forged, this is no less the case in its deployment in the mid-20th century. For, importantly, in his rethinking of the monochrome (as well as abstraction more generally) in the mid-20th century, Tuttle is not alone. We could look to the blue monochromes of Yves Klein in Europe in the late 1950s and early 1960s or Tuttle's fellow American Ad Reinhardt and his *Black Paintings* (1954-67), a series of black five-foot square paintings with almost

¹³⁸ For other statements by Rodchenko, including his notion of Constructivism as linked to the post-revolutionary society, see Selim Chan-Magomedov, *Rodchenko: The Complete Work* (Rhode Island: MIT Press, 1987).

imperceptible delineation of tones and squares therein. But because this analysis examines how the *Cloth Pieces* challenge the legacy of the historical monochrome, I instead consider Robert Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* from 1951 (Figure 3.14), a series of five multi-paneled works that were flatly painted white such that they eschewed visible brushwork. I do so because in some respects, Rauschenberg's paintings might well be considered a forerunner for Tuttle's, especially as Tuttle's series reconsiders the implications of the monochrome over a decade later in the 1960s.¹³⁹

In an attempt to free painting of the emotional and sometimes spiritual abstractions of the Abstract Expressionists, it is said that Robert Rauschenberg created the *White Paintings* to be receptive surfaces that would be filled by the environment around them. It was an interpretation that was first theorized by fellow artist John Cage, whose silent musical composition *4 '33"* (1952) was supposedly inspired by Rauschenberg's monochromes. As Cage understood them, the *White Paintings* were as if "airports for the lights, shadows, and particles" that surrounded them, picture planes on which the ambient and fleeting world was effectively captured and reflected.¹⁴⁰ In this sense, as Branden Joseph has argued, the *White Paintings* in mid-century America changed the strategy of the historical monochrome: once thought of in terms of timeless idealism, the monochrome in the hands of Rauschenberg takes on the real, "temporally

¹³⁹ It is worth noting as well that two years after the *White Paintings*, Robert Rauschenberg would upend the legacy of Abstract Expressionism in perhaps the most literal of ways by making his famous *Erased de Kooning* (1953), a work that might be regarded as an iconoclastic monochrome.

¹⁴⁰ Qtd in Branden W. Joseph, *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 69-71.

changing” realm of “non-art,” opening up its picture plane to the resonances of life.¹⁴¹

Like Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings*, Tuttle’s *Cloth Pieces* not only aim to undermine some of early abstraction’s most entrenched ideas, but to reconsider the dominant ideas of abstraction in mid-20th century America as well.

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During this period, early abstraction’s once dualistic concepts came to be defined as oppositional models— formalism and expressionism. The formalist notion of abstraction was a narrative of art for which the influential American art critic Clement Greenberg was largely responsible. Beginning with his 1939 essay “Avant-Garde and Kitsch,” Greenberg argued for the avant-garde and modernist art more specifically to defend the decline of aesthetic standards in the face of consumerism, to preserve the distinctions between art and life. Indeed, Greenberg is concerned to purify, define, and fix the identity of art, saving it from any incursions from life, an argument that is advanced further in his 1940 essay “Towards a Newer Laocoön.”

To defend the purity and identity of art against what he worries will be its fate when entangled with life,¹⁴² Greenberg draws from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s famous 1766 essay “Laocoön, or, The limits of Poetry and Painting.” While Lessing’s essay

¹⁴¹ Joseph, 57. See also Toby Mussman, “Literalness and the Infinite,” *Minimal Art*, 246. For Mussman, Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings* declared “a new ‘picture plane,’” one that was as material as it was theoretical.

¹⁴² Clement Greenberg, “Towards a Newer Laocoön,” *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 23. Here Greenberg writes: “The dogmatism and intransigence of the ‘non-objective’ or ‘abstract’ purists of painting today cannot be dismissed as symptoms merely of a cultist attitude towards art. Purists make extravagant claims for art, because usually they value it much more than anyone else does.... A great deal of purism is the translation of an extreme solicitude, an anxiousness as to the fate of art, a concern for its identity. We must respect this....”

sought to distinguish the difference between the mediums of visual art and literature, to articulate their medium-specificity (that is, the singular capabilities inherent to each medium), Greenberg utilizes Lessing's conception of medium-specificity to distinguish (and further purify) the mediums of painting and sculpture.¹⁴³ When saved from incursions from life as well as infiltrations from each other, painting and sculpture, Greenberg argues, can finally become mediums of pure abstraction, can claim their value by accepting the boundaries of their mediums.¹⁴⁴

As may be apparent already, Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces*, with their conflation of the painterly (e.g. monochromatically dyed canvas and two-dimensional wrinkles) and the sculptural (e.g. three dimensional wrinkles and lumpy surfaces), are formally at odds with Greenberg's ideas of purity and medium-specificity in the visual arts. But because Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces*, by virtue of their canvas cloth and their monochromatic dyeing, most readily conjure the tradition of abstract painting, I turn to another important writing by Greenberg, his 1961 essay "Modernist Painting," which was slightly revised and

¹⁴³ Ibid. Regarding his defense of the purity of the different mediums of the visual arts, Greenberg states: "Discussion as to purity in art and, bound up with it, the attempts to establish the differences between the various arts are not idle. There has been, is, and will be, such a thing as a confusion of the arts. From the point of view of the artist engrossed in the problems of his medium and indifferent to the efforts of theorists to explain abstract art completely, purism is the terminus of a salutary reaction against the mistakes of painting and sculpture in the past several centuries which were due to such a confusion...."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 34. Greenberg writes: "Painting and sculpture can become more completely nothing but what they do; like functional architecture and the machine, they *look* what they *do*. The picture or statue exhausts itself in the visual sensation it produces. There is nothing to identify, connect or think about.... The purely plastic or abstract qualities of the work of art are the only ones that count. Emphasize the medium and its difficulties, and at once the purely plastic, the proper, values of visual art come to the fore."

reprinted in 1965, only two years before the *Cloth Pieces* were executed.¹⁴⁵ Therein, Greenberg establishes not only the purity of abstract painting but also its primacy within the broader legacy of abstraction and Modernism.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, as it was with the birth of abstraction roughly half a century before, the medium of many abstract artists in mid-20th-century America is painting and hence it is in relation to painting that abstraction is theorized (primarily) at this time.

As Greenberg writes in “Modernist Painting,” abstract painting must embrace the literalness of the pictorial space and eschew any indication of three-dimensionality, which in Greenberg’s mind would inevitability link it with sculpture. “To achieve autonomy,” Greenberg contends, “painting has had above all to divest itself of everything it might share with sculpture....”¹⁴⁷ As Greenberg contends, modernist painting since Manet had increasingly discarded not only illusion, but subject matter and self-expression too, distilling itself to those elements that are distinct to painting alone. By doing so, painting was divested also of any traits that it might share with sculpture, “more firmly” entrenching painting in its essential elements. Therefore, Greenberg urges, in its medium-specificity and self-reflexivity, painting finally secured its autonomy and its “independence as an art.” For Greenberg, this independence would find its most celebrated manifestation at the apex of Abstract Expressionism, in Jackson Pollock’s drip

¹⁴⁵ Greenberg, “Modernist Painting,” *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993). This essay was originally published in *Arts Yearbook* 4, 1961. With some minor verbal changes, it was reprinted in *Art and Literature* (Spring 1965).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 85. For Greenberg, abstract painting is a rigorous task of self-criticism that is central to the larger Modernist project: “The essence of Modernism lies, as I see it, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticise the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence.”

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 88.

paintings of the late 1940s and early 1950s, which especially celebrate “opticality,” a quality of modernist art that appeals to the sense of sight alone. More will be said about Greenberg’s ideas in relation to Tuttle’s *Cloth Pieces*, but at this point, I turn to the other faction of mid-20th-century abstraction, that of expressionism, in which Tuttle’s *Cloth Pieces* likewise will intervene.

In 1952, and in contradistinction to Greenberg’s formalist readings of abstract painting such as “Towards a Newer Laocoön,” the art critic Harold Rosenberg wrote the essay “The American Action Painters,” which interpreted the current gestural and action painting of the as-yet unnamed Abstract Expressionists as an act of self-expression. As Rosenberg argues, painters were now treating the canvas as an “arena in which to act.... What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event. The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter.”¹⁴⁸ Rosenberg continues:

The new American painting is not "pure" art.... Form, color, composition, drawing, are auxiliaries, any one of which—or practically all... can be dispensed with. What matters always is the revelation contained in the act.... A painting that is an act is inseparable from the biography of the artist. The painting itself is a "moment" in the adulterated mixture of his life...the same metaphysical substance as the artist's existence. The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life.¹⁴⁹

Here, Rosenberg underscores notions of immediacy, originality, and inimitable, signature styles, and constructs the canvas as the frozen and perpetual residue derived from a moment in the artist’s life.

¹⁴⁸ Harold Rosenberg, “The American Action Painters,” 23.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

While Greenberg's accounts of abstract painting constructed a narrative that asserted a teleological goal of distilling the abstract picture plane to its irreducible elements of surface, color, and line—ever distancing it from ideas and meaning outside of itself—Rosenberg's account of abstract painting is less interested in its formal aspects and, in fact, even in these excerpted sentences, it can be detected that Rosenberg is responding to Greenberg's assertions about formalism and abstract painting's purification from life. However, while Rosenberg argues for the incorporation of life into art, ultimately, the object is secondary, the mere residue of an encounter. What is primary, Rosenberg insists, is the "act," "action," or "the process of creating," through which the artist then finds "the true image of his identity."¹⁵⁰ But, as we have already found, Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* are by no means frozen moments of time, nor do they reveal anything about Tuttle's essential self. Instead, they are abstract-like paintings, and in excess of Tuttle's efforts, ones that *change in and over time*, with their dyed surfaces and gestural-like wrinkles only serving to make even more explicit the morphological capabilities of the pieces themselves.

Although seemingly oppositional models of abstraction, both Rosenberg's and Greenberg's ideas, I would argue, are linked ultimately by the logic of essentialism—that is, by an abiding interest in painting's ability to embody and convey some essential identity. For Greenberg, it is painting's identity as a purified and specific medium, whereas for Rosenberg, it is painting's ability to capture and encapsulate the "true"

¹⁵⁰ Greenberg responded to Rosenberg's claims by continuing to emphasize pictorial flatness in "The American Action Painters" with his 1955 essay, "American-Type Painting." See *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 3: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 208-229.

identity of the artist in perpetuity. Both are challenged by Tuttle's mutable *Cloth Pieces*. Of course, Tuttle is not the only artist to critique the essentialist conception of American abstraction (and abstract painting). For example, by the mid-1950s, and at the moment when both Rosenberg's and Greenberg's theorizations of abstract painting were gaining prominence, their theorizations also found rebuttal and resistance in the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, which were made by materials such as found objects and newspaper (which Greenberg's notion of a pure abstraction had so strenuously excluded) and conflated too those mediums that Greenberg had sought to make distinct.¹⁵¹

While for the general public in mid-20th-century America, it is the idea of art as expression that holds the most sway, within the more academic context of contemporary art and art history it is Greenberg rather than Rosenberg who becomes the most significant art critic for American abstract painting, especially in the 1960s when the *Cloth Pieces* are created.¹⁵² As such, it is also worth noting more of Greenberg's intensely influential focus on medium-specificity and purity in abstract painting in an additional writing of this decade.¹⁵³ In his 1964 essay, "Post Painterly Abstraction,"

¹⁵¹ On this point, see Isabelle Loring Wallace, *Jasper Johns* (London: Phaidon, 2014) as well as her earlier cited "From the Death of Painting to the Death in Painting. Or, What Jasper Johns found in Marcel Duchamp's *Tu m' / Tomb*"; *Robert Rauschenberg* (October Files), ed. Branden W. Joseph (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2002); Joseph's earlier cited *Random Order*; and Leo Steinberg's essays on Johns and Rauschenberg the compilation, *Other Criteria: Confrontation with Twentieth-Century Art* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

¹⁵² While Greenberg's ideas would be challenged and eventually overturned, his dogmatic ideas of abstraction, prolifically published from the 1940s to the 1960s, remain a critical touchstone for the study of mid-century American abstraction.

¹⁵³ Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* could be read against a number of Greenberg's essays but here I note an additional one in particular. Following the heyday of Abstract Expressionism, Greenberg continued to assert medium-specificity but shifted his focus to what he termed in his 1962 essay, "After Abstract Expressionism," to the "non-painterliness" paintings such as those by the color-field artists Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko.

Greenberg celebrates the increasing presence of flattened color-based paintings, which included the abstract paintings of Frank Stella and Jules Olitski, as well as the abstract stained canvases of Helen Frankenthaler (Figure 3.15), Kenneth Noland, and Morris Louis (Figure 3.16). For Greenberg, Post Painterly Abstraction's intense focus on the color and anonymity of paint application yielded a way forward for art, a range of new tendencies for painting in the wake of the dramatic canvases of Abstract Expressionism (what Greenberg had always termed as "Painterly Abstraction"). As Greenberg argues, "post-painterly abstraction" lacked clarity and lacking detail. In particular, Greenberg praised the stained canvases of Frankenthaler, Noland, and Louis, which achieved for him a highly admirable flatness and purity, namely because the paintings were made by pouring (not painting) thinned paint directly onto unprimed canvases.¹⁵⁴

(It is worth mentioning that Greenberg had always derided the Abstract Expressionist label, preferring the term "Painterly Abstraction"). As with his "Modernist Painting" of 1961, "After Abstract Expressionism" sees Greenberg emphasize once more what he understands as the essential features of art: "By now it has been established, it would seem, that the irreducible essence of pictorial art consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms: flatness and the delimitation of flatness; and the observance of merely these two norms is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture: thus a stretched or tacked-up canvas already exists as a picture –though not necessarily as a successful one." Neither flat nor framed and, indeed, merely "tacked-up" (if affixed to the wall at all), Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* could also be read as a defiant gesture in response to Clement Greenberg's ideas in this essay, challenging what it means to make a "successful" abstract painting as well as the critic's ideas of the delimited abstract picture plane in the 1960s. See Clement Greenberg "After Abstract Expressionism," *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*.

¹⁵⁴ Greenberg, "Post-Painterly Abstraction," *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism, Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*, 192-197. This essay was first published in association with an exhibition of the same title that Greenberg had curated at the Los Angeles County Museum, also in 1964. Greenberg selected all the artists except those from California, which were selected by one of the museum's curators.

When the *Cloth Pieces* were debuted at Betty Parsons Gallery, many critics assumed that Tuttle was following the lead of the Post-Painterly Abstractionists, as Emily Wasserman most notably did in her March 1968 *Artforum* review.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, the *Cloth Pieces* are without brushstrokes and seemingly are stained like the soaked surfaces of Frankenthaler and Morris' paintings. Yet if it can be said that Tuttle's dyed canvases conjure the stained surfaces of Post Painterly Abstraction, they do so, I argue, in order to complicate Greenberg's formalist ideas about such a supposed purified style of painting. While Greenberg had praised this new movement in painting for its lack of "clarity," its shunning of detail as well as "thick paint and tactile effects," Tuttle makes these very features formally explicit in the *Cloth Pieces* with their seeming insistence on ambiguity via their optical and tactile wrinkles, irregularities in shape, and oscillation between the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Emily Wasserman, "New York: Process, Whitney Museum; Theodoron Awards, Guggenheim Museum."

¹⁵⁶ In the context of painting in the 1960s, one might be tempted to argue that Tuttle's irregular and monochromatic forms are no different than the shaped canvases by Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly that were briefly discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to *Constructed Paintings*. But I would argue against this contention based on the fact that Tuttle's interests are not purely formalist, which, incidentally, is how the shaped canvases of Stella and Kelly were interpreted in their contemporary moment. In 1966, Michael Fried considered the shaped canvases of artists such as Stella, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Jules Olitski in his essay, "Shape as Form: Frank Stella's New Paintings," *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, ed. Michael Fried (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 77-99. According to Fried, the old standard of abstract painting, or the "old illusionism" saw an artist utilize a basic square or rectangular canvas support and to depict an image therein. But artists such as Stella, as Fried argues, transformed painting into a "new illusionism," by privileging the literal shape—form—of the canvas itself instead of what the canvas depicted. By using oddly-shaped canvases, Fried insists, they made coincident the form of the painting and the shape of the canvas and thus continued the progressive aim and development of modernist painting to achieve flatness by eliminating the illusion of depth.

Indeed, even as critics read the dyeing in the *Cloth Pieces* in line with Post-Painterly Abstraction, they also discussed the ways in which the *Cloth Pieces* seem to confound divisions between sculpture and painting. For Robert Pincus-Witten, these works were provocative at the time in “fusing painting and sculpture into a new polymorph in which sheer tangibility and blunt materiality alluded to sculpture while the character of soaked-in-paint bespoke painting.” “(T)hey share,” Pincus-Witten wrote, “formal concerns with (Keith) Sonnier and Robert Morris,” artists whose work like Tuttle’s, oscillates between what might called the gestural strokes of painting and the tactile features of sculpture (Figure 3.17).¹⁵⁷ As with Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings* before them, much of the abstract art of the 1960s, as exemplified by Sonnier, Morris, and even Robert Ryman’s tacked up works of thick white paint on square pieces of unstretched linen canvases (Figure 3.18), which, incidentally, were made at the same time as the *Cloth Pieces*, function to make abstract painting material and tangible, if not outright sculptural. With their irregular dyeing, their mutability, and their refusal to declare a specific medium, Tuttle’s *Cloth Pieces* function in similar vein, likewise disrupting Greenberg’s contemporary theorizations of abstract painting, its ambitions of purity, fixity, and medium-specificity, which will become hallmarks of (American) abstraction and which, as we will see in the remainder of this chapter, Tuttle’s abstract serial oeuvre consistently aims to undermine.

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To be sure, Tuttle’s *Cloth Pieces* is a series for which Tuttle would become well-known, second to, if not equal in this respect to the *Wire Pieces*. But if I have devoted

¹⁵⁷ Pincus-Witten, “The Art of Richard Tuttle,” 206.

what might seem as a disproportionate amount of time to the *Cloth Pieces*, it is because they both emerge at and intervene in a crucial juncture in the larger history of abstraction. While critics certainly detected some of the radicality of these works at their initial debut in 1967, it would be a few years before the impact of their intervention in the art of the 1960s was recognized on a larger scale and aligned with other interventions into abstraction by Tuttle's peers. In 1969, Tuttle participated in two seminal exhibitions: "Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form," curated by Harald Szeemann at the Berne Kunsthalle and "Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials," curated by Marcia Tucker and James Monte at the Whitney Museum. Notably these exhibitions shared many of the same artists such as Eva Hesse, Robert Smithson, Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Robert Ryman, and, of course, Tuttle, and, in both, Tuttle displayed selections from *Cloth Pieces*.

Writing in his catalogue essay for "Live in Your Head," Scott Burton termed Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* as "multi-formal" and "non-rigid," recognizing their separation from the legacy of historical abstraction as well as Greenberg's theories of abstraction in its mid-20th-century formation.¹⁵⁸ Of the pieces in the exhibition, Burton wrote: "It is not possible to say whether a Tuttle is a painting or a sculpture; it uses properties of both and is probably neither." Burton was particularly struck by the differing conditions of the *Cloth Pieces*, in form and in display. As he described them, "they have no back, no front, no up or down, they may be attached to the wall or spread out on the floor." For Burton, Tuttle's *Cloth Pieces* were part of a new abstraction, evident in this exhibition,

¹⁵⁸ Scott Burton, "Notes on the New," *Live in Your Head: When Attitude Becomes Form: Works—Concepts—Processes—Situations—Information*, ed. Harald Szeemann (Bern, Switzerland: Kunsthalle Bern, 1969), unpaginated. All subsequent quotes in this paragraph are from this source.

that imaged a new naturalism or realism, one that emphasized “time” and now sought to include “the raw, unpleasant, ordinary” in art. By doing so, Burton noted that the once-implacable categories of art are now eroding and “art and ideas are becoming indistinguishable.... The only large esthetic distinction remaining is that between art and life; this exhibition reveals how that distinction is fading.” For some time now, Burton insisted, “(a)rt has been veritably invaded by life, if life means flux, change, chance, time, unpredictability.”

While Burton did not write an essay for the other exhibition of 1969, “Anti-Illusion,” his review of it in *ARTnews*, an essay entitled “Time on Their Hands,” was an insightful statement on the sense of temporality that he saw permeating the art in the exhibition as well as contemporary practices more broadly at the time.¹⁵⁹ Singling out the work of artists such as Richard Serra, Bill Bollinger, Bruce Nauman, and Tuttle and his “dyed octagons of canvas” specifically, Burton wrote that in the art of the “Anti-Illusion” exhibition, “...we find art’s existence in time stressed... morphological variability. This is the ultimate (at least the current ultimate) in the idea of art as an ‘imitation of life’; not to aspire to an impossible permanence....”¹⁶⁰

If the exhibitions of “Live in Your Head” or “Anti-Illusion” in 1969 cemented Tuttle’s association with a new abstraction, they also situated his work within the context of an art that privileges process and time, and, moreover, an entanglement of art and life. Although neither Burton’s essays nor those of the curators in the either “Live in Your

¹⁵⁹ Scott Burton, “Time on Their Hands,” *ARTnews* 68:4 (Summer 1969): 40-43. In addition to “Live in Your Head,” the “Anti-Illusion” exhibition would help to establish the viability of Process Art as well as the larger temporal and mutable tendencies of Postminimalist art.

¹⁶⁰ Burton, “Time on Their Hands,” 40.

Head” or “Anti-Illusion” contextualized such features in his art as being part of a serial practice, it would be by the *Cloth Pieces* in the late 1960s that Tuttle’s oeuvre (thus far) would be characterized and theorized. And if not acknowledged as participating in a paradoxical seriality, it was at least recognized as an art that was in-between disparate things—in-between categories and materials, forms and ideas.

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By the end of the 1960s, the American art historian and critic Leo Steinberg saw Greenberg’s theories as a kind of “preventative aesthetics” for art, an “interdictory stance that tells an artist what he ought not to do, and the spectator what he ought not to see.”¹⁶¹ In his 1968 lecture, “Reflections on the State of Criticism,” Steinberg contended that Greenberg’s rigid formalism negated art’s content and meaning by favoring only the technical transformations of the abstract picture plane within a narrow and linear trajectory. Remarking on Greenberg’s extraordinary insistence on collapsing a century of European and American painting into this limited narrative, Steinberg writes: “Whatever else one may think of Greenberg’s construction, its overwhelming effect is to put all painting in series.”¹⁶²

Indeed, Greenberg effectively organizes his history of Modernist painting into a linear and serial progression of painterly moments that ultimately culminate in the abstract picture planes of mid-20th-century New York, which is, of course, significantly the time and place in which Tuttle begins his artistic career. Purified in form and bereft of content: this is abstraction for Greenberg and importantly, this is also the legacy of

¹⁶¹ Leo Steinberg, “Reflections on the State of Criticism,” *Robert Rauschenberg* (October Files), 7.

¹⁶² Steinberg, 10.

abstraction that Richard Tuttle most directly inherits. And, as if a rejoinder to Greenberg's tightly constructed and reductive narrative of abstraction, Tuttle begins, and in Greenberg's heyday of the 1960s no less, to make abstract series after abstract series that are neither fixed nor pure, that are neither absolute nor teleological. Instead, Tuttle's interventions in abstraction draw on the same ideas of movement and process, ambiguity and incoherence that constitute his concept of seriality.

II.

Beyond the 1960s, Tuttle's serial oeuvre continues to participate in a rethinking of abstract painting, ever endeavoring to complicate the pure, still form and the formalist narrative that has been typically associated with the abstract picture plane. Much like the *Paper Octagonals* (1970) discussed in the previous chapter, the purity of which was sullied by the imperfections of the walls underneath and the medium-specificity of which was complicated by their relation to the "whites" of the painted walls, Tuttle's abstract series that focus on painting function to contaminate it not only with three-dimensional features but also with elements of what might be termed as *non-art*. In fact, since 1990, Tuttle has created numerous series that more explicitly entangle ideas of abstract painting with the three-dimensional as well as with materials that, at least in the history of painting, have remain obscured or even disassociated from the typical formal language of abstract painting.

For example, from *Waferboard* (1996) (Figure 3.19) and *New York, New Mexico* (1998) (Figure 3.20) to *Prologue I and II* (2001) (Figures 3.21-3.22) and *20 Pearls*

(2003-2007) (Figure 3.23), Tuttle has made a number of series that utilized industrially engineered lumber such as plywood, flakeboard, and aspenite rather than canvas or cloth as the material support for painting. Of course, wood panels were used for paintings long before canvas or other fabric supports. This was especially the case for the earliest religious icons and even a large portion of paintings in the Renaissance, where the panels were preened to perfection by a laborious process of sanding, filling, and priming, such that the picture plane (e.g. paint, color, line, and composition) would be at the fore rather than the material support. For, even after the advent of abstraction and its supposed disavowal of illusion, abstract painting remained insistent on emphasizing the picture plane at the expense of the support (e.g. its flatness à la Greenberg). And yet, in Tuttle's series of abstract painting that use plywood and other engineered wood, there is no attempt to fill in the holes, to smooth the splintery particles that inevitably surface, or to hide the grainy patterns. Indeed, unlike the picture planes constructed by legions of painters who came before him and even some of his peers who thickly and glossily painted plywood and thus obscured the support (such as Donald Judd's early boxes), Tuttle admits the inherent qualities and thus the imperfections of his material supports, which then become integral to the picture plane itself.

As a case study, consider *Cycle* (1994), a series of twelve small panel-like paintings made from acrylic paint and aspenite (Figure 3.24). Aspenite is formed by compressing layers of wood flakes in varied orientations, which are then infused with industrial adhesives. Because it is especially rough in texture, aspenite absorbs viscous materials, and this trait Tuttle seems to exploit in conjunction with his application of water-based acrylic paint, juxtaposing thinner areas of paint with more opaque

applications and, moreover, within a single piece. Indeed, it is notable that the consistency of paint in *Cycle* varies, within and between each piece, but also that some segments of aspenite remain unpainted in every piece. Sometimes these bare areas of wood are marked by pencil, but more often than not the unpainted flakes become as if dynamic lines themselves, introducing a sense of movement and instability to the surface of the picture plane. Even when it is covered with acrylic paint, the insistent piecemeal texture of the aspenite inevitably surfaces through the paint, entangling picture plane and material support. In doing so, Tuttle collapses these conventionally distinct entities—not to bring about an ultimate plane of foundational essence or truth in abstract painting but rather to insist that abstract painting (as with the whole of painting’s history) was always an illusion made of different layers and pieces, and which Tuttle insists on in a series like *Cycle* via the nature of aspenite, a material that is made by compressing layers of wood. As Tuttle has said, and in opposition to Greenberg’s notion of abstract painting: “I’m interested in surface conditions rather essentialist conditions.”¹⁶³

On the point of abstraction’s surface conditions, consider how the internal sense of motion within each of the individual *Cycle* pieces is further exacerbated by the irregular edges of each work. Unframed and cut into organically shaped forms, the edges of these forms, with few exceptions, seem shaped as if a cycle themselves, suggesting that the forms themselves are continuously rotating. When considered in series, in the order of its sequenced titles, these edges become even more evocative of a cycle. They seem to turn into or open onto the next form, seemingly imaging the notion of moving, of keeping on. Thus, Tuttle’s *Cycle* suggests an always differentiated and open-ended

¹⁶³ Brown, 61.

process or cycle, especially as instantiated in the final work of the series, the form of which seems to extend and expand on either side.

No doubt thinking of the formalist legacies of abstraction, Tuttle has stated: “I think the biggest problem with abstraction is that it’s been under consideration for so long that it’s set—it’s gelled.” But Tuttle believes that abstraction is still open to “possibility.” “It’s an ongoing experiment,” he says. “Art is a developmental kind of thing, there’s always a leading edge, and the most exciting, interesting, valid, true place for art is on that edge....”¹⁶⁴ As evinced in *Cycle*, the edge for Tuttle is a literal but liminal point that manifests continuation, the slip from one moment into another, the change from one ending to another beginning.¹⁶⁵ Once again, Tuttle images abstraction as a process rather than a result, something that Tuttle hoped would be further underscored by its most recent installation in 2010, where it was horizontally oriented, spanning the four walls of an entire room, such that it effectively encompassed the spectator (Figure 3.25).¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 58.

¹⁶⁵ It is precisely this interest in temporality and edge that comes to the fore in one of his most recent series, *The Critical Edge* (2015), a series that comprises seven separate series, all of which evoke a historical span of abstract painting. Indeed, the different styles and compositions of the individual picture planes raise specters of the organic forms in paintings by Kandinsky, Joan Miro, and Matisse as well as the reductive planes of Malevich and Joseph Albers, the zips of Barnett Newman, the raw materiality of Robert Ryman’s white paintings and Agnes Martin’s hand-drawn grids, and the colorful abstracted landscapes of Richard Diebenkorn. This series debuted at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in May 2016.

¹⁶⁶ In his 2010 exhibition “Triumphs” at the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin, Tuttle exhibited over twenty series of abstract painting-like panels and drawings that reconsidered the subject of abstract painting. The exhibition was originally entitled “Polysemous, Multi-part Horizontals” and as Hugh Lane Gallery curator Michael Dempsey has discussed, Tuttle’s interest in the idea of polysemous came from his study of the Roman emperor Augustus, who used polysemous imagery to command his large and disparately formed territory. Dempsey writes that the polysemous for Tuttle was as if a horizontal line that extended in all directions, holding together a “multiple of ideas.” See Dempsey’s essay in *Richard Tuttle: Triumphs*, 34-40. Yet, the more Tuttle

III.

In the history of abstraction, and for better or for worse, it will be painting that gets the glory, the lion's share of the exhibitions and the bulk of the critical consideration. Indeed, one need only look to the scholarly tomes on abstraction in art history to see how the scales tip in painting's favor. But if Tuttle's serial oeuvre enacts critical interventions in abstract painting, in both its historical legacy and its mid-20th-century ambitions, the same can be said for his reconsideration of abstract sculpture. In this section, I consider several of Tuttle's more sculpturally-oriented series that are exemplary for their interventions in sculptural abstraction.

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I begin with a consideration of two early series from the 1970s, *Blocks* (1973) (Figure 3.26) and *Colored Triangles* (1974) (Figure 3.27), which were first shown at Tuttle's 1975 Whitney exhibition. In the rather descriptively titled series *Blocks*, Tuttle has created black and white abstractly painted plywood blocks (roughly 4 inches by 5 inches by 2 inches each), which, when displayed, are placed curiously on the floor but set off from the wall by four inches. (It is thought that there are 10 total in the series.) The

considered the exhibition and the importance of the horizontal his series, he suggested that the title be changed to "Triumphs," which nevertheless retained a connection to the Roman empire in concept. As Thomas McEllivey writes, a triumph was "a kind of parade that was performed in ancient Rome to celebrate a successful military campaign." In thinking on the notion of Roman triumphs, namely their processual parades, Tuttle was prompted to arrange his abstract painting-like series in horizontal arrangements. By doing so, as McEllivey writes, Tuttle's series become suggestive of time unfolding, such that they seem to be akin to "cinematic motion." See McEllivey, 28.

series *Colored Triangles* (1974) is somewhat similar.¹⁶⁷ Here, Tuttle painted small wooden triangles (which vary in size from 7 inches by 7 inches by 7 inches to 8 inches x 8 inches by 8 inches) with horizontal lines of different colors and these too are displayed on the floor. Unlike *Blocks*, however, the *Colored Triangles* are set against the intersection of wall and floor and leave no space between wall and object.

In her essay accompanying the Whitney exhibition, Marcia Tucker mentions numerous times that Tuttle's art has a "relation to the body" as well as "to temporality, since the body is our primary metaphor and vehicle for being-in-the-world."¹⁶⁸ As she writes, there is in Tuttle's art a "sense of gravity, of body orientation."¹⁶⁹ Tucker contends that this bodily orientation is manifested more abstractly in series such as *Blocks* and *Colored Triangles* by their "gravitational pull."¹⁷⁰ She does not expound further on this phrase, but given her other contentions about temporality and the body, with this "gravitational pull" in Tuttle's art, Tucker was thinking of the semblance of *Blocks* and *Colored Triangles* to Minimalist objects and the then-recent (pejorative) theorizations about Minimalism by Greenberg and the young art critic Michael Fried, a student of Greenberg's. After all, although small in scale, *Blocks* and *Colored Triangles* do have affinities with larger-scaled Minimalist sculpture, namely in their basic geometric shapes. Moreover, like Judd's boxes or Tony Smith's large-scaled *Die* (Figure 3.28), Tuttle's *Blocks* and *Colored Triangles* disavow the traditional base for sculpture and instead are placed directly on the ground. Indeed, they are grounded in the circumstances of what

¹⁶⁷ The total number in this series remains unknown. Only two were shown in the 1975 Whitney exhibition and they have been rarely exhibited.

¹⁶⁸ Tucker 15.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. See also page 8 of Tucker's text.

we might call the “real,” lending further weight to Tucker’s assertion that Tuttle’s abstract art “has a sense of gravity” and is about “being-in-the-world.”

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To understand the relation of Tuttle’s work such as *Blocks* and *Colored Triangles* to the body, gravity, and of being-in-the-world, let us first consider the aforementioned theorizations of Minimalism and how Tuttle’s two series here might engage with them. It was the blankness of Rauschenberg’s *White Paintings* as well as those of Yves Klein’s pure blue paintings that led Greenberg in his essay “Recentness of Sculpture” (1967) to argue that the monochrome was partly responsible for the advent of the Minimalist sculpture in the 1960s, primarily because monochromes by Rauschenberg and Klein had “slick” and “familiar” connections to the realm of “non-art.”¹⁷¹ Greenberg elaborated: “What seems definite is that they [Minimalists] commit themselves to the third dimension because it is, among other things, a coordinate that art has to share with non-art (as Dada, Duchamp, and others already saw). The ostensible aim of the Minimalists is to “project” objects and ensembles of objects that are just nudgeable into art.”¹⁷² For Greenberg, it was as if the cubic works by Donald Judd and other Minimalist sculptors were aberrant three-dimensional monochromes, literal extensions of the pictorial plane into real time

¹⁷¹ Some scholars have argued, like Greenberg but with different logics, that the Minimalist object was the logical evolution of the monochrome. See Joseph, *Random Order*, 31-33; Foster, *Return of the Real*, 20; and Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1981), 266-267.

¹⁷² Greenberg, “Recentness of Sculpture,” 183. Here Greenberg elaborates the connection of Minimalist objects to non-art by discussing how “the look of non-art was no longer available to painting” but rather “had to be sought in the three-dimensional, where sculpture was, and where everything material that was not art also was.” He continues: “Minimal works are readable as art, as almost anything is today—including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper... it would seem that a kind of art nearer the condition of non-art could not be envisaged or ideated at this moment. That, precisely, is the trouble. Minimal Art remains too much a feat of ideation, and not enough anything else.”

and space, which of course muddled Greenberg's insistence on the autonomy of the visual arts. Moreover, it is this foray into real time and space, as well as its affiliations with "non-art," that prompts Greenberg to regard Minimalist sculptures as "objects" (a term that is meant to be the antithesis of "art") and to declare them as possessing an "effect of presence," or, put otherwise, a temporality.¹⁷³ On Greenberg's terms, and lamentably so: "There is hardly any aesthetic surprise in Minimal Art, only a phenomenal one...."¹⁷⁴

Published in the same year as "Recentness of Sculpture," Michael Fried's seminal 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood" expanded his mentor's concerns with presence and time in Minimalist sculpture.¹⁷⁵ In one instance, Fried calls attention to the hollow interiors of the Minimalist works objects, which as he argues makes them "blatantly anthropomorphic" and gives them a "presence" that moves in real time and space, much like our own bodies. In another instance, he argues that the Minimalist object, typically large in scale, is akin to "a kind of stage presence," which "distances the beholder" yet also "demands that the beholder take it into account." Drawing on the writings of Minimalist artist Robert Morris, his series of "Notes of Sculpture" essays, and Greenberg—both of which described the engagement of Minimalist objects as phenomenological—Fried likewise insists on the phenomenological dimensions in his argument on Minimalist objects. For Fried, the experience of the Minimalist object can only immerse spectators in the literal facts of their circumstances, can only remind them

¹⁷³ Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," 185.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 184.

¹⁷⁵ Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, ed. Michael Fried (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-172. Quotes are taken from different points throughout the whole of this essay.

of their embodied “presence” within lived conditions. (This is one of the reasons that Fried prefers to term the movement as “Literalism”).

As Fried makes clear throughout his essay, a Minimalist object is ultimately mired in time; it “*persists in time*,” in “an indefinite *duration*,” leaving one’s knowledge of it always “inexhaustible” and “incomplete.”¹⁷⁶ In contradistinction, Fried argues that art should be transcendent and should deliver us from the facts of our literal existence. He contends that Modernist painting and sculpture have endeavored always “to defeat” the conditions of theatre and presence with an “instantaneousness” and a wholeness that he terms “presentness,” instantiated for Fried in the sculpture of David Smith and Anthony Caro and in the paintings by Jules Olitski, Kenneth Noland, and Morris Louis. For Fried, Modernist art, in its defeat of time, is wholly redemptive from the flux inherent in the conditions of life. As Fried famously concludes his essay: “We are literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace.”¹⁷⁷

As is perhaps already clear, if Tuttle’s *Blocks* and *Colored Triangles* recall any relation to the recent theorizations by Greenberg and Fried, they do so precisely in order to challenge them. First, consider the location of these two series in installation, beginning with *Blocks*. Situated in an area that is usually devoid of art, on the floor and a few inches from the wall, these small works call attention to a space in the gallery

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 166. The italics are Fried’s own. On this point about time, it is notable too that Fried links this sense of temporality and incompleteness found in Minimalist art to the “Surrealist sensibility,” arguing that both the Minimalists and the Surrealists “employ an imagery that is at once holistic, and, in a sense, fragmentary, incomplete,” which, in turn, effects feelings such as expectation and anxiety for viewers. See n22 of Fried’s essay.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 168. As Pamela Lee has argued, Fried’s criticism of Minimalist sculpture is “chronophobic,” indicting temporality and theatricality as much as championing “presentness” and “medium-specificity.” See Pamela Lee, *Chronophobia: On Time in the Art of the 1960s* (Cambridge MA and London: The MIT Press, 2004).

typically reserved for viewers in their observations of art. In their positioning in the gallery, that is, in the space they occupy, these works become stands-ins, as it were, for the body—*our bodies*—embodying a notion of “presence” that Greenberg and Fried had derided in Minimalist objects. Although not hollow like most Minimalist objects, there is nevertheless a highly abstract anthropomorphism in *Blocks*. Indeed, given their placements in the gallery and their appearance of weight-like blocks, *Blocks*, and as we will see with *Colored Triangles*, suggest, and *contra* Greenberg’s and Fried’s theorizations that abstraction frees one from the body’s finitude, that abstraction is a form of art that is conceived in relation to the body if not the larger corporeal realm.

To be sure, while Tuttle’s *Blocks* have much in common with Minimalist objects in terms of the qualities that Greenberg and Fried denounce, there remains a difference in their scale. In comparison to the dominating scale of Smith’s *Die*, Tuttle’s *Blocks* are practically minuscule, and this would seemingly lessen the impact of their phenomenological immersion. But as Anne-Sargent Wooster astutely observed in 1978, the smaller scale of Tuttle’s art is different: “Small work is generally not thought of as environmental but Tuttle’s ‘objects’ are a means of forcing us to see the space they are presented in. It is impossible not to confront the bare cube of the room, the gray floor and radiator grill in the process of looking for/at these small works.”¹⁷⁸ I would argue that Wooster’s “looking for” is a most appropriate phrase in describing what is it like to view Tuttle’s small objects *in situ*, with their sometimes unorthodox locations therein. Indeed, in “looking for/at” objects from the *Blocks* series, we are made to examine their relationship to the surrounding environment. Put otherwise, in the hands of Tuttle, and

¹⁷⁸ Anne-Sargent Wooster, “Richard Tuttle at Betty Parsons,” *ARTnews* 77:4 (April 1978): 156.

with series such as *Blocks*, we are made to think about “non-art” as much as art, the conditions of being-in-the-world as much as abstract art’s (conventional) disavowal of it.

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Before turning to *Colored Triangles* and by way of thinking more about Tuttle’s sculptural abstraction as mired in conditions of being-in-the-world, I briefly turn to the series, *Floor Drawings*. Comprising twenty objects discontinuously produced from 1987-1989, *Floor Drawings* (Figure 3.29) is a series primarily made of multiple series, as indicated by the groups of different titles therein: *Sentences I-IV*, *Turquoise I-III*, a series given the simple monikers of numbers from “one to six,” *There’s No Reason a Good Man is Hard to Find I-IV*, *VI-VII* (it is thought that the “V” was either never produced or destroyed by Tuttle), and, curiously, a lone piece entitled *Sandtree 7*. Variouslly constituted by commonplace materials such as fabric, plywood, acrylic paint, foamcore, cardboard, ribbon, plastic, and wire, these different “floor drawings” appear to be tentatively constituted, hardly built to last.

For example, in *Turquoise I* (1988) (Figure 3.30), the wooden structures that constitute it seem delicate, barely able to support a swath of canvas that has been whimsically shored up by wire threadings throughout. From the ends of the canvas hang, on one side, a chain of small, linear wood-blocks that are seemingly spilling on to the floor, and, on the other, a number of fluttering leaf-like shapes attached to a heavier wire. Underneath all of this on the floor is a large piece of canvas. Mostly painted in a dusty blue with uneven brushstrokes and finished with irregular edges, the canvas has the effect of undulating water, underscoring even further the sense of movement in the work. Yet, at the point the wires with the leaves touch it, the color of the canvas turns into a vibrant

yellow, hinting at a transformation, suggestive perhaps of that transition or boundary between sea and land.

Within *Floor Drawings*, Madeline Grynstejn, similarly, has observed indications of temporality and movement:

Nonchalantly placed in the middle of the room, the works ask to be approached and apprehended from all angles. In this passage around the work, the viewer experiences not only an unfolding sequence of visual surprises, but also an utter dissipation of fixed coordinates.... Transparent and spare in construction, the floor drawings teeter on the threshold between form and its undoing....¹⁷⁹

For Grynstejn, such transitional features in the different objects within *Floor Drawings* suggest a correspondence to us, as these are conditions, she contends, that are not unlike our own, especially as these works “share the same space of lived experience as our own bodies,” that is, in the middle of the floor/ground.¹⁸⁰

Some of the works in *Floor Drawings* make this correspondence more explicit. Consider *There’s No Reason a Good Man is Hard to Find IV* (1988) (Figure 3.31, with detail), a structure made from dramatic wooden flourishes, a bundle comprising cloth, wire, painted tin pieces and strips of chicken wire that crowns its top, and a long, flaccid extension that hangs by a red wire from the bundle. Standing at about 4.5 feet tall, *There’s No Reason a Good Man is Hard to Find IV* appears to be a living creature, effected by the flex-like curves in the wooden footings, the stirring, head-like movement of the top bundle, and the protruding malleable appendage that seems to shuffle slowly on the floor. In *There’s No Reason a Good Man is Hard to Find IV*, we seem to come in contact with a piece that, while not precisely an image of us, nevertheless seems to image something *about us*—about our temporal and shifting conditions on the ground, further

¹⁷⁹ Grynstejn, 53-54.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

underscored by the obvious reference to “man” in the title of this sub-series, *There’s No Reason a Good Man is Hard to Find*. As Tucker encouraged in her 1975 essay, there are moments in Tuttle’s highly abstract art that “when, in dialogue with it, we are able to recognize ourselves.”¹⁸¹ We might say, then, that Tuttle’s abstraction is insistent on *grounding abstraction* in real conditions and doing so by making work that inhabits our space and shares our conditions. As Tuttle has said elsewhere: “I never think of my work as abstract. Perish the thought...I’m much more interested in putting something into the world that’s as real as real can possibly be.”¹⁸²

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At this point, I return to *Colored Triangles*, an early series that is emblematic of Tuttle’s interest in muddling the idealism typically associated with abstraction with notions of realism. Like *Blocks*, *Colored Triangles* have a similar insistence on gravity in their stable, pyramidal forms. But unlike *Blocks*, they also work to elide the distinction between the wall and the floor, which for Tuttle, as for others have the connotations of the important and historic distinctions of idealism and realism, respectively.¹⁸³ Because *Colored Triangles* have been rarely exhibited and because their extant photographic documentation is of poor quality, I turn to a series that is similar in many respects and equally exemplary of Tuttle’s preoccupation with eliding wall and floor, idealism and realism: *Source of Imagery* (1995-2010) (Figure 3.32). Spanning fifteen years of production, this series debuted at Galleri Nicolai Wallner in Copenhagen in the summer

¹⁸¹ Tucker, 18.

¹⁸² “Interview with Arne Glimcher,” *Richard Tuttle: Walking on Air*, Pace Wildenstein Gallery, DVD, 2009.

¹⁸³ “Drawings and Exhibitions: Richard Tuttle,” Art 21, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.art21.org/texts/richard-tuttle/interview-richard-tuttle-drawing-and-exhibitions>.

of 2010. On display were twenty of the series' one-hundred pieces— a selection of ten sculpture-like objects and ten drawings. While the small and delicate drawings were important studies in realizing the objects themselves, it was the curious objects and, moreover, their curious installations that attracted the most attention.

Made from differently shaped pieces of thin plywood and differently painted with acrylic, the ten objects are precariously positioned at an angle, dependent for support on both the wall and the floor and so as with *Colored Triangles*, the *Source of Imagery* objects call attention to this very intersection. In *Source of Imagery*, however, that juncture is made all the more conspicuous and curious by a repeatable element throughout the series—an almost miniscule cube on which each object is propped. Made of plywood or Styrofoam, these cubes used throughout the series measure at 3.5 cm. At first glance, it seems that the cubes act as a base, but upon closer examination, it becomes evident that the cubes do not always separate the object from the floor or function as a means of support, as with *Source of Imagery (Tangle)* (Figure 3.33). In some cases, the cubes seem integral to the object itself, as suggested in *Source of Imagery V* and *Source of Imagery (Wall)* (Figures 3.34-3.35), where the cube is absorbed into the work itself. In fact, one piece in the exhibition, *Source of Imagery VI* (Figure 3.36), is notably without a cube. When these variations of the cube's deployment in the series are taken together, it would seem that the cube functions less in terms of a separation from the ground (and thus an attempt to heighten the idealism of abstraction) and more in terms of a means to call attention to an ambiguous relationship between abstraction and realism, which is underscored formally throughout the series by the precarious placements of the objects on the miniscule cubes.

However, I do not mean to insist that Tuttle's notions of abstraction are based or grounded *entirely* in notions of realism or the real. In fact, Tuttle calls attention to the contrary in this very series, with the small, all-white rectangles of cloth that hang from each of the ceiling's skylights. Flittering with the airflow in the gallery and fluctuating with the light, these monochrome-like pieces draw the gaze upwards, to the location with which lofty ideas and endeavors of abstraction are conventionally associated. Set above the low-lying objects dispersed around the gallery, these pure white cloths remind us that abstraction always holds something of the intangible power of thought, the generative capability of the abstruse. However, unlike the universal or utopian lines of thought typically aligned with abstract art, Tuttle's all-white cloths vary alongside the conditional circumstances of the gallery space, suggesting that even the most immaterial facet of abstract art—thought—is tempered inevitably by the particular conditions of life.¹⁸⁴ In part, it is abstraction's relationship to thought that I consider with the final series of this chapter, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.

¹⁸⁴ Of course, Tuttle's peers in Postminimalism and Process Art such as Eva Hesse, Robert Morris and Richard Serra would also be interested in this distinction and the subsequent elision between wall and floor. As with some of Tuttle's own, some of the work of these artists aimed to confuse these conventionally separate realms. For example, in Hesse's *Expanded Expansion* (1969) (which was installed near Tuttle's *Cloth Octagonals* at the 1969 Whitney Museum exhibition, "Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials), the rubberized cheesecloth slightly flags within its regulated intervals and in some more than others. As Briony Fer has contended, such flagging indicates that Hesse's work is both "sensitized" to and "grounded" by the conditions of its environment, and thus, Fer argues, Hesse's abstraction is to be seen in concert with the temporal circumstances of life. See Briony Fer, "States of Abstraction: Abstraction and Abjection: Eva Hesse and Conditions of Making," presented at the 8th Annual Kirk Varnedoe Lecture Series, Institute for Fine Arts, New York University, March 2014, accessed July 15, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/89501089>. Spanning parts of both the wall and the floor, *Expanded Expansion* also obliquely echoes the installation of both Tuttle's cloth works, where even the wall-installed octagonal slightly flagged.

IV.

In 1996, Tuttle began a sprawling and complex series that would occupy him for four years, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* (1996-1998). It consists of four sequentially produced pieces, known in the abbreviated form as *Replace I-IV*.

Commissioned by the Kunsthau Zug in Switzerland for its permanent collection, it was conceived as a site-specific series that would extend, in some measure (and in its initial exhibition), into all the museum's galleries as well as its exterior grounds. Unlike most of the series in his oeuvre to this point, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*, at least in its title, seems particularly focused in its theme or interest: replacing the abstract picture plane. As we have seen in this chapter, the abstract picture plane had typically been the province of idealistic painting, but in the art from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, namely in works by Rauschenberg, the Minimalists, and the Postminimalists/Process Artists, and, of course, in Tuttle's, what came to constitute the abstract picture plane was expanded (to the intersection of floor and wall or solely the floor) and entangled with the conditions of life—indeed, made coincident with the real. And yet, despite the fact that the abstract picture plane has been both provocatively rethought and reconceived by numerous artists since the mid-20th century, there remains in Tuttle's title of this series a sense of urgency or an imperative. Perhaps the timing of this series hints at why—it is made in the aftermath of Clement Greenberg's death in 1994.

In one sense, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* returns viewers to Greenberg's dogmatic legacy, to a legacy that had dominated Tuttle's career from the beginning, but it is not to emphasize this legacy's importance. Rather, as we will find, the series employs

Greenberg's reductive ideas about abstraction as a point of departure in reimagining the possibilities for abstraction going forward. In this series, the abstract picture plane is never settled, never one thing and, moreover, never one static thing. Instead, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* images abstraction as something that meanders and wanders.

But I also take seriously the fact that this series is a site-specific series and one that is especially disjointed in its forms and labyrinthine in its installation. Although it would seem that the sequential sequencing of its four components would provide obvious connections between facets of the series, this is not the case. As we will find, one must search the Kunsthau Zug site for the different components of this series and, moreover, work hard to make connections between them, a strategy for observation and analysis that seems intentional on Tuttle's part. As the artist has remarked enigmatically, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* "takes advantage of how things are seen in order to be seen."¹⁸⁵

The production and initial installation of *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* were documented extensively in a catalogue. In addition to numerous photographs, the catalogue also includes a commentary on the series by Tuttle. In what follows, I employ this commentary in my examination of the series, as though we were being led by Tuttle through the series *in situ*. Written in a conversationally-styled text, Tuttle's remarks guide the viewer through the series, asking questions about what is seen and experienced and musing abstrusely about the possible implications of the series.¹⁸⁶ Although Tuttle's text is presented in a linear layout within the catalogue and proceeds through the parts of

¹⁸⁵ *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*, ed. Matthias Haldemann (Kunsthau Zug and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2001), 78.

¹⁸⁶ All of Tuttle's commentary on this series that follows is taken from "the lines" of text that runs throughout the untitled and collaborative photo-essay in the catalogue, *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*, 13-79.

the series in a chronological order, it soon becomes apparent that the series (as well as Tuttle's commentary) is anything but linear. Tuttle begins his commentary by beckoning the reader/viewer in an avuncular fashion, perhaps betraying the circuitous path that this series cuts: "Come with me. I'll walk with you through the line."

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"First, we'll go to the basement on the north side of the Kunsthaus, down the spiral staircase. Here the line begins." At the bottom of the spiral staircase, we observe the beginning of *Replace I*, a remarkably large and dramatic piece (Figures 3.37-3.39). "Here, you can see how the line is green." Comprising two long panels of green cloth attached to an orange skeletal-like frame by grommets and string, *Replace I* appears, at first glance, like an abstracted green serpent. As others have written elsewhere, the cloth paneling and its skeletal support evoke the fundamental materials of painting—the canvas and the stretcher.¹⁸⁷ But *Replace I* is, I argue, more than just an evocation of abstract painting, as it consists of two panels of cloth that run parallel to each other and which, moreover, are attached on either side of a lengthy and ovicular framework. Thus, *Replace I* is at once two-dimensional *and* three-dimensional, incorporating, as we will see, attributes of both abstract painting and sculpture.

At the time of its creation in 1996, *Replace I* was the largest of Tuttle's pieces. (It remains the longest in his oeuvre). Measuring over 140 feet in length, its skeletal framework was constructed to expand and contract much like the bellows of an accordion, while its coarse green paneling, a cloth normally used in the Zug area for gardener's overalls, was chosen for its malleability and durability but also for its

¹⁸⁷ See the earlier referenced collaborative photo-essay.

associations to the earth, fecundity, and vitality.¹⁸⁸ Suspended in the air by transparent monofilament, its long and malleable body snakes up the entirety of the three-story spiral staircase, animated as if a puppet on its strings. Tuttle encourages us to move along: “As we travel upstairs,” Tuttle tells us, “you can see how the flexibility of this whole system allows it to bend following the curve of the stairs.” From this vantage point alongside “the climbing line,” we can glimpse inside the work through slits in the cloth on either sides of the green paneling, which are made by orange strips of the framework that protrude in a spike-like fashion (Figure 3.40).

But once *Replace I* nears the top of staircase, it soars above our heads before unfurling from its spiral orientation and straightening its frame (Figure 3.41), transforming itself from a seeming a three-dimensional object to a two-dimensional line. Tuttle remarks: “As the line leaps to the third floor we go into a more open, light-filled room and watch the line settle into a horizontal passage some distance from the wall,” indeed, reminding us of a line’s relationship to the mediums of drawing and painting, which are typically associated with the wall, and not some distance away from it. Of course, this space is conventionally the province of the museum-goer. But, in its snaking and leaping, *Replace I* seems to move throughout three floors and two galleries, alongside us, and, moreover, to move in our spaces—the stairway, the doorway, and, importantly, the space a few feet from the wall—perhaps summoning connections to Tuttle’s earlier series such as *Blocks* and *Floor Drawings*.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Kunsthaus Zug Curator Marco Obrist, conversation with the author, September 9, 2014.

¹⁸⁹ Greenberg, “After Abstract Expressionism,” 132. That the abstract picture plane could, in some cases, literally expand into the spaces of life was something that Greenberg had worryingly recognized in abstract painting even in the early 1960s.

Because they are devoid of any paint or markings, Tuttle's long pieces of green cloth can be associated with the tradition of the monochrome. Made from durable worker's fabric, these monochromatic panels evoke too that conflation of art and non-art that Greenberg dreaded in "Recentness of Sculpture." But if flat in color, these panels are hardly flat in form. Instead, they protrude along with the skeletal frame underneath. Tuttle describes them in his commentary as "bumpy, unflat (because each stick, being natural, bends differently)," and in walking around them and alongside them as they snake up the stairs and through the space of the galleries, it also seems as if the green panels are moving and stretching with the frame, lending a strange sense of temporality and motion to what is otherwise seems to be a static object. Indeed, as with the monochromatic *Cloth Pieces*, these pieces of green cloth seem to move as does the line more generally, which notably morphs in-between something that is sculptural and planar.

The green line extends from the first gallery to another, proceeding through the middle of a short corridor and three steps up, before abruptly terminating in the middle of the room (Figure 3.42). At this point, Tuttle notes that the line has now lowered to "a standard adult height" and this is useful for us. The end is open, as is the other end at the bottom of the staircase where we began, but here, we can stand before it at more or less eye level. Illuminated by the natural light of the galleries that seeps inside through the

Greenberg writes parenthetically in "After Abstract Expressionism" (1962) that the "paradoxical outcome" of pictorial flatness and reduction "has been not to contract, but actually to expand the possibilities of the pictorial" by including "all sorts of large and small items that used to belong entirely to the realm of the arbitrary and the visually meaningless" as part of the pictorial experience. In light of its quotidian materials, its sense of movement, and the space it occupies in the gallery, *Replace I* could well be read as a rejoinder to Greenberg's argument.

slits, the interior of *Replace I* is a clear and narrow passage that seems to endlessly extend. Tuttle says that this open-end allows us “to look back into the hollowness of line.” Perhaps this is an oblique reference to Fried’s (derisive) interpretation of the hollowness of Minimalist sculpture, for there are formal echoes here of Minimalist sculpture—of the bending or winding movement of Richard Serra’s *Torqued Ellipses*, for example. When looking into the line’s end (Figure 3.43), it seems to extend endlessly, and Tuttle remarks that the interior of *Replace I* seems to go on “forever.” Even when the passage angles slightly to the left, abruptly ending the line of sight into the passage, one can imagine continuing on by means of the mind’s eye through its twists and turns and down the spiral staircase. In some respect, the passage recalls Tony Smith’s now famous description of an experiential drive as he moved through part of the then-unfinished New Jersey turnpike.

When I was teaching at Cooper Union...someone told me how I could get on to the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike. I took three students and drove from somewhere in the Meadows to New Brunswick. It was a dark night and there were no lights or shoulder markers, lines, railings or anything at all except the dark pavement moving through the landscape.... This drive was a revealing experience.... it did something for me that art had never done.... It seemed that there had been a reality there which had not had any expression in art.... There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it.¹⁹⁰

Smith’s experience on the unfinished turnpike was invoked as part of Fried’s objection to Minimalism in “Art and Objecthood,” primarily because, for Fried, Smith’s experience of “endlessness” and thus a duration in and endurance of time effectively became the artwork. And yet, in Tuttle’s *Replace I*, it is endlessness that is precisely encouraged.

¹⁹⁰ Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” 157-158.

After all, Tuttle calls the green line at several points the “horizontal passage,” implying motion or the idea of moving through something as well as the passage of time.

Flexible and durable, mutative and temporal: *Replace I* images an abstract picture plane that is meant to move—in materials and mediums, in time and in space. But this, Tuttle notes, is not the only option in replacing the abstract picture plane. At the end of his commentary on *Replace I*, Tuttle remarks: “As much as any picture plane is a ‘solution,’ it cannot solve everything. What has our picture plane... not solved, what was left behind?”

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With that statement and question, Tuttle then beckons us to “come away from the end of the green line.” We must search for the next piece in the series, as the end of *Replace I* does not direct us to the obvious location of *Replace II*, a purposeful ploy by Tuttle. In fact, the next piece is not anywhere inside the museum but is outside in a small grassy courtyard, just beyond the gallery where *Replace I* ended. “Luckily, in this museum there is a grand window to the garden outdoors,” Tuttle says, and we see through the window a construction outside that is very Tuttle-like. Before it, we realize that unlike the malleable construction of *Replace I* that snaked its way around the Kunsthaus’ north galleries, *Replace II* is an obdurate sculpture and mostly hard-edged (Figure 3.44). It comprises three distinct forms, described in ascending order: a highly polished square base of Italian marble; an upright geometric form made from welded sheets of aluminum that Tuttle terms the “dumbbell”; and, intersecting with the uppermost part of the dumbbell, two cast-aluminum pieces, the lines of which recall expressive gestural (and painterly) lines.

At over 15 feet in height and roughly 3 feet in width, *Replace II*, in its materials and verticality, seems radically different from *Replace I*. Constituted by aluminum and marble forms, it is permanently installed on the grounds of the Kunsthaus Zug and there is nothing soft or flexible in this piece. At first glance, *Replace II* seems evocative of different types of abstract sculpture from the early to mid-20th century. For example, in the marble base, there are echoes of Brancusi's highly polished bases that held his quiet, reductive, and idealized abstract images (Figure 3.45) and, in the upright austere dumbbell and expressive arcs, there is a correspondence to the different pieces in Abstract Expressionist sculptor David Smith's *Cubi* series (1961-1965), made too from austere geometric forms, some of which were topped with dynamic but seemingly frozen geometric compositions (Figure 3.46). If *Replace I* images the abstract picture plane as something that moves, oscillating as it does between the two dimensional and the third dimensional, then it would seem that *Replace II* images the abstract picture plane as something that is immutable and timeless. Yet, as we will find, the use of such seemingly immovable shapes and materials is a purposeful ploy by Tuttle, meant to upend some of the most stagnant ideas of abstract sculpture and imbue this conventionally static medium with possibilities of temporality. And in this way, what appears to be a wide gap formally and conceptually between *Replace I* and *Replace II* begins to narrow. But making their connections requires a kind of leap, not unlike the one literalized in the installation.

On the level of form, it could be argued that *Replace II* does in one location and in three-dimensions what *Replace I* (simultaneously planar and sculptural) does in its snaking form and mutable materials over multiple galleries. For example, *Replace II*, in

its flat cubic planes, is also planar as well as volumetric, as evident in its three-dimensional cubic forms, but also in the dynamic space created by the two gestural arcs at the top. It is also in these sweeping lines that *Replace II* conjures, as does *Replace I*, forms from Minimalist Richard Serra's oeuvre (Figure 3.47).

Given their juxtaposition of jaggedness and smoothness in an obdurate metal medium, the arcs most obviously recall the different cast lead pieces in *Casting* (1969) (Figure 3.48). Created from molten lead hitting the angled intersection of the wall and floor, was inspired, in part, by the drip paintings of Jackson Pollock and, more broadly, the action painting of Abstract Expressionism.¹⁹¹ As Rosalind Krauss has argued, and much like splattering and gestures of action painting, Serra's casting movements functioned to reveal the temporality in gestural painting. Far from the notion that such gestures were unadulterated and frozen moments of the artist's life encapsulated within art (a la Rosenberg), Krauss insists that Serra's casts can be seen a record of a series of actions that occurred over time, unearthing not only the "flux" of making but the possibility too of its (endless) continuance.¹⁹²

At once rough and refined, jagged and smooth, Tuttle's strangely mutative arcs seem aligned with Krauss' reading of Serra's *Casting* in that they appear to convey a process, and moreover, a process that is still in-process. It is an indication given, I argue, by the direction of these energetic arcs, which slightly sweep to one side and away from the restrained, vertical orientation of the lower half of *Replace II*. Indeed, there is an echo of the kind of horizontal movement and a sense of the passage (in time and space)

¹⁹¹ Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition* (Thames & Hudson, 1999), 26.

¹⁹² Ibid, 26-27.

that *Replace I* imaged in its snaking form but also its hollow interior. Tuttle seems to hint at this very point in his commentary: this work, he says, “seems to have taken the arcs from the orange strips of the first sculpture and suspended two of them, slightly askew....” But it is also notable that the expressively styled arcs engage—indeed, pierce—the top of the dumbbell in the manner of a hook, which, in turn, suggests an aggressive intervention. In this way, the expressive arcs read as gestures of a different types, which aim to uproot abstraction from its more staid or frozen instantiations, to encourage it to move in time, as evident in the inchoate arcs at the top. This may well be what Tuttle means in his remark as the conclusion of his commentary on *Replace II*: “The extreme verticality of this sculpture points paradoxically to the horizontal.”

On the subject of time and movement, I offer a final connection between *Replace I* and *Replace II*: both image abstraction in the highly abstracted form of living creatures. Whereas this might be obvious in the serpent-like form of *Replace I*, it takes more time in *Replace II* for this reference to come into focus. As encouraged by the catalogue’s essays as well as Tuttle’s commentary, *Replace II* is a highly abstract figure, inspired by the abstract figures of the Spanish sculptor Julio González (1872-1942) and the Austrian sculptor Fritz Wotruba (1907-1975). In fact, one of Wotruba’s stone-towers of cubes can be found just opposite *Replace II* in the sculpture garden at Kunsthaus Zug.¹⁹³ When considering Tuttle’s broader oeuvre, it initially seems implausible that Tuttle is interested in the anthropomorphic, primarily because the figure makes no obvious appearance in his

¹⁹³ It is worth noting, in the context of my analysis of *Replace II*, that David Smith’s *Cubi* had also been considered anthropomorphic. In 1966, the Minimalist Robert Morris disapprovingly declared that the *Cubi* series had not discarded the dreaded illusion of the figure, no matter how abstracted it might be. See Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 1 and 2.”

art. Yet, given that Tuttle is interested in grounding abstraction, and moreover, in its temporal and contextual conditions, the figure may well be apropos.¹⁹⁴ Thus, against the purist exhortations of figures such as Greenberg, Fried, and, at one point, Malevich, *Replace II* is an image that is both referential and abstract, ironically referencing the human body/figure, the very entity (and its associations) that the most idealist doctrines of abstraction have disavowed in the name of perfection and permanence.

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“Now, here is where the tour gets hard to follow....” As with *Replace II*, we must search for the next piece in the series, a task that returns us to the interior of the museum and down a set of stairs. Located in a gallery directly underneath the courtyard of *Replace II*, *Replace III* is almost perfectly aligned with its predecessor axially (Figure 3.49). But, as is perhaps already clear for this series, such an axial alignment does not guarantee progression or obvious similitude.

In contrast to *Replace I* and *Replace II*, *Replace III* (Figure 3.50) is relatively small and set on the floor, making contact with the ground at multiple points. It comprises two pieces that are set slightly apart from each other—a small square and shallow wooden box and a tripod-like piece—and which are connected only by a sinuous and animated wire. At first glance, the piece seems as though a three-dimensional gestural mark or scribble. Seemingly emerging from a small and shallow square box on the floor, the wire springs over to the tripod-form where it wraps itself excessively around a 2 by 4 in the middle. An additional segment of wire intertwines around the legs,

¹⁹⁴ In his essay for the catalogue, Kunsthaus Zug Director Matthias Haldemann writes that *Replace II* is a figure that is “standing firmly on solid ground.” See *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*, 87.

while yet another weaves its way in and out of a wooden sphere located in the middle of the tripod-form. In some sense, the tripod contraption seems to be in the process of breaking apart. Tuttle discloses that *Replace III* is about “movement” and “time”: “Doesn’t it look like a fallen tree, uprooted, dying, ready to die, but finding life...?”

When compared to *Replace I* and *Replace II*, *Replace III* is a smaller piece, measuring at 2 feet by 13 feet, and yet has more dynamism in its form. Though sparsely colored, its forms are partly activated by the vibrancy and handling of these colors—by the energetic application of orange paint and the sinuous green wire. Naturally, attention is drawn to the wooden sphere, where the orange paint and wire are primarily concentrated. Roughly fashioned from thin and pliable wooden strips and a planar circular base, the sphere seems to be amid a whirling motion, coming together as much as it is falling apart (Figure 3.51). When seen in this light as well as in terms of materials (e.g. wood and wire) and composition, there are specters of the tentatively constituted objects in *Floor Drawings* as examined earlier in this chapter as well as, most obviously, the morphing form of *Replace I*.

As earlier noted, the wire appears to emerge from a shallow box on the floor (Figure 3.52). We never see its origin as such and can only assume it comes somewhere from underneath, perhaps indicating the ground. Boring a hole through the bottom panel of the box, the wire thrusts upwards, seemingly lifting the lid of the box in the process. But more than just lifting the lid, the wire actually makes a seam in the box lid before springing over to the tripod-form. It is a subtle detail that suggests that the green wire functions as an agent of change if not an agent of destruction.

Indeed, the longer one observes *Replace III*, the more one senses that the source of the piece's activity is enacted by the green wire. Weaving its way throughout the different segments of this work, the green line seizes on and entangles itself with the most stabilizing components: its legs, its central shaft, and, most dramatically, its sphere. As with the shallow box, the wire bores through the circular base of the sphere at multiple points, wrapping itself around the spiraling swarm of wooden strips and pulling them with its tautness up, down, and generally against the direction of the strips' natural form.

But as much as the green wire can be seen to be an agent of destruction, it is also an agent of regeneration, something that Tuttle suggests in his commentary on *Replace III* and in excess of his remark about the piece being “uprooted, dying, ready to die, but finding life...?” For Tuttle, the green wire is associated with generative capabilities of nature, its fecundity and creation, linking the sinuous green wire of *Replace III* with *Replace I*'s snaking line: “Lately, I have become aware of how much I am interested in the earth—even as the source of jewels and gems. Where the wire touches the earth in *Replace III*, having gone through the receiving box, seems so much like the beginning place of *Replace I*.”

The connections of *Replace III* to *Replace I* and *Replace II* are becoming clearer. To be sure, there are formal similarities between the three pieces thus far—orange and green colors and especially twisting or contorting forms—*Replace I* as it winds through the spiral staircase on the north galleries, the expressive arcs of *Replace II*, and the whirling sphere in *Replace III*. But equally important, I would contend, is their shared insistence on fecundity and generation, creation and movement. While unlike *Replace I* and *Replace II*, *Replace III* is not exactly an abstracted reference to a living creature, in

its positioning on the ground, *Replace III* reminds us, as did *Blocks*, *Colored Triangles*, *Floor Drawings* and *Source of Imagery*, of what it is to think of abstraction as grounded in the real and by conditions of being-in-the-world.

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Replace IV was installed in close proximity to *Replace III*. Spanning the two floors of the south galleries in the Kunsthaus, *Replace IV* is the last work in the series, but it is also a series in its own right, consisting of forty abstractly painted panels evenly split between the two floors (Figure 3.53). The forty panels are small and are painted diachromatically with opposing colors from the chromatic spectrum (Figures 3.54-3.57). When considered against other works in the *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* series, *Replace IV* seems the most straightforwardly aligned with the history of abstraction. That is, these geometric, abstract works readily conjure types of purified paintings such as the monochrome and mid-20th-century color-field and hard-edged paintings, all of which are often regarded as abstraction's *most abstracted* types or purest forms. Indeed, the forty pieces constituting *Replace IV* are those within *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* that are most like quintessentially abstracted pictures planes.

Each piece in *Replace IV* includes what Tuttle terms a "plane," an 11-inch square piece of plywood that is bisected by a freehanded pencil line and then painted in opposing colors with water-based acrylic paint. Depending on the dilution of the paint, the finished application on the panels can resemble either a watercolor wash or have the consistency of an oil painting. At times, the paint is extremely diluted, clearly allowing the grains of the plywood underneath to become visible (Figure 3.55). In other pieces, the paint is more opaque, and yet the paint application is never precisely even or fully

covering (Figure 3.56). In other instances, the paint is gestural, full of dramatic brushstrokes (Figure 3.57). These examples of Tuttle's painted planes recall the stained canvases of Post-Painterly Abstraction such as Helen Frankenthaler or Morris Louis, the vertically bisected canvases of Newman, and the textured, expressive canvases of de Kooning, respectively.

Of course, the painting techniques of each of these artists are closely aligned in the history of art with a unique, individual if not signature style. But in Tuttle's panels that recall them, their associations with a signature style are problematized. For in their context in a series of forty panels, Tuttle emphasizes that these seemingly unique styles of abstraction are but options among multiple styles. Moreover, even in his quotation of these styles, there are nuanced variations between the panels that, for example, conjure Newman's or Pollock's paintings, underscoring that even within a signature style (typically associated with a repetitive sameness) there is change and difference.

If change and difference is meaningful between these panels, it is also central within each of them. Consider again this particular plane painted in golden yellow and orange (Figure 3.55). Upon closer observation, it is apparent that all its edges are cut in an irregular fashion, a feature that suggests a subtle sense of movement in the plane and which is heightened by the colored plane's setting against an oppositional field of white. Moreover, as the application of the water-based acrylic paint on this panel is more transparent, the grains of the plywood in the panel *surface*, revealing a material constitution of the picture plane itself. Similar instances of materiality also surface in the opaque planes as well as those painted in gestural brushwork, where the grains of the plywood continue to emerge amid the paint. In his commentary on *Replace IV*, Tuttle

says: “You can tell me about the downward energetics of the wood grain underneath the painted surface, how it wants to jump to the surface....” With this statement, Tuttle muses: the plywood underneath is “becoming a surface, a plane,” a statement that harkens back to the earlier analysis of *Cycle*, where the material support (surface) of aspenite was purposefully entangled with the traditional picture plane features of paint and line. Here too, in his use of plywood (made of layers on layers), Tuttle’s *Replace IV* planes insist on self-differing.

And yet, something else is curious about these panels—they are somehow skewed. Tuttle admits this: “the plane lies in front of its white contextualizing box and the complete structure rests $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the actual wall surface.” Indeed, the backs of the frames are not flush with the wall and, when viewed from the side, the panels slightly extend beyond their frames (Figure 3.54). Within the interior of the white framing box, but directly behind the painted planes, another block of paneling, roughly a few inches thick, is detectible and it pushes the painted planes forward. For the majority of works in *Replace IV*, the extension of the painted planes in front of a box is slight, merely effected by this block of extra plywood paneling. However, in some of the works, this extension from the front of plane is exaggerated as one side of the plywood panel is doubled, resulting in the appearance of something like a shallow sideways step. It would appear, then, that the planes were emerging from the wall, and extending too from their boxes. Rather than containing, Tuttle’s boxes are the thing from which his abstract picture planes seem to extend. Regarding the curious properties of *Replace IV*’s work, Tuttle says: “These, I can’t help but feel, are essential features of the replaced abstract picture plane.”

One further point of analysis: consider more closely the curious construction of the frame in the “white contextualizing box” (Figure 3.58). Handcrafted by Tuttle, these frames appear slapdash in their formation, particularly the corner joints. When typically making a frame, corner joints are formed at a 45-degree mitered-angle and are brought together to form a 90-degree corner, making the seam at their conjunction thin if not inconspicuous. As is obvious with the corner joints of Tuttle’s frames, there is no seamless 90-degree corner. Instead, the sections of the frame are positioned such that they overrun the corners, creating a sense of a cyclical and counterclockwise movement. This seemingly haphazard style of making frames has been present in Tuttle’s oeuvre since 1980s, most conspicuously in series such as *Old Men and their Garden* (1982) (Figure 3.59). But the frames of *Replace IV* recall more precisely the frames of another series, *How it Goes Around the Corner* (1996) (Figure 3.60), which was made concurrently with the *Replace* series. As the title *How it Goes Around the Corner* suggests, the handmade wooden frames, with conspicuous gaps at their corners, evince a kind of slippery or shifting movement, much like the frames in *Replace IV*. If, like the various elements of *Cycle* and *How it Goes Around the Corner*, the boxes, frames, and planes in the individual pieces of *Replace IV* suggest various kinds of movement, then it is further exacerbated by the works’ installation as a series.

Note how the pieces are positioned in a larger horizontal line, which when taken together becomes a moving line of slightly shifting panels. Such a sense of movement is made more provocative as the spaces in-between each piece, each box-like frame, seem as though interstices between filmic frames, suggesting a kind of a cinematic propulsion and motion. When the differentiated panels are viewed as a series, they seem to image the

very notion of something in-process, of something that continues, of something in pure movement. In this way, Tuttle subverts the *timeless purity* typically associated with Greenberg's ideas of abstract painting. For, in its depiction of abstract painting as pure movement, *Replace IV* depicts aims to expand the picture plane in time.

Consider again how *Replace IV* spans the two floors of the Kunsthaus' south galleries (Figure 3.53). On the upper floor, twenty of the pieces are arranged horizontally on two walls that are perpendicular to each other, a horizontal "L" shape, while another twenty pieces are hung in the same manner in the gallery below, save for the fact that they are a mirror image of those above. When observed through the split between floors and around the spiral staircase, the arrangement of the pieces in *Replace IV* become as if abstracted lines that combine to configure the abstract picture plane as an open-ended cube that continues to expand. I would argue that it is no coincidence that *Replace IV* is presented in the two-story framework of an open-cube, for it means to surround us if not suggestively move about the space with us. And while *Replace IV* is the final term in the larger series of *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*, it is not suggestive of an end. Instead, in the open-endedness of its lines, it seems very much like a point from which to continue, to begin (again).

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Throughout Tuttle's commentary, there is a constant use of the term "line." In hindsight, one sees that it is by means of various lines that Tuttle enacts his changeable abstract picture plane: the winding green line of *Replace I*, the curving and inchoate arcs of *Replace II*, the sinuous, activated green wire of *Replace III*, and in *Replace IV*, the energetic lines within the panels (plywood grains, paint application, and irregular edges)

and the expansive lines that they configure on the whole. And if these lines are to image what the abstract picture plane is for Tuttle, then it is, as with his seriality, always in-process.

But Tuttle, I would argue, offers another way to think about this line. Indeed, in walking through the wandering line of the exhibition of this series with him, we are also reminded, in its variant forms, ideas, and locations and in Tuttle's insistence on searching and exploring, how this site-specific series evokes the notion of a line of thought, which likewise wanders and searches. Perhaps Tuttle's enigmatic statement that *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* "takes advantage of how things are seen in order to be seen" becomes clearer. That is to say, it is a series of art that draws on the meandering and differing nature of thought in order to say something about abstract art's relation to thinking.

Of course, "abstraction" has always been associated with thought and thus philosophy, and abstraction typically is considered the form of art wherein art "performs" philosophy, where art images thought. But as we have come to see in Tuttle's seriality, in *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* and elsewhere, Tuttle's art does not readily transmit a crystalline idea. In this way, shared ways of thinking, and moreover, in thinking about thought, once again emerge between Deleuze's philosophy and Tuttle's seriality.

There is a striking rhetorical link between the mutative abstract picture plane as imaged by Tuttle and Deleuze's and Guattari's "plane of immanence" as discussed in

What is Philosophy? (1991):¹⁹⁵

The plane of immanence is not a concept that is or can be thought but rather the image of thought, the image thought gives itself of what it means to think, to make use of thought, to find one's bearings in thought.... The image of thought retains only what thought can claim by right. Thought demands "only" movement that can be carried to infinity. What thought claims by right, what it selects, is infinite movement or the movement of the infinite. It is this that constitutes the image of thought.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Because I understand Tuttle's notion of the abstract picture plane as neither a precise equivalent to nor a literalization of Deleuze's (and Guattari's) philosophy, it is important to note that my use of their plane in *What is Philosophy?* and its correspondences to my understanding of Tuttle's abstract serial art is indeed more conceptually abstract. Thus, it necessitates that I depart from some of the central contentions and articulations made by Deleuze and Guattari in *What is Philosophy?* A central part of *What is Philosophy?* addresses philosophy's relations to the arts such as music and painting as well as its relation to science. As Deleuze and Guattari understand it, philosophy, the arts, and science can be regarded as corresponding modes of thought. In terms of the visual arts, they mostly focus on painting, as Deleuze had done so in previous texts such as *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981). Crucial to their text is the distinctions they assert between philosophy and painting. As they write, philosophy and painting are different disciplines that operate in different fields or "planes." They articulate these different planes as "a philosophical plane of immanence" and "an artistic plane of composition." But they also contend that such distinctions between the disciplines allow for affinities and exchanges of creative forces, that "the philosophical" must also contain something of "the non-philosophical." In some sense, my rhetorical link between the plane of immanence and Tuttle's notion of the abstract picture plane is inspired by the possibilities for such affinities and exchanges. However, it should also be noted that in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari use "plane of consistency," "plane of immanence," and "plane of composition" synonymously and, thus, in another sense, I am using their notions of "planes" as employed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. For an excellent explication of the differentiation of "planes" in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* as well as the latter's relation to the broader arts, see Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Music, Painting, and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003). More generally, my thinking on Deleuze's philosophy and its implications for Tuttle's art at the intersection of art/life was also impacted by Bogue's, *Deleuze's Way: Essays in Transverse Ethics and Aesthetics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

¹⁹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* [1991], trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York and West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1991), 37. The "image of thought" was first advanced in Deleuze's oeuvre in *Difference and Repetition* (1968), wherein the philosopher argued for a thought that is

A plane that images movement in thought, that gives the image of “what it means to think, to make use of thought”: this too can be seen as a description of Tuttle’s image of the abstract picture plane. For, rather than merely illustrate fixed ideas or static images of thought(s), Tuttle’s abstract series, I argue, image the *process of thinking as such*, which, in turn, is a process as multiple and varied, contingent and suggestively infinite as his seriality would image.

As the experience of the labyrinthine installation of *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* underscores, thought is always a process that functions in the in-between; it is rife with incoherence in the moment as well as uncertainty about what was and what will be. Indeed, it is significant that at the end of this particular series, we find ourselves somehow (still) in the middle of something, if not at another beginning—a circumstance of thinking that can be frustrating. But, as ever, Tuttle would encourage us in the

analogous to abstract art, what he terms as a “theory of thought without image.” (Indeed, of his theory of thought, Deleuze wrote that “it needs that revolution which took art from representation to abstraction.”)¹⁹⁶ According to Deleuze, from Plato and Aristotle to Descartes and Kant, philosophy has perpetuated a representational image of thought. Comprising aspects of recognition, resemblance, opposition, analogy, and identity, this representational image of thought contains dogmatic and presupposed ways of thinking and, moreover, it prevents one from understanding the repetition of difference in thought as well as thought as a generative force of difference. In contrast to the universality and fixity of representational thought, Deleuze calls for an imageless thought. Of course, this is not to say that Deleuze is against images but that thought should contain movement and difference and with this comes the element of time. Deleuze writes that thought must contain “the pure and empty form of time” for it is this very form of time that “introduces and constitutes Difference in thought...” (276). As Deleuze argues, thought comes into being through the *difference of thought*, which is itself an ongoing and temporal process. Thus, when Deleuze and Guattari write of the “image of thought” in *What is Philosophy?*, they are insistent on associating this theory of thought with movement and difference. As they contend, the aim of philosophy is to invent concepts or to change the ways we think about inherited concepts. Inventing or altering concepts, they contend, incites *movements in thought*, which leads to new discoveries, new questions—in short, to the practice of thinking and rethinking ideas. See *What is Philosophy?*, 1-9.

wandering and incessant process of thought, of all that might be found in the middle.

After all, as *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* images, it is in the in-between-ness of thought that ideas are explored, possibilities are discovered, and the future is invented.

For, in Tuttle's seriality, in-between-ness is genesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUBVERTING ENDS: THE LATER SERIES

If artwork can... redefine or define human beings in a way that's helpful to life on this planet, I think it's very useful. I think art is... one of the best possibilities we have to give ourselves the definition that we need to go on.
~Richard Tuttle¹⁹⁷

In the latter years of his career, Tuttle's seriality achieves an unprecedented level of directness by explicitly targeting various notions of systems, models, and methods, taking aim at the predictability, coherence, and resolution with which they are typically associated. This chapter focuses on two such series by Tuttle: *Walking on Air* (2008-2009), a series of abstractly dyed cloth paintings that reconsider conventional methods of view painting and linear perspective, and *Systems* (2011-2012), a series of large freestanding structures that faces head on the very concepts of systems and models as such. As we will find, while *Walking on Air* and *Systems* are separate series, they are linked in their premise to image the incoherence and uncertainty of life as well as the means by which one might come to navigate it.

I.

From 2008-2009, Tuttle created *Walking on Air*, a series that comprises at least thirty-two known works. In fact, the series is made up of at least three sub-series subtitled

¹⁹⁷ Quoted in Susan Harris, 49.

“B,” “C,” and “E,” each of which contains a varied number of works therein. Such distinctions reflect no such difference at the level of execution, since all works in the series are made in the same fashion. Ultimately mounted to the wall, each work consists of two overlapping cotton panels, both of which measure approximately 1 ft x 10 ft. The cloths have been dyed with Rit colors in careful ways such that at first glance, they seem in some respects to be reminiscent of the stained abstract canvases as discussed in the previous chapter (Figures 4.1-4.6).

While the works’ colors and dye-styles vary across the series, other formal elements remain consistent, even beyond the size of the panels. For example, each of the *Walking on Air* works contains twenty-seven small holes. The upper panels have a successive alignment of nine holes on both top and bottom, while on the lower panels, nine holes are included only at the top. When overlapped, the holes on the bottom of the upper panel align with those at the top of the lower panel, such that, following careful placements of nails, the panels can be easily installed, unrolled from the large spool around which they are stored and merely slipped onto the nails—first the lower panel and then the upper panel (Figures 4.7-4.8). In order to smooth out the panels, both the holes and thus the nails are spaced in way so that the cloth is pulled tautly, requiring Tuttle to reinforce the holes with metal grommets to prevent the cotton from unraveling or tearing. However, as is evident in some of pieces’ installation on the wall, the attempt to smooth out the panels is not wholly successful as the cloth always remains somehow rumped and the hanging of the panels always slightly irregular.

With few exceptions, the panels that comprise each work are of contrasting colors, usually with one panel lighter and the other darker. This contrast is exacerbated

then by the obvious seam formed in their overlapping as seen in a detail of *Walking on Air B10* (2008) (Figure 4.9). Tuttle has called the *Walking on Air* works “a band of cloud and sky,” but I argue that there is more to the works than mere atmospheric or meteorological interests.¹⁹⁸ Given their horizontal format and the conspicuous seam formed by the contrasting panels, the works hint at the tradition of landscape painting, with the upper and lower panels as if sky and land/sea, respectively, and the seam of the overlapping panels, a horizon line. While commentaries on the *Walking on Air* series have noted the kinship to landscape painting in a casual fashion, I would argue that the landscape tradition is central to the significance of the series.

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Consider how certain features of Tuttle’s seemingly abstract panels become evocative of landscape painting’s typical schema. Jagged vertical stitches in lower level of *Walking on Air B4* (2008) (Figure 4.1) become as if forests or vegetation against a hazy sky in the upper panel, while a similar scene is conjured in *Walking on Air C1* (2009) (Figure 4.6), albeit with a clearer sky and a warmer terra firma. The blood orange circles in the lower panel of *Walking on Air B5* (2008) (Figure 4.2) appear like the headlights of traffic at night, with its purple panels above suggesting the time of either dawn or dusk. *Walking on Air B10* (2008) (Figure 4.4) appears as though a red harvest moon over golden fields on a steely cold night and *Walking on Air B11* (2008) (Figure 4.5) looks like a sunny coastal scene. Some of the works in the series recall famous landscapes, as with *Walking on Air B12* (2008) (Figure 4.3), which seems to be a highly-abstracted version of the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich’s famous

¹⁹⁸ “Interview with Arne Glimcher,” *Richard Tuttle: Walking on Air*, DVD, 2009.

Monk by the Sea (c. 1810) (Figure 4.10). Tuttle's white circle of the lower panel is as though a stand in for the miniscule monk, who in Friedrich's painting is set against an overwhelming and ominous scape of sea and sky, where he contemplates his uncertain relation to the forces of nature.

Contemplative landscapes are well known to Tuttle. He counts the American Luminist painter John Frederick Kensett among his paternal ancestry, which has led some to speculate on his artistic kinship with Kensett and the Luminist tradition.¹⁹⁹ Luminist

¹⁹⁹ Drawing on this claim to paternal ancestry as well as his Lutheran, Congregationalist, and Presbyterian roots, Madeline Grynsztejn has written of Tuttle's oeuvre affinities to the Luminist landscape tradition (1850s-1860s) and its attendant relation to American Transcendentalism, a 19th-century literary, religious, and philosophical movement comprised of a loosely associated group in New England. (As scholars have noted for some time, American Transcendentalism is difficult to articulate; its practitioners such as Emerson and Thoreau were neither entirely empiricists and materialists nor idealists and rationalists, leaving its practical applications inconsistent and vague at best. However, suffice it to say that American Transcendentalism was an idealistic system of thought, interested in relieving one from the circumstances (and burdens) of life by aiming for a transcendent and timeless world of ideas and imagination. For, underlying the Transcendental system was a deeply religious current and the assumptions that God, truth, the good, freedom, and beauty could be experienced essentially and universally.) Grynsztejn writes that the idealistic aims of American Transcendentalism and in particular its "abolition of ego for the sake of a reconciliation with Divine" were central to the Luminist landscape tradition. Like the Transcendental practitioners, the Luminist painters, Grynsztejn contends, attempted to reconcile the natural world with the Divine by means of an "intense contemplation" of the spirit of nature. By concealing their brushstrokes beneath a smooth, slick surface of paint, Grynsztejn writes that the Luminist worked in an "egoless style." Grynsztejn argues that similar to the Luminists, "Tuttle's method is also self-effacing," that there is no "signature style" in the making of his art. As Grynsztejn writes, this ultimately situates Tuttle in the tradition of a Luminist "ethos" and places Tuttle "in the tradition of American Transcendentalism, which combines equal doses of metaphysics and pragmatism in its attempt to give specific form to the immaterial." See Grynsztejn, 20-21. As this study has argued, Tuttle's serial art aims in part to make visible that which is invisible but there is much in this *Walking on Air* series as well as his larger oeuvre that complicates a correspondence between Tuttle and Luminism and American Transcendentalism, the least of which is that Tuttle's serial art is suspicious of the kinds of essentialist categories and originary ideas to which Luminism and American Transcendentalism aspired.

paintings were generally elongated rectangles (typically at least 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide) and showcased expansive views of a countryside, a sea, or a river. Because of their deep aerial perspective, their slickly applied paint, and sharply modeled objects, Luminist paintings affected a sense of tranquility and calm, reading as though they were moments frozen in time and readily available for quiet contemplation, as a work like John Frederick Kensett's 1859 *Shrewsbury River, New Jersey* attests (Figure 4.11).

To be sure, there are similarities between Tuttle's similarly expansive rectangular panels and Kensett's horizontally stretching paintings. But for all the ways that Tuttle's *Walking on Air* series shares features of different landscape traditions, when carefully scrutinized as "landscapes," the cloth works seem somehow off. In addition to tangible wrinkles and rumpling that all the works possess, some works in the series include blatant three-dimensional features. In one work, a strip of rope snakes through the cloth (Figure 4.12), while in another, a cluster of string stretches across a lower panel (Figure 4.13). In some works, rough stitching runs throughout the lower panels, gathering the cloth unevenly in the process (Figures 4.13-4.14). Whether simply adhered to the cloth's surface or threaded through it, these three-dimensional additives exacerbate the cotton cloth's tendency to pucker or bunch, creating sculpture-like features on the planar panels. Moreover, these additives can read as if horizon lines themselves, even if they are slightly under the overlapping seam or in the middle of the lower panel, effectively multiplying a line that is typically understood to be singular, in landscape painting and in nature more broadly, indicative of orientation and symbolic of stability. Whether it be the horizon in a pastoral landscape by the 17th-century Frenchman Claude Lorrain (Figure 4.15), in an 18th-century Venetian *vedute* by the Italian Canaletto (Figure 4.16), or in a 19th-century

Luminist painting by the American John Frederick Kensett, this line is fixed, much like the division between earth and sky. Yet, in Tuttle's *Walking on Air*, it would appear that the horizon line is multiple, if not moving.

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By way of investigating these curious horizon lines, consider the curatorial logic of two exhibitions, wherein some of the works from the *Walking on Air* series were displayed. Firstly, there is Tuttle's 2014 solo exhibition "1, 2, 3" at the Galleri Nicolai Wallner in Denmark (Figure 4.17) in which seven of the 2009 works in the *Walking on Air* series were shown alongside another series of painterly pieces entitled *Sharing 1-25* (Figure 4.18, with details) also from 2009, and a 2013 series of steel abstract sculptures called *Making Silver*, as seen in these installation shots (Figure 4.19). In the press release for this exhibition, the gallery noted the centrality of the "horizontal line" throughout all of Tuttle's work in the exhibition, but it especially emphasized it in the wall bound works:

(The horizontal line) is most evident in *Sharing 1-25*, where series of graphite and watercolor lines figure on the bottom of small, narrow, horizontal papers. The lines draw the spectator's eye along the exhibition space, giving the work a sense of movement, as it becomes necessary to physically move to observe all twenty-five components of the work. *Walking on Air* continues the idea of the horizontal line, as two long pieces of dyed cloth are installed one on top of the other, creating a line as they overlap. The creation of this line through installation reveals its delicate and non-permanent nature....²⁰⁰

Within the individual drawings that constitute *Sharing 1-25*, these horizontal lines appear multiple and in fact, some contain as many as four lines. When read in a top to bottom or bottom to top succession, the horizon line seems to be shifting or blurring (Figure 4.20),

²⁰⁰ "Richard Tuttle: 1, 2, 3," Galleri Nicolai Wallner, accessed October 20, 2016, https://www.nicolaiwallner.com/press_releases.php?action=details&id=33.

an effect that is made more palpable as one moves with the larger horizontal line formed by the individual drawings within their installation in the gallery. As the press release goes on to state, these horizontal lines of *Sharing 1-25* and *Walking on Air* convey a “sense of movement,” a comparison that is especially encouraged by the fact that *Sharing 1-25* was displayed in a room alongside two works from *Walking on Air* (Figure 4.17).²⁰¹

In the seven works from *Walking on Air* displayed in this exhibition, the overlapping seam-as-horizon line never sits quite flush with the wall. Instead, at the bottom of the top panels especially, the cloth gathers in swags and puddles, not unlike the cloth of a stage curtain, made most evident in the relatively evenly dyed top panels of *Walking on Air E1* and *Walking on Air E7* (Figures 4.21-4.22). In the other works on display, the seam-as-horizon line is further complicated by the fact that there appears to be more than one horizon line. In *Walking on Air E5* (Figure 4.23), the overlapping seam is slightly extended above and below by seemingly pulsating blue and brown dye lines, while in the upper panel a thick yellow band floats under the top row of holes. More subtly, there is a seam on the lower panel, which works, in turn, to distort the straightness of the line and subsequently the smoothness of the panel itself. In *Walking on Air E4* (Figure 4.24), the seeming distinctions between sky and land (top and bottom panel) are problematized by two orange splotches, each of which seeps into each of the other panels in a diagonal and dynamic fashion. Moreover, several hot pink ink blobs form another kind of horizon line that bleeds from the edge of the lower panel and towards the bottom seam.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

If movement was a subtle but palpable feature of the *Walking on Air* series in the 2014 “1, 2, 3” exhibition, it was made explicit when the first pieces of the series were debuted in Tuttle’s inaugural exhibition with The Pace Gallery in Chelsea in April 2009. The eponymously titled exhibition “Walking on Air” showcased a selection of the series from 2008 throughout one large room, wherein the works were installed at various heights along the walls (Figure 4.25). Some of the works were placed in such a way that their horizon lines were at eye level. Others were hung slightly lower and higher, differences that were undetectable in cursory surveys. However, in one instance in the exhibition, the earlier discussed piece of *Walking on Air B8* is installed dramatically far above the head (Figure 4.26), with the edge of the lower panel far beyond a comfortable tilt of the head.

Of this installation’s design, Tuttle has remarked: “When we were hanging the show, I had this idea that the viewer should feel like they are riding on a carousel.”²⁰² Indeed, one does and to the extent that one might even feel as if they are “walking on air,” without the restraint of gravity or the specificity of time and space. Whether the shifts are slight or not, the fact is that in this installation, the horizon line-as-overlapping-seam is strangely on the move, suggesting, in turn, that the traditional correlative of horizon line and stability is somehow unhinged. Admittedly, such an unsettling description of geographic space and stability therein might also conjure dire warnings or apocalyptic tones. However, I argue that Tuttle’s interests in making landscapes in this

²⁰² Piper Marshall, “Walking on Air: A Conversation with Richard Tuttle,” *Art in America*, April 10, 2009, accessed January 3, 2017, <http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/richard-tuttle-walking-on-air-pace-wildenstein-1/>.

way are less about presaging something ominous and more about unsettling conventional ideas of viewing the world around us. For, if Tuttle's *Walking on Air* works are abstract landscapes that upend the fixity of the horizon line, it is because they aim to dismantle particular *views*.

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From the 17th-19th centuries, and because of the variety of views that they proffered spectators, landscape paintings were often termed as “view” paintings. For example, viewers were morally gratified by the order of nature in Claudian pastoral scenes, could marvel over the precise detail in the formulaic *vedute* of a Canaletto, and were made contemplative by the contrived serenity of a Kensett scene. More generally, view paintings reaffirmed an attunement between the viewer and nature, a way of harmonizing the individual's relationship to the world around him. Indeed, the ordered and trusted structures of traditional view painting ultimately sought to revel in a view that would resemble, more or less, the world as it supposedly was or, more pointedly, the world as one desired it to look: static, ordered, and coherent.

While in the *Walking on Air* works, there is a sense that one is standing before views of the world, these views and, moreover, the world it depicts are anything but static, ordered, and coherent. Rather, there seems a willful disjunction within Tuttle's views, made most explicit in the horizon line-as-overlapping-seam, which is constructed by means of holes and nails, stitching and tension (Figures 4.7-4.9, 4.12-4.14). Moreover, given that Tuttle's horizon lines meet our gaze at what is (almost) always at our eye-level, these curiously conspicuous lines both recall and complicate the horizon line of linear perspective, which was, for Alberti, a line made coextensive with one's sight and

thus indicative of a coalescence between the viewer and the view. As we will find, Tuttle's *Walking on Air* series reads linear perspective against the grain, exposing the deficiencies of the perspectival system as originally instituted, namely by the holes that preforate the series' panels.

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In addition to inventing the picture plane (as discussed in the previous chapter), Alberti's 1435 *On Painting* was also the origin of many of Western painting's theories and practices, most famously the codification of linear perspective.²⁰³ However, Alberti's discussion of linear perspective begins not with the techniques or materials of painting *per se* but rather with a way of seeing—what he terms as the “visual pyramid.”²⁰⁴ Alberti describes the visual pyramid as a cone of vision comprising three elements: 1) the “cuspid,” or the point of the pyramid (which is located within the eye), 2) extrinsic rays or parallel lines that emanate from the eye, and 3) the picture plane (Figure 4.27). As Alberti describes it, the pyramid is a figure of a body from whose base straight lines are drawn upward, terminating in a single point. The base of this pyramid is a plane that is seen. Emanating from a projective figure, the visual pyramid is an optical and conceptual scheme through which the subjects of painting are observed and reconciled against one's (monocular) vision. Thus, in Alberti's perspectival system,

²⁰³ It is important to note that many scholars agree that Alberti's writing on the linear perspective method was no more than a written record of Filippo Brunelleschi's organizational scheme for painting, which already in practice at the time of Alberti's writing. Indeed, the *invention* of linear perspective is often attributed to Brunelleschi's experiment with a painting of the Florence Baptistery. See also Antonio Manetti, *The Life of Brunelleschi*, trans. Catherine Enggass (University Park and London: Penn State Press, 1970).

²⁰⁴ Alberti, *On Painting*, 40-59. The primary source material in discussing Alberti's perspectival system in this paragraph is drawn from various points from this page range.

before a mark is made on the canvas, both *how and what one sees* is conceived already in terms of a fixed and cohesive geometric structure. As we will see, Alberti's explication of perspective is both an ideal system (model) and ideal method (means).

As briefly described in Chapter 3, the picture plane for Alberti was "a rectangle of whatever size... which [he] regard[s] as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen." Keeping the window metaphor at hand, he instructs the reader as to how the ordered view produced by the visual pyramid can be transferred onto the picture plane by means of a window-paned-like grid (Figure 4.28). Alberti writes:

I believe nothing more convenient can be found than the veil.... It is like this: a veil loosely woven of fine thread, dyed whatever color you please, divided up by thicker threads into as many parallel square sections as you like, and stretched on a frame. I set this up between the eye and object to be represented, so that the visual pyramid passes through the loose weave of the veil. This intersection of the veil has many advantages, first of all because it always presents the same surface unchanged, for once you have fixed the position of the outlines, you can immediately find the apex of the pyramid you started with....²⁰⁵

The gridded veil is an intermediate tool that allows for a one-to-one correspondence between what is seen and what is painted. Set between the artist and the object to be depicted, the veil fixes the object in the sightline, which then can be transferred to the painting by imitating the grid on the surface of the picture plane. As Alberti notes, the veil facilitates a "system of parallels" between the eye and the picture plane.²⁰⁶

In this transition from seeing to making, Alberti tells readers to follow the "centric ray" that extends from the eye, through the veil, and to the plane. Marking this as the vanishing point or the "centric point," because "it occupies the place where the centric ray strikes," Alberti then instructs readers to draw parallel lines from this point to

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 65.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 67.

the foreground of the picture plane and adds that through the centric point is to be drawn a horizontal line is to be drawn, which Alberti terms the “centric line,” an artificial horizon line that extends the centric point across the painting’s surface, at the eye’s level.²⁰⁷

Like the visual pyramid, the picture plane is constructed as a cohesive geometric scheme. In fact, these schemes of seeing (visual pyramid) and making (picture plane) are as if mirror reflections of each other, as the fixed centric point of the painting can be seen as the specular image of the cuspid in the sightline, suggesting that the one is tethered to the other. Hence in Alberti’s perspectival system, the viewer’s centrality is emphasized in both the conception and manifestation of the painting and, in turn, seems to construct a self-contained world of the viewer’s own making.

Central to Alberti’s method is an interest in fixity. Although Alberti encourages the painter to depict the natural world, to imbue it with the likeness of our “bodies” and “emotions,” he counters this statement elsewhere in the text by telling readers to arrest the movement of the subjects in painting, or, put otherwise, to *fix what one sees*. As Alberti remarks: “You know how impossible it is to paint something which does not continually present the same aspect....”²⁰⁸ In other words, it is difficult to represent something that moves, a problem solved by Alberti, in part, by the disciplinary tactic of the gridded veil that captures the view (“because it always presents the same surface unchanged”).²⁰⁹ Thus, perspective for Alberti is a method whereby a moving or fleeting subject is rendered static. But as perhaps is already becoming clear, and *contra* Alberti’s

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 58.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, 64-65.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. 65.

notion of “view,” the views as depicted in Tuttle’s *Walking on Air* series are shifting. Of course, the term “view” is multi-valent in meaning, can reference both sights and sites as well as ideas and perspectives, and this multi-valence is important. For, in Alberti’s writing on the perspectival system, meanings of the “view” —as what we see and as how we see—are readily interchanged and muddled, a confusion that Tuttle’s series likewise will press upon.

Ultimately, for Alberti, perspective was a way of ordering and fixing what one sees and perceives. As art historian Erwin Panofsky pronounced in his text, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*: “The result (of Renaissance perspective) was a translation of psychological space into mathematical space; in other words, an objectification of the subjective.”²¹⁰ At the same time, for Panofsky, linear perspective “is as much a consolidation and systemization of the world, as an extension of the domain of the self.”²¹¹ In other words, perspective makes the world in our image, but it also controls and fixes that image by means of an inhuman monocular eye, the centric point, both of which aimed to image a triumphant mode of seeing the world—in sight and site. As did many Renaissance and humanist endeavors, linear perspective aimed to celebrate the agency of the individual and his centrality in the world and to reflect a set of elevated ideas about man and his intellectual context and capabilities. For, in Alberti’s perspectival system, and its circular and specular logic, seeing the world is knowing the world.

²¹⁰ Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher S. Wood. (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 66.

²¹¹ Ibid, 67-8.

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With these ideas in mind, I return to the *Walking on Air* series. Briefly consider again *Walking on Air, B10* (2008) (Figures 4.4; 4.9; and 4.13), paying particular attention to the lower panel. (More will be said about the upper panel in the pages to come). Directly below the overlapping seam is a long bundle of intertwined red string that stretches across the lower yellow panel, another effect of multiplying the horizon line. In order to secure the bundle, Tuttle has sewn it to the panel, and thus the lower panel is made to buckle even more, especially at its edges, creating an appearance of undulation. Underneath these strings there is a consistent stitched pattern of zig-zags, yet in a closer inspection, it nevertheless sits uneasily on the surface of the yellow panel, somehow quivering or even agitating the surface. As exemplified in a work such as this one, the *Walking on Air* series thus struggles to hold any view, suggesting that an attempt to see the world as a thing to be wrangled, ordered, and fixed is mere fantasy, indeed, an *illusion of objectification*, but one to which Alberti as well as the view painters within this examination had subscribed. In contrast, Tuttle's views suggest that both *how and what we see is in flux*. On the fixity found in Renaissance art, Tuttle once termed it as a "bad thing"—"this idea that art is about a single point in time and space. So you get the Madonna and then that's it. That's your picture.... I am actually hugely excited by the idea that a picture could be movement in time and space."²¹²

Of course, it could be argued that the order and fixity which Alberti believed his system provided were always already problematic. In one respect, it exchanged (and

²¹² Smith, 64.

tamed) our ever-shifting binocular vision for a static monocular (and inhuman) vision, thereby distorting, in some sense, the very physics of seeing. In another, it provided stability in the form of imprisonment, effected by the means of veil. Although the veil aimed to secure an accurate (and realistic) view, it is, metaphorically, a prison by which sight is arrested, captured and suspended, as it were, in the individual cells of the grid, a particular notion of fixity borne out of the Renaissance that has surfaced in several series in the latter half of Tuttle's career.

Even before the views at hand in *Walking on Air* were made, the gridded veil of perspective and the (absolute) grid of 20th-century abstraction had already been targeted by Tuttle's serial oeuvre, as in, for example, *Perceived Obstacles*, a series of eighty paintings on gridded canvases. As a work like *Perceived Obstacle No. 76 (Oil Painting #5)* (1991) (Figure 4.29) makes clear, its green circle (which, in the context of linear perspective, can read as both an eye and target) slips off the grid at the bottom of the painting, resisting arrest, much like the activated brushstrokes that constitute its form. Although no grids figure precisely in the *Walking on Air* series, there is the fact that the cloth panels, when installed, appear veil-like or curtain-like, most dramatically evident in the swags and cascades in the pieces from the "1, 2, 3" exhibition.²¹³ In this way, the

²¹³ The curtain is an important trope within the history (and ambitions) of representation and thus it is also possible to perform a more thorough reading of the curtain-like features in *Walking on Air* alongside another origin story in the history of Western art. In Book 35 of Pliny's *Natural History*, the ancient writer relays the story of two rival painters in ancient Greece, Parrhasius and Zeuxis, who were competing to create the most realistic painting: "Parrhasius entered into competition with Zeuxis, who produced a picture of grapes so successfully represented that the birds flew up to the stage buildings; whereupon Parrhasius himself produced such a realistic picture of a curtain that Zeuxis, proud of the verdict of the birds, requested that the curtain should now be drawn and the picture displayed; and when he realized his mistake... he yielded up the prize, saying that whereas he had deceived the birds, Parrhasius has deceived him, an artist." See Pliny,

works in *Walking on Air* can be seen to flaunt their fluctuating veil-like panels, indeed, to foreground them, ultimately betraying not only the fixity that Alberti had privileged in them but also the notion that the veil was an intermediate tool, merely a means to an end.

It could also be argued that Filippo Brunelleschi's famous experiment with the Florence Baptistery, often thought to be tethered to the invention of linear perspective, suggested all along that movement was at the origin of this seemingly arresting method (Figure 4.30). After painting the Florence Baptistery from the vantage point of the steps of the Florence Cathedral, Brunelleschi allowed viewers to affirm the one-to-one comparison between his painting of the Baptistery and the Baptistery itself. To do so, he bored a conical hole (similar to the cone of vision as described in Alberti's text) in the back of his painting. Standing on the steps of the cathedral, the spot from which Brunelleschi had painted the image, a viewer would look to the front of the Baptistery and, with the painting turned away from him, peer through the hole, while holding a mirror in front of the painting so as to reflect Brunelleschi's image. The mirror also had a hole or "sight line" so that one could see through to the actual building, a means to confirm the effectiveness of Brunelleschi's image.²¹⁴

Although much of Brunelleschi's experiment centers on fixing the view before him, there remained a curious element of movement within his panel, because of how Brunelleschi conceived of the sky above the Baptistery in his painting. By covering it

Natural History, vol. IX, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1961), Book 35, 307-315. As relayed by Pliny's account, deception or the perfect copy is the goal of representation. If Pliny's story underscores the ability of mimetic painting to deceive, Alberti writes as to how this such deception can be systematically achieved. Also, on art's pursuit of the perfect copy, see Isabelle Loring Wallace, "From the Garden of Eden and Back Again: Pictures, People and the Problem of the Perfect Copy," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 9:3 (December, 2004): 137-154.

²¹⁴ For a more detailed account of this story, see Antonio Manetti, 43-44.

with burnished silver, Brunelleschi made the sky a reflective surface on which ambient conditions could appear in “real time.” On this burnished silver, for example, clouds drifted, light flickered, and birds flew by. While for Brunelleschi this tactic was intended to make his efforts more life-like, it unwittingly undermined the fixity on which he had insisted in other parts of the painting.

Still more crucial for Alberti’s and Brunelleschi’s systems, the centric point and sight-hole respectively were intended to be points of coherence and convergence between viewer and view. However, for Tuttle’s *Walking on Air* series, the centric point/sight-hole is always a hole through which things are made to slip, much like the nails on which the panels are hung. Consider once more the exemplary work, *Walking on Air, B10* (2008), this time with a focus on the upper panel. Above the center of the overlapping seam is a deep red stain that seeps from the very top of the panel, especially calling our attention to a detail here that is significant throughout all works in this series: the grommet hole, which was always already at the very center of these works, the origin point, as it were.

Holes, as one might expect, are never mentioned in Alberti’s text and for good reason. Of course, holes are things through which something escapes or are the things that signal that something is damaged, unfinished, or absent, and hence holes would disrupt the systematic harmony and fixity that was central to Alberti’s method. As others before me have contended, the centric point in linear perspective is also a kind of hole and, indeed, the centric point is more popularly termed in art history as *the vanishing*

point.²¹⁵ When seen in this way, it could be argued that the center hole in the horizon lines in *Walking on Air* calls attention to what was latent in but repressed in Alberti's original concept of perspective and perhaps glossed over in the legacy of Brunelleschi's panel—that the point of convergence in linear perspective is the point at which something vanishes. In fact, we might say that Tuttle exacerbates this point by multiplying the hole across his horizon lines.

As with the porous surfaces of his first series, *Untitled (Paper Cubes)*, the holes in *Walking on Air* are suggestive of movement and passage—that is, a means of egress from one thing to another. Whereas Alberti's perspective engenders a closed and fixed circuit between seeing and knowledge, wherein the one is guaranteed by the other, the holes in Tuttle's horizon lines insist that the correspondence between seeing and knowing is not only unfixed but also open-ended. Hence Tuttle's holes signal that knowledge is not to be grasped firmly, but rather that it is contingent and fluctuating, ephemeral and elusive, and thus is something that requires continual exploration and discovery. For, the only element of these works that Tuttle has endeavored to fix is the very one that that will always yield uncertainty and unfixity—the holes, which are safeguarded by dint of metal grommets.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ For such analyses, see the excellent essay by Margaret Iverson, "The Discourse of Perspective in the Twentieth Century: Panofsky, Damisch, Lacan," *Oxford Art Journal* 28:2 (2005): 191-202.

²¹⁶ In part, my ideas about the implications of linear perspective and horizon lines in contemporary art have been shaped by the scholarship of my advisor, Isabelle Loring Wallace, especially the following essays: "N-O-W-H-E-R-E: The Art of Pipo Nguyen-duy" *Contemporary Art About Architecture: A Strange Utility*, Isabelle Loring Wallace and Nora Wendl, eds. (Farnham, Surrey, England, and Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate, 2013), 109-133 and "Technology and the Landscape: Turner, Pfeiffer, and Eliasson after the Deluge," *Visual Culture in Britain* 12:1 (March 2011): 57-75.

In the closing paragraphs of this examination, I return to landscape painting and to Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea*, which in hindsight had a telling affinity to the significance of Tuttle's *Walking on Air* series, namely *Walking on Air B12* (Figure 4.3). As earlier noted, this work bore a highly-abstracted resemblance to Friedrich's painting. Of course, there are no holes in Friedrich's painting but this is not the point of comparison. However, like *Monk by the Sea*, *Walking on Air B12* (as with the whole of the series) suggests that there is something unknowable about our relation to the view we see and the world itself.

Created during the Romantic period of art in the first half of the 19th-century, Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* makes man small and seemingly insignificant, especially as the majority of the pictorial surface is covered by sky and sea. Unlike the controlled Lorrainian schema or the precision of Canaletto's *vedute* that came before it, Friedrich's painting suggests that nature is a force endowed with the potential to overpower us, signified in the painting by ominous colors, hazy brushwork, and relative scale of nature to the monk. While the sky dominates the work, the painting also features a large swath of ocean.

Painted in the aftermath of the Enlightenment, *Monk by the Sea* is an exemplary painting about the sublime, a concept as old as antiquity but renewed as an interest by Enlightenment thinkers such as Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant.²¹⁷ The sublime is an aesthetic experience, in nature, art, or ideas, of overwhelming vastness or power that

²¹⁷ For an overview of the concept of the sublime, see Robert Doran, *The Theory of the Sublime from Longinus to Kant* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

affects the mind in a mixture of terror, fear, and awe. And in *Monk by the Sea* Friedrich employs popular emblems of the sublime that emerged alongside its (re)theorization in the 18th century such as the overpowering nature of a stormy sky and the vastness of the undulating ocean, both spaces in which one might lose one's footing physically and mentally, indeed, where one might be made to "walk on air."

Of course, there are compelling formal similarities between *Monk by the Sea* and *Walking on Air B12* such as the portentous colors of dark blue and gray as well as the haziness of the view, especially underscored in the horizon-as overlapping seam that is embellished with an expressive line of ashen dye. Moreover, if the white unsteady circle can be aligned with the monk, it too is not (exactly) in the center, in either the lower panel or the centric point/hole of the work. As with the circle in *Perceived Obstacle No. 76 (Oil Painting #5)*, it seems to be moving or, more precisely, quivering, an effect heightened by its slightly tilted elongation.

As with Friedrich's painting, the view presented in Tuttle's *Walking on Air, B12* evokes the sublime and thus it is neither assuring nor gratifying. Like the monk, we too feel small and similarly overwhelmed when confronted by Tuttle's views, by the expansiveness they image within an individual work and by the vastness they conjure in their multiplicity and continuation as a series, especially as instantiated in the Pace Gallery installation in 2009. But it is by the faculty of reason, Kant famously insisted, that one can overcome the terror and awe of the sublime and can make sense of unfathomable vastness—indeed, can master it so as to regain one's footing.²¹⁸ And yet, as with *Monk by the Sea*, the different and shifting views of *Walking on Air* seem to stress,

²¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment* [1790], trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), Book 2, 97-140.

and over and over again, this moment of uncertainty that occurs before an experience of the sublime, giving the anxiety it elicits, I argue, a positive valence.²¹⁹ For, what is it to “walk on air” if not to willingly lose one’s footing, to leave behind the stable and known entity of the ground.

As much as Tuttle’s views can be seen as abstractions of what it is like to be in the world, they can be seen too as mediations on our relation to what is perhaps the most dominating force in the world—the unknown. Obscure and hidden, beyond our understanding, the unknown, and the fear of it, is universal to the human condition. After all, it was the unknown (and its attendant irrationalism) that provoked fear in even the most rational of the ancient Greeks. But as early as 50 B.C.E., the Roman poet Lucretius, writing in his *On the Nature of Things*, declared that the unknown, though unnerving, was productive, and to follow it, “to wander afield... through unpathed haunts,” was to subscribe to a certain kind of “method.” As Lucretius contended, discovery and exploration, attempting to know more, even if not *all*, would be the means by which the fear of the unknown could be held at bay. In this sense, one would be compelled by doubt, questions, and speculation, to keep looking, to keep, in Lucretius’ words, “thriving in sturdy thought.”²²⁰ In sum, one would be compelled to keep working through the puzzling process that is the lived experience in the face of the unknown. As I contend, it is this very process—imaged by a processual method—that *Walking on Air*, in its

²¹⁹ There is in Friedrich’s oeuvre the painting, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (c. 1818), which, images, it could be argued, and *contra* the painting *Monk by the Sea*, man’s ability to overcome in spirit and in reason (in conjunction with the Kantian sublime) that which cannot be managed physically.

²²⁰ Titus Lucretius Carus, *On the Nature of Things*, trans. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), Book 4, accessed February 26, 2017, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2242>.

disparate, multiple, and always unsteady views, makes manifest.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Lucretius is a proclaimed “hero” of Richard Tuttle.²²¹ In fact, Tuttle reads the poet in the original Latin and often quotes him in conversations and lectures. Indeed, in some respects, it could be argued that Tuttle’s study of Lucretius and the method of (purposefully) wandering afield that the Roman writer encourages has made a mark on Tuttle’s method of making art in series, which, as we have come to see, likewise wander. In this way, *Walking on Air*, images a way of being in the world that renounces certainty and affirms the unknown, a way of being that is likewise imaged in the next series under consideration in this chapter. As Tuttle has noted, both *Walking on Air* and *Systems*, were attempts “to invent a cosmos, a way of seeing and understanding the world...”²²²

II.

At the outset, the series *Systems* (2011-2012) flouts any notion of the systematic that would seemingly accompany its title. Comprising twelve large-scale and freestanding pieces (Figures 4.31-4.45), it is apparent, even in a brief survey, how disparate and disjunctive this series is. Consider how these systems oscillate, both between and within each piece, orientations of the vertical to the horizontal; careful construction to haphazard arrangement; and sparse design to flamboyant elaboration.

²²¹ As a recent case in point, Tuttle cited Lucretius in his artist lecture in the Tate Modern’s “American Artist Lecture Series: Richard Tuttle,” November, 4, 2013, accessed June 2, 2015, <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/audio/american-artist-lecture-series-richard-tuttle>.

²²² Richard Tuttle, interview by Leonard Lopate, *The Leonard Lopate Show*, WNYC, May 2, 2011.

Indeed, for a series about “systems,” this is one that is strangely inconsistent, made more so by the objects’ chronological sequencing, which follows neither an orderly progression nor a predictable process, as a cursory pass from the beginning to the end of the series would indicate.

Yet, for all the ways that *Systems* is paradoxically inconsistent and irregular, there are aspects of the series that remain consistent. First, all the systems are constructed in the round and hence are open and legible from all points of view. Secondly, and in spite of some of the disarray within most of the pieces, there is a sense of structure within each work. For example, *Systems I-VIII* includes some version of a minimalist, modular framework, while the others include types of stacking that are differently constituted and composed as with *Systems IX -XII*. Hence, it might be best to say that *Systems* conflates irregularities and regularities, order and disorder, suggesting that there might well be underlying connections between these systems, and, moreover, a method to the apparent madness that they (initially) present.

Over the course of 2011-2012, not only were the twelve pieces made but they were also debuted across three separate exhibitions: *Systems I-VI* (from May-July 2011 at The Pace Gallery, New York); *Systems VII* (from October-November 2011 at Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London); and *Systems VIII-XII* (from September-October 2012 at the The Pace Gallery, New York). In an interview on the occasion of the first exhibition in May 2011, Tuttle addressed the intention of the title *Systems*, noting that it was a “play on the general use of systematology,” that is, the scientific study of systems or their

formations. As Tuttle states in the interview, systems are generally ineffective and these works, he insists, would, in part, illuminate that fact.²²³

Of course, a series so overtly about systems in Tuttle's oeuvre, even in 2011-2012, raises the specter of 1960s and 1970s "systems art" as discussed in Chapter 2—of those Minimalist and Conceptual approaches that Tuttle's first decade of serial production undermined. Given the familiar Minimalist frameworks and other repetitive motifs of this series, it could be argued that *Systems* still intervenes in the legacy of these systematic approaches to art-making. But as the focus of this chapter's aims is Tuttle's later series and what I contend are (somewhat) more crystalline themes therein, my examination of *Systems* will attend to the idea of the system more broadly. Like *Walking on Air*, *Systems* is a philosophical series about how we navigate and make sense of the world.

One more introductory point on *Systems*: these systems are scaled, more or less, to the human body (Figure 4.44). Those with the vertical, modular frameworks range from approximately seven to nine feet tall (though there is one that is sixteen feet tall), while the more dispersed horizontally-oriented systems have components that are no taller than an average waist or hip height. Of course, in either the vertical or horizontal format, these systems obviously *exceed* the size/height of the average human body. And yet in this series, a system, typically thought to be merely an abstraction, is made not only tangible, but is also brought within reach. That these systems are made comparable to human scale signals, I would argue, that something larger has been made smaller than usual. In this sense, Tuttle's *Systems* conjure notions of making something in

²²³ Ibid.

microcosm—of making models of systems. As I will contend, *Systems* is a series that promotes close observation and analysis of the *system as such*.

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Within the history of art and architecture, the model is a multivalent concept. In one sense, the model is the thing imitated from life, such as a life-model for a figure in a sculpture, painting, or drawing. In another sense, the model is the totalizing projection of what is to come, such as the creation of model building, wherein the end is imagined at the beginning. In some cases, models are methods or approaches, as, for example, linear perspective can be regarded for Alberti and Brunelleschi in mimetic picture making.

These different notions of the model will be in play in my analysis of the *Systems* series, but here, let it suffice to say that the model is a distant cousin to the system, both of which function as diagrammatic abstractions of something larger. Indeed, beyond art and architecture, in disciplines such as the social and physical sciences, models and systems are often used in tandem, with models used to understand how the dynamics of a system works and perhaps even to predict how it will respond to change. Therefore, by means of a model, even the most abstract and unwieldy systems can be brought into microcosmic focus, made simplified and coherent for scrutiny. Or can they? For, as even a cursory survey of Tuttle's *Systems* suggests, there remains something unruly about the system and, similarly, something unpredictable within the model.

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I turn now to a closer examination of the series and begin at the beginning with *System I* (Figure 4.31). Here a solitary object made of canary yellow feathers, thin strips of wood, and aluminum foil centrally hovers within a minimalist framework. Given its

wing-like features and elevation by an almost invisible monofilament wire, the object most obviously resembles a bird, but if so, it is not a bird in flight. Rather it appears in perpetual suspension, unencumbered by the facts of the gravity and time. In this way, *Systems I* returns us to the issue of gravity and levity central to the *Walking on Air* series and evokes the institutional practice of exhibiting specimens of natural history, which are likewise statically positioned within minimalist structures or vitrines. As the analogy to natural history preservation would suggest, there is something rarified or exceptional about this bird. Indeed, given that this bird-like form is positioned above our heads (just beyond our physical parameters) and encased within an open framework, it seems that this system was built to foreground solely it and segregate it for observation and analysis.

A closer examination of the minimalist framework yields other features that suggest the “bird’s” exceptionalism. Constructed by four aluminum and wooden posts and a square sheet of unpainted plywood as a base, this framework is rigidly secured by means of heavy-duty bolts and numerous screws and washers. Unlike many of the structures and forms that we have seen in Tuttle’s oeuvre, this one seems oddly built to last. However, given the seemingly lightweight object it contains, this framework also appears overly sturdy and reinforced, signaling, that as much as it provides support, it is also a means of safe-guarding. To be sure, there is a sense of order and balance within this system, reflecting the coherence and seemingly effortless to which so many systems (as concepts) aspire, but it also reads as compensatory and seemingly anxious. Thus, *Systems I* seems to model an ideal system, wherein all is harmonious, stable, and unburdened from outside and unwanted incursions.

As the first system in a chronological series of systems and because it evokes the notion of an ideal model of the system, *Systems I* would seem to be the system to which other, subsequent works in the *Systems* series might aspire. But, while *Systems I* is, indeed, a beginning, it might be more precise to say that it is representative of the kind of system that Tuttle's *Systems* series aspires to upend. As I will argue, rather than instantiate a system to follow or a model to mime, *System I* is the term of the series, the idealized system, that all the subsequent systems aim to reconsider and complicate.

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Consider the next two systems in detail and, importantly, the differences in their construction and arrangements in comparison to *Systems I*. While the minimalist framework remains, *Systems II* (Figure 4.32) includes white plastic-coated iron posts rather than aluminum and instead of one pristine and elevated sheet of plywood as with *Systems I*, *Systems II* requires two: a large plywood platform on which the entire system is based and, within the framework, a white plywood panel braced with three intersecting 2 by 4s in the shape of a star, on top of which rests a colorful draping of red and green. More will be said about this draping, but in other parts of *Systems II*, something seems to have gone awry. Notice how the heaviness of several hung or draped forms literally weighs on two crisscrossed plastic coated iron cables, which, indeed, have required more than the lightweight monofilament of *Systems I*. Even the plastic-coated iron pipes bend ever so slightly with the load. A bundle of clear bubble wrap, delicately hung in one of the corners, seems to be escaping from a loose knit netting while a dense amalgamation of brown and tan fabric and strips of paper on the same cable, further weighted with fringe at the bottom, pulls the cable downward. A set of hinged black and white plywood

panels seems to disrupt the equilibrium of the system the most; it appears to be in the midst of slipping off the cables, which, in turn, lead our eyes downwards again to the lower section and to the aforementioned colorful draping.

Atop the plywood base within the framework, a green cloth piece is draped over one of the 2 by 4s, with two rows of red wooden spike-like forms emerging from it. Indeed, given its particularly verdant hue, the green cloth reads as a patch of grass and its red forms like that of vegetation, features that suggests fecundity and generation. Additionally, and on only one of the footings for the framework, a thin rectangular sheet of industrial wire mesh—the kind that would adorn a radiator box—has been placed against one of the wooden bolsters. Strangely the wire mesh sheet has been torn at the top, its three sliced sections shaped into wave-like forms that seem to flutter. Such details lend the planar sheet a distinctly sculptural and, moreover, temporal dimension, turning the features of its cool and industrial aesthetic into a rippling form reminiscent of the sea. Considering the sagging, hanging forms in the upper part of the framework, it would appear that something about this system is strained, if not falling apart. Yet given the overtones of nature within the lower part, the system seems, overall, resilient, suggestive of generation and production.

Moving to *Systems III* (Figure 4.33), we can see that the aluminum framework (albeit coated here in a layer of white plastic) of *Systems I* has returned. Therein, a group of colored paper-formed balls seem to float effortlessly in the upper half of the piece, as if they were helium balloons, recalling the suspended bird of *Systems I*. Yet in a closer examination, it becomes apparent that the bundle of balloons is not exactly suspended but rather precariously placed on top of and held up by the cables that crisscross underneath

it. What is more problematic is that the bundle is held together only by means of a slapdash application of Saran wrap, apparently an attempt to keep the bundle from coming apart and falling, a probability that seems to be anticipated in a feature directly below.

Underneath the bundle of balloons is a contraption made of wood strips and two paper bowls, a mobile-like structure that is tenuously suspended from the cables above with unfolded paperclips. Given the container-like qualities of these vessels and, moreover, their positioning underneath the bundle, it would seem that they are poised to act as a safety-net within the system. But because the bowls are not large enough to hold the bundle and because the paper clips from which the entire mobile-structure hangs are flimsy, it appears that this level of the system is, like the bundle above, incapable of sustaining itself, of maintaining static suspension, a feature underscored by the fact that the mobile contraption moves slightly with airflow and, as another view of the system reveals, is never entirely aligned with the bundle above.

Within *Systems III*, there is a palpable sense that the system is structurally bracing itself, or, at least, aware of the folly in its tenuous construction and arrangement. Consider how the buttressing legs of the framework encroach onto the elevated base and towards the center, a feature not present in the previous works and made ever-more evident here by the addition (and contrast) of chunky unpainted wooden pegs on the white and smooth aluminum lines. Although their positioning would suggest that they serve to secure the aluminum legs to the base, the fact is that they do nothing of the sort. Instead, their bullhorn-like forms, reminiscent of salutary configurations, work more

effectively to call attention to the center of the base. And here, as with *Systems II*, it seems as though something were emerging from the ground.

On top of the black elevated base sits an incomplete circular arrangement of abstract forms (Figure 4.34). At first glance, and from some distance, it looks to be a model train set, with the gap in the circle simply the distance between the caboose and the locomotive as it runs around the track. In a closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that these model rail cars are fragile pieces, handmade from thin wood strips and red and black craft paper and left open at each end and at the top. While there is no track precisely, the analogy to the model train persists.

Conventionally, and especially for those of Tuttle's generation, model trains and their tracks had to be built and assembled piece by piece. Indeed, that these rail cars are made of craft paper and, in some instances, tongue depressors remind us of this fact. It would seem too that the analogy of children's toys and the idea of construction are carried over into the objects at the center of the base, in a red piece that is reminiscent of a child's Lego block. Made of solid wood, the block anchors pieces of colorful rice paper and craft paper. Like the red "building" block, the paper is but another element of construction, albeit one that is notably fragile. Because it oscillates between solidity and fluidity, I argue that the model given in this arrangement of the base begins to take on a slightly different inflection. Rather than model a fully realized prototype or a certain mastery over a system, these systems, seemingly coming apart as much as they are coming together, model something about how systems are transitory as well as fragile, in danger of collapse, succumbing to the weight of their own untenable assumptions.

As critic David Frankel observed in his review of the May 2011 exhibition, “each work is an arena within which quite disparate entities coexist, each making its own struggle with gravity.”²²⁴ Indeed, between manifestations of gravity and time and ideas of confusion and incompleteness, it becomes evident that *Systems II* and *Systems III* are insistent on complicating the idealism of *Systems I*, which was embodied in its formal qualities of suspension and balance, order and stasis. And as the series unfolds, each of its systems continues, in different ways, in manifesting these complications. *Systems IV* (Figure 4.35) does so by subverting the familiar minimalist framework, literally turning it upside down, so that its internal objects now hang from the base downwards, spilling out. If we take seriously the notion that what is at the bottom of this system might have been previously at the top, there is a sense that certain structures are being targeted and upended. This would include an abstract-like tower as well cut-outs of the letters “S” on which the tower now sits and either an “H” or “N” that casually leans against the other elements of structure that seem to have fallen away. The latter details remind us that, while much more abstract, language too is a structure.

In *Systems V* (Figure 4.36), there is a densely-populated base, reminiscent of the detritus in a junk-yard. Here again are letters, although these are the mass-produced adhesive type. Like other things in this haphazard arrangement, these letters are scattered about make-shift columns and, curiously, eye-catching stacks of bright red painted Styrofoam in the shapes of gears, suggesting a mechanical function. But given that they are unconnected, stacked and largely stored in between a multi-level platform, these gears

²²⁴David Frankel, “Richard Tuttle: The Pace Gallery,” *Artforum International* (October 2011): 310.

now seem functionless. On the whole, there is much about *Systems V* that attempts to extend upwards but fails to do so, features most dramatically manifested in the set of stairs that abruptly stop, leading to nowhere.

Systems VI (Figure 4.37) features a framework that centers on a suspension of black mesh, haphazardly encased by an armature of wooden strips that itself is loosely held together by flimsy twistings of wire. Escaping from this wooden trapping, the mesh appears to seep below, directing our eye to other areas of the system that likewise fail to be contained or coalesce. A piece of foam resembling a luridly painted doormat seems to fluidly ooze downwards and outwards, while panels of unpainted fiberboard precariously lean against the system's base, which has been elevated by several foundational platforms, some of which are quite colorful. Within the framework, there is a vacant white pedestal, seemingly for the black mesh object above. It is surrounded by three red Styrofoam balls, and there is also a smaller set of four of these on top of the white posts, all of which are reminiscent of the flashing lights on skyscrapers for aircraft. It would appear, then, that this brilliant red paint, present in all of the systems so far after the first, serves as a means of alert. Moreover, in *Systems IV*, there is also a working spotlight above the center, which further illuminates or calls attention below.

Below—this is becoming an apt descriptor for this series. For, even with *Systems VII* (Figure 4.38), the tallest in the series at sixteen feet, it is formed from and secured by structures, emerging below within the foundation, such as the delicate stack of wooden cubes. Moreover, even when additional buttressing is required, it is accomplished by props on the ground and, the cables, previously located atop the systems, are notably

anchored to different points of the foundation, another element that draws attention below.

Although *Systems VIII* has a metal rack framework that centers that system's structure, *Systems VIII–XII* (Figures 4.39-4.43) abandon the cubic framework as well as rigid frameworks more generally. While structure certainly remains, it is now articulated through stacking, layering, and piling, suggesting that these later systems tend more towards the provisional and the make-shift. The chunky wooden elements so prevalent in the first half of the series are present in the latter half, but they are overpowered by lighter weight materials such as blue foam and a bundle of fabric in *Systems IX*, plastic bags in *Systems X*, rickety wooden strips and flimsy metal in *Systems XI*, and poles, cloth, and a skein of red yarn in *Systems XII*. Indeed, *Systems VIII–XII* are entirely bereft of the centralizing and elevating platform-bases and instead are constructed, in various ways, in more horizontal, dispersed, and asymmetrical fashions. In fact, *Systems IX–XII* especially seem to move into our space, such that in *Systems X* and *Systems XII*, we might mistake its different components to be separate systems all their own.

But there remains something puzzling about the middle of *Systems*: how might one account for the dramatic, abrupt shift that occurs between *Systems VII* and *Systems VIII*, the abandonment of the geometric framework? Some observations by art critic Barry Schwabsky offer an entry point to this conundrum. In his review of the third exhibition in 2012, which featured *Systems VIII–XII*, Schwabsky reconsidered the first half of the series. Of those earlier pieces, the critic writes:

...there was a sense of order... with their four vertical posts serving as something like the points of a compass, giving a clear sense of determinate placement to all the other elements incorporated... But to see those posts

as compass points meant adopting an impossible, imaginary perspective—
taking in these towering sculptures as if from above....²²⁵

Following Schwabsky's line of thinking, if the four posts of *Systems I-VII* can be seen as compass points, it would seem, then, in hindsight, that an idealized structure guided *Systems II-VII*, reliant as they all were on an essential, cardinal orientation. As Schwabsky notes, while open and transparent in their construction, to view these systems is to do so from "an impossible, imaginary perspective." Although they complicate the conventional model established by *Systems I*, *Systems II-VII* can be seen to do so, ultimately, within a set of givens, a cardinal framework, and in that sense, *Systems II-VII* remain untenable model-systems.

Perhaps this is, in part, what Tuttle realized over the course of the year between *Systems VII* and *Systems VIII*. Of course, time has a way of making us see and understand things differently, but if the dramatic shift in the series and the time over which the series was made (especially the time of a year between the making of *Systems VII* and *Systems VIII*) are taken together, it would seem that Tuttle's *Systems* manifests an effort to grapple with the *idea of the system*: to consider the system in and over time, to think about *what it is* and *what it is not*, and more importantly, to change the system according to circumstances at hand. Indeed, there is something suggestive about the fact that the systems following *Systems I* tend towards the ground. It suggests, I argue, that these systems are mired in the real and confusing conditions of life and as such image the different kind of shifts necessary to contend with those mutable conditions, features that lend *Systems* a certain philosophical weight.

²²⁵ Barry Schwabsky, "What Goes With What: On Richard Tuttle," *The Nation* (October 16, 2012), accessed December 15, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/what-goes-what-richard-tuttle/>.

In a 1980 interview, Gilles Deleuze was queried as to whether systems remained viable. “Systems,” he remarked, “have in fact lost absolutely none of their power.” But the kind of systems to which Deleuze was referring were those that tended to be conceived in delimited ways, either too narrowly or too broadly. As a means to counteract such thinking, Deleuze proceeds to discuss the notion of an “open system”: “All of the groundwork for a theory of so-called open systems is in place in current science and logic, systems based on interactions, rejecting only linear forms of causality.... What I and Guattari call a rhizome is precisely one example of an open system.”²²⁶

In the context of Tuttle’s *Systems*, Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome becomes a suggestive philosophical counterpart. The term rhizome is taken from botany and that which is “rhizomatic” for Deleuze and Guattari is conceived as a dynamic root system that proliferates without a common filiation (the ginger root is a common example). As the authors describe it throughout their introductory chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the rhizome is always in motion, possessing characteristics of connectivity, heterogeneity, multiplicity, and rupture, which, in turn, uproot conventional and often rigid ideas of structures, systems, and methods.

To wit, Deleuze and Guattari set the rhizome in opposition to “aborescences,” tree-rooted structures of thought, which find relation to each other by a common root

²²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “On *A Thousand Plateaus*,” *Negotiations: 1972-1990* [1990], trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 31-32. Deleuze begins his answer to this question as follows: “It’s become a commonplace these days to talk about the breakdown of systems, the impossibility of constructing a system now that knowledge has become so fragmented (“we’re no longer in the nineteenth century. . .”). There are two problems with this idea: people can’t imagine doing any serious work except on very restricted and specific little series; worse still, any broader approach is left to the spurious work of visionaries, with anyone saying whatever comes into their head.”

system, an origin or a central principle. In his distinctions between aborescences and rhizomes, Deleuze scholar Ronald Bogue writes: “Arborescences are hierarchical, stratified totalities which impose limited and regulated connections between their components. Rhizomes, by contrast, are non-hierarchical, horizontal multiplicities which cannot be subsumed within a unified structure...”²²⁷ While Deleuze and Guattari admit that the rhizome has a structure or a unity, it is one that is always in transformation, never static. Indeed, because a rhizome “operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots,” it is not reducible to any one structure, method, or approach—any one term—but rather functions as immanent and emergent.²²⁸

Deleuze and Guattari find evidence of the rhizomatic in various disciplines of science, language, literature, politics, and music (among others), but in a broader sense, it could be argued that the concept of the rhizome undermines Structuralist thinking across disciplines. One of the targets of Deleuze’s philosophical oeuvre (both with and without Guattari) is what he considers to be the arborescence of Structuralist thought models. Whether it be systems of subjectivity, Chomskyan grammar, or Freudian psychology, Structuralist models emphasized foundations and lineage and insisted that meaning is made and maintained in systematic and unified structures. Much like Poststructuralist thinking writ large, Deleuze’s philosophy aims to decenter thought and, thus, the concept of the rhizome seeks to destabilize and upend such closed systems of thought by encouraging thought to mutate, to *become*. In this way, the rhizome, then, becomes a constructive and, moreover, ever-constructed model of thinking.

²²⁷Bogue, *Deleuze and Guattari*, 107.

²²⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

As we have seen throughout this study in relation to Tuttle's serial art, Deleuze's philosophical concepts such as becoming, the image of thought, and the plane of immanence have reconsidered the structures and construction of thought. Rather than lead to solutions, these concepts are a means to open-up onto problems and to perpetuate them, and in that sense, the rhizome is no different. As Deleuze and Guattari write, the rhizome, as an open-system, stresses, like Tuttle's seriality of the in-between, the logic of "and," the relations *between* things, whether it be terms that are disparate or similar. For, in rhizomatic thought, it is as if each thought were a new germination, triggering a new root system such that within its proliferation, neither origin nor end-point can be assigned.

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Returning now to Tuttle's *Systems*, points of correspondence with the rhizome begin to emerge. In its upending of *Systems I* and, more generally, the verticality of the series first half, the series can be seen to manifest a rhizomatic model of systems, of the different ways that the system might break free from essential and closed systems in conventional thought. Perhaps this is most dramatically instantiated in the radical shift between *Systems VII* and *Systems VIII*, a break from the roots of a cardinal framework, as it were. But, of course, subtler rhizomatic movements were already underway. We could look back to *Systems II* and *Systems III* and how we were made to see model-systems as unstable and, moreover, incomplete; how in *Systems IV* the supposed stable structures of language were upended (Tuttle once said that he thinks that "language" is a "world" that is "constantly seeking stability"),²²⁹ and how in *Systems V*, mechanized gears were cast

²²⁹ Grynsztejn, 31.

aside in favor of a system that seems more human. For here, weighing down the cables at the very center of the system is an object that most obviously resembles the heart organ, which is, of course, a centerpiece of the body's physical system.

But these rhizomatic leaps continue too in the latter half of the series. In *Systems IX*, in tandem with the plastic rod and bundle of floral fabric that destabilize the structured stacks of blue foam, there are six pedestal-like forms of wood, two of which hold objects. On one pedestal, a series of brown interconnected paper rings spill over on one side, while on another, a skein of white yarn has unraveled, its string extending not only from the pedestal but well out of the parameters of the system itself. When considered along with the other provisional and seemingly shifting characteristics of *Systems IX*, this piece of yarn suggests that this system is by no means the end but rather leads elsewhere. Yet, as much as *Systems IX* unravels and begins to disperse, *Systems X* returns to an upright and somewhat gridded structure, albeit in a flimsy sort of scaffolding that requires an offset base to keep it from toppling. While it evokes the cardinal frameworks in the early half of the series, *Systems X* is certainly more provisional in its construction. It seems to relay, like the concept of the rhizome, that if structure and unity are necessary, they must be made transient, something that *Systems XI* and *Systems XII* underscore as they break off again to the more horizontal and dispersed compositions.

Indeed, as with other series by Tuttle, there is no precise progression in *Systems*. That is, it does not move from that which is ordered to that which is utterly disordered. Instead, it toggles between similarity and disparity, order and disorder and, in doing so, I contend that the series images the difficulty and perhaps reluctance in breaking away

from conventional thinking about systems, what they are and how they function. For, as much as the subsequent systems dismantle the forms and ideas encapsulated in *Systems I*, there remains no certainty in the way forward, no obvious model-system which stands in contradistinction to *Systems I*. Thus, we are left with a sense that these model-systems could continue to proliferate rhizomatically—indeed, generate, and perhaps incessantly so. And this multiplicity, this continual generation goes against all we have come to believe about the model as a superior, essential example.

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Models and examples, Plato said long ago in the *Politicus*, are the means by which one comes to understand things; they provide a systematic way of exploring new or difficult subjects. Models and examples are especially important in explicating the more important concepts, by which Plato means the more theoretical.²³⁰ At first pass, Plato's philosophy here seems somewhat aligned with Tuttle's aims for *Systems*, which investigates the idea of systems and its practical manifestations. Indeed, I would argue that both Plato and Tuttle see models and examples as an aid to exploring ideas and understanding them. However, it is in the understanding gained from such explorations where Plato and Tuttle diverge.

While in the dialogue of the *Politicus*, Plato is writing on politics and the exemplary statesman, his beliefs in models and examples nevertheless echo the conventional concepts of the model as earlier rehearsed in this chapter—those of imitation, predictability, and control—as well as his own notion of the model, as

²³⁰ *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato*, ed. and trans. Lewis Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1837), 80-84, accessed February 26, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/sophistespolitic00plat>.

discussed in Chapter 2 alongside the *Wire Pieces*, that models are originary and timeless, existing as they do in the immutable realm of Being, and thus are those things to which one in the world of becoming should aspire. Plato insists that by means of models and examples, one is brought to a knowledge of what one does not yet know. Indeed, this statement is coincident with one of the most popular concepts of the model as the thing that makes known the as-yet unknown. For, in Plato's philosophy, in the *Politicus* and elsewhere, the model or the example is the medium by which one accesses the Good or the Truth. Yet, as we have begun to see in Tuttle's different systems of this series, the model is neither a given nor is it fully known. Rather than the typical generative/predictive function, the model in the hands of Tuttle has become solely generative, a genesis that somehow always retains provisionality, ambiguity, and uncertainty, which I argue was always already present in *Systems I*.

Returning to a closer examination of the suspended bird therein, we can observe just how tenuously it is constructed, especially in its underside, which is built around a wooden skeleton that itself has irregularities (Figure 4.45) as well as aberrant gaps on the undersides of the wings. It would also appear that green paint is seeping from within the bird, a detail that Deleuze might interpret as a signal of a difference-in-itself. What is more, the hooks that attach the bird to the monofilament barely grasp onto the underside. Constituted by a flimsy structure and precariously suspended by fragile means, the bird appears as if it might fall and/or fall apart at any moment, as though it were a modern-day Icarus on the verge of free fall. Seen in this way, the purposefully segregated display and overly wrought safe-guarding measures of *Systems I* become clearer. In its resemblance to natural history specimens, the bird is, indeed, a rarified entity and, given that it is

falling apart, it requires measures of preservation. But its preservation and all we might find in observing and analyzing is not for the benefit of the future. Rather, as underscored by its museological attributes, *Systems I* is the kind of system that is to be consigned to the past.

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To be sure, it can be difficult to renounce the assurance and stability provided by the idea of a system. Traditionally, systems are like their kindred concepts of methods and models, created in advance and in order to overcome variation, unpredictability, and in some cases, human error. Indeed, we might say that the very same things that we find rewarding about systems, methods, and even models are usually what make conventional series so satisfying—precisely their linear or chronological movement from beginning to end, wherein all is properly shored up and problems are resolved and, ideally, without ambiguity.

But this, as we well know, is not the way that life operates. Nor should systems, Tuttle seems to tell us. As this series insists, systems are not essential and suprahuman, suspended above the fray of life; neither are they neatly structured and unambiguous. Rather it is that they are messy, and moreover, messily forged amid the ever-shifting conditions of life, which is made explicit in the series by the different systems' constitutions from everyday materials and by slapdash arrangements. Indeed, for Tuttle's *Systems*, there is no singular model for making a system, a subordination of the many to *the one*, as Platonic thinking would have it. Multiple and as varied as life, *Systems* ultimately manifests the way that systems are *modeled*, which is to say, the way that systems are *made* by us.

By interpreting *Systems* as a serial image of what it is like to forge (systems) anew in a continual process according to conditions rather than essences, I aim to link *Systems* to other series discussed in this study. From the now-lost first painting to the *Constructed Paintings* and *Wire Pieces*, from *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane* to *Walking on Air* (to name only a few), Tuttle's series have welcomed the provisional and the transitional, have privileged emergence and difference. For, as the *Wire Pieces* especially demonstrated, Tuttle's serial art is rife with what Plato negatively called phantasms but what Deleuze productively termed simulacra. As Deleuze helped us to understand, with the *Wire Pieces*, the simulacrum—cut-off from a referent, a model, or an original—requires that everything is made anew and differently so. For Deleuze, the simulacrum is a condition of the real and a productive force for life. And the simulacrum is key to how *Systems* functions as a series: each system is already other than itself—each representative of a different instance of thinking and making, an opportunity not for imitation or emulation, but for exploration and generation. As Deleuze affirms in *Difference and Repetition*, simulacra are the things that reveal the reality of flux, constantly challenging our thinking and understanding of everything. And it is these very same challenges, I argue, that Tuttle images in microcosm with his various model-systems.

But even in their flux and their uncertainty, Tuttle's *Systems*, I contend, is a series that encourages us to trust the process: trust in the murky and muddled unfolding of things; trust in the fleeting, the temporary, and the transitional; and trust in the fact that, against Platonic thinking, there are not many copies in subjugation to the one, essential model, but rather that models, like systems, are a means by which becoming unfolds in

life. Hence *Systems* can be seen as both an immanent and incessant way of imaging how we navigate the world, how we move forward—even if that way forward is uncertain and largely unknown.

III.

Tuttle once said that “in the face of nature,” “humans” tend to make “artificial structures,”²³¹ a means to cope with the uncertain “universal forces” he said we all must face. While *Systems* and *Walking on Air* are obviously artificial structures in their own right—indeed, artifice—there is, as we have already begun to see, something of the real as imaged in these two series. Consider again Tuttle’s earlier statement: that *Systems* and *Walking on Air* were connected, that both were attempts to invent a cosmos, “a way of seeing and understanding the world.”²³² If this is so, then what these series image is a cosmos in flux and the ways for existing within it ever-fluctuating. As we know well now through the advance of physics, such an imaging of the universe is not entirely an invention *sui generis*, but in fact harkens back to antiquity and returns us once more to the writing of Lucretius.

In *On the Nature of Things*, Lucretius proposed that the stuff of the universe is an

²³¹ Richard Tuttle, interview by Marc-Christoph Wagner at Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen, “Richard Tuttle: Artists Are Like Clouds,” Louisiana Channel, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2014, accessed August 1, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEoZpS4AWLw>.

²³² It is also worth noting that even before *Systems* was created, Tuttle said that the works in *Walking on Air* were an “expression of elation for the potential for a new beginning, the possibility to rebuild and discover a harmony for existing in the world today.” See “Richard Tuttle: Walking on Air,” accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.pacegallery.com/exhibitions/11462/richard-tuttle-walking-on-air>.

infinite number of atoms moving randomly through space, colliding and forming complex structures, only to break apart again—a ceaseless process of creation and destruction. This he called a “swerve” (*clinamen*)—the unexpected and unpredictable movement of matter. As Lucretius contended, we are a part of this moving-matter world and moreover, are continually made with it. Of course, Lucretius’ provocative concept of atoms was then only a speculation, as empirical proof would not come for another two thousand years or so. And to the ancient, vexing question of “how do we know what we know?,” he could only encourage that all appearances and perceptions are true. Yet, at the time, *On the Nature of Things* posited a certain model of understanding the cosmos. It was, as Lucretius believed, something that was unimaginably vast, complex, and largely unpredictable and this, Lucretius insisted, is one of the only truths we can know. Accept the uncertainty of life, Lucretius seemed to implore, and the unknown can become productive paths in which to both wander and wonder.²³³

²³³ It also could be argued that Tuttle’s art finds correspondence to Deleuze’s notion of “chaosmos,” a term (taken from the writing of James Joyce) that conflates “chaos” and “cosmos.” In the ancient cosmologies of Plato and Aristotle, the supraearthly was known and understood in essential terms while the earthly was perceived as mutable, chaotic and unknown. Conversely, Deleuze’s term chaosmos means to entangle cosmos and chaos as a way to signal the chaos as always present in the cosmos and vice versa. But the chaosmos is not merely chaos; like the rhizome, it has a certain form, its own sense of structure or unity, even if it is disordered and disparate. On this point, see Eugene Holland, *Deleuze’s and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013). Holland contends that in *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze and Guattari view the cosmos as a non-linear and open-system, a “self-organizing chaosmos” in which order emerges immanently and fluidity rather than being imposed (21). Moreover, one does not work simply *on* or *against* the chaosmos but rather *with* it—thinks with it, changes with it, and *becomes with it* (21). Following Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Holland characterizes the chaosmos as a dynamic, generative, and affective process encompassing different kinds of matter, life, and forces (75-76). It necessitates then that the chaosmos be thought not merely not in terms of one’s lived experience but also the “state of affairs” or the “events” in which that experience occurs, among those “universal forces” that Tuttle mentioned. Moreover, it is notable that

It would seem that Tuttle's serial art has accepted this uncertainty of life, has made the unknown, in part, the subject of his life's work. Indeed, since the first painting with which this study began, his art has admitted doubt and uncertainty. From its vernacular materials to its familiar, if sudden shifts both within and between his objects, his seriality images what it is like to exist with ambiguity and questions, images something fundamental about the nature of life. But the question of Tuttle's serial art, I would argue, goes beyond the mere acknowledgment of the unknown and its attendant circumstances as fundamental to life. With its emphasis on process, emergence, and the in-between, Tuttle's serial art seeks ways to make the unknown affirmative and productive, much like Lucretius' text aimed to encourage his fellow Romans. For, comingled with the uncertainty and ambiguity that all of Tuttle's series convey, there remains, I argue, an insistent tone of optimism. In its imaging of the in-between—its insistence on difference in repetition in forms and its suggestive unfinishedness in both objects and process—Tuttle's serial art, as we have especially seen in *Walking on Air* and *Systems*, suggests the ways to keep moving forward and to begin again at every moment, embracing a fluid existence wherein the illogical or unexpected flows of life can become a creative force of becoming and difference. In this way, and paradoxically, Tuttle's serial art can be regarded as a model for living, one that, importantly, moves as we move—indeed, as the world does.

Deleuze and Guattari draw concepts from the ancient physics of Lucretius (one example is the swerve—*clinamen*) for their own philosophical cosmology in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Similar too to some of Lucretius' contentions, the chaosmos of Deleuze and Guattari insists on the flux of all kinds of matter (organic and inorganic) and life (human and non-human).

CHAPTER FIVE

POSTSCRIPT: STILL QUESTIONING

...I think I don't know. I am kind of comfortable with not knowing.
~Richard Tuttle²³⁴

By late 2013, it was announced that Richard Tuttle had received a Turbine Hall commission from the Tate Modern in London, a former power station-turned-museum. Because this large industrial space is typically reserved for massive contemporary art installations, hosting, for example, the large-scale projects of artists such as Anish Kapoor, Ai Weiwei, and Olafur Eliasson, the choice of Richard Tuttle was surprising if not confounding. That Tuttle's work would fill the overwhelming space of the Turbine Hall seemed unlikely, especially given Tuttle's penchant for producing relatively small-scaled pieces. But as I will argue, the Turbine Hall commission provided Tuttle with an opportunity to underscore his serial oeuvre with a kind of punctuation.

I.

Little was said about Tuttle's project leading up to its unveiling in October 2014, but in a press release in February 2014 for an exhibition of Tuttle's work at Pace Gallery, some specific information finally emerged. Billed by Pace as "drawings and studies" that

²³⁴ Chris Martin, "In Conversation: Richard Tuttle," *The Brooklyn Rail*, Dec 04/Jan 05, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://brooklynrail.org/2005/01/art/richard-tuttle>.

Tuttle had “created in preparation” for the upcoming Turbine Hall commission, this exhibition, the press release noted, would display twenty new works in anticipation of what would be Tuttle’s largest project to date.²³⁵ Naturally, it was expected that these studies would showcase some specific plans for the Tate piece, but neither Tuttle’s objects nor the accompanying labels in this exhibition made explicit reference to what the gallery’s press release would only describe as a massive textile installation. Instead, the exhibition at Pace’s midtown Manhattan location, curiously entitled “Looking for the Map,” featured delicate and modestly scaled constructions that sparsely populated the gallery, what one might have deemed “typical Tuttle.” While a certain degree of “in-progress” work would have suited the exhibition’s premise as studies for the Tate commission, the incompleteness of Tuttle’s objects in “Looking for the Map” presents, as we will find, a different inflection of work-in-progress.

To complicate its already uncertain connection to the mysterious textile project for the Turbine Hall, the Pace exhibition included two disparate series, *Looking for the Map 1-11* (2013-2014) and *PlusMinus 1-9* (2013-2014) (Figures 5.1-5.4). The objects in *Looking for the Map* consist of different configurations of fabric, chicken wire, wood, and pins, ranging from two feet square to eight feet in height. Some of the objects in this series are wall-bound, as in *Looking for the Map 10* and *Looking for the Map 4* (Figures 5.5-5.6), while others are larger, make-shift installations that lean into the wall, as with *Looking for the Map 7* (Figure 5.7, with detail). In this particular work, red fabric is gathered and seemingly shaped by a cylindrical wire mesh armature in the shape of a column. A horizontal swatch of beige fabric encircles the wire mesh near the top, as if a

²³⁵ “Richard Tuttle: Looking for the Map,” Pace Gallery, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.pacegallery.com/exhibitions/12649/richard-tuttle>.

tourniquet on an appendage that attempts to stem the flow of fabric. But it would appear that it fails in this effort, as clumps of red seeps out on either end of the column. This column leans against a simple wood panel and is upheld by a rudimentary brace on panel's right side. Like the column, the wood panel is precariously situated, merely propped against the wall. At the top of the column and wood panel is a cascading swath of pale pink fabric, which, in part, conceals and cradles a tangled nest of delicate brown linen thread and more vibrantly colored lumps of pink fabric. Indeed, in every element of *Looking for the Map 7*, form is provisional, a feature that permeates all the objects in this specific series.

The larger, floor-bound works in the *Looking for the Map* series (Figures 5.8-5.9) might have been convincing as (smaller) make-shift models of textile installations that might soon fill the Turbine Hall. Yet, the relationship between the idea of maps remains opaque, as none of the works within the series contains obvious map-like features. Instead, as the title of this series seems to insist, these works leave one very much in the act of "looking for the map." And yet, as we will find, this is a purposeful conundrum, especially when *Looking for the Map* is considered alongside the other series, *PlusMinus*.

PlusMinus consists of flattened, wall-bound objects that measure at roughly 2 feet by 2 feet. Made of cotton pulp affixed to a piece of wire mesh within a wooden framework, the objects in this series, at least on a formal level, have a more apparent relationship to maps. There are specters of the grid in the wire mesh and, in the cotton pulp, connotations of paper, the structure through which and the material on which maps have been conventionally charted and drafted, respectively. When considered alongside the exhibition's title, there is a sense that the title of the *PlusMinus* series directly

references maps, unlike *Looking for the Map*, which conjures the idea of map as an absence. Of course, the “plus” and “minus” in mapping is indicative of the precise coordinate systems used to map the world, such that every actual location in the world corresponds to a set of numeral coordinates on an abstracted grid. The most well-known coordinate system is the Geographic Coordinate System, which uses measures of latitude and longitude to plot location. In this system, positive numbers represent both the northern hemisphere (latitude) and eastern hemisphere (longitude) while negative numbers representing the southern hemisphere (latitude) and the western hemisphere (longitude). Thus, a location that has the latitude and longitude coordinates of “30, 30W” would be, in this system, notated as “30, -30.” But in Tuttle’s use of these terms as titles, *PlusMinus* 1-9, the “plus” and “minus” coordinates do not indicate any specificity but rather seem merely descriptive of one ambiguous location after another.

Although Tuttle’s use of colors in *PlusMinus* seems referential to maps, they are ambiguously deployed. In conventional geographic mapping, colors have specific associations with earthly features. For example, shades of blues are associated with the oceans and its varied depths; yellows and oranges signal different points of elevations in the land; and white is indicative of the highest elevations, all of which, notably, are colors that Tuttle employs in his cotton pulp. But any attempt to read these works as conventional maps is impossible, primarily because, in their high degree of abstraction, they give no indication of anything that has been precisely charted or plotted. Rather, they seem to figure locations that are, more precisely, imprecise. Consider how the differently colored cotton pulp looks hastily applied in gestural swaths or indiscriminate blobs. Some of the cotton pulp application is more scattered than in others but in almost

all the pieces in *PlusMinus*, the wire mesh and the cotton pulp exceed the wooden frame, as exemplified in *PlusMinus 9* (Figure 5.10), which suggests coordinates that go off the map, as it were. Of course, the allure of the map is that it typically describes in precise visual terms the terrain of a given area, so that one can then navigate one's way through it. Yet, as is perhaps becoming clearer, *PlusMinus* and *Looking for the Map* no more provide clear-cut maps than they serve as straightforward studies for the Tate commission. Rather, these series, ambiguous in both forms and titles, are suggestive of doubt, again signaling an uncertainty about the way forward.

It is significant too that the individual pieces of *PlusMinus* and *Looking for the Map* are interspersed throughout the gallery in an alternating and meandering fashion, such that in moving through the space, one would encounter a work from *PlusMinus* and then one from *Looking for the Map* and so on and so forth. It is as if one series were a call and the other a response, although it remains unclear which is which, perhaps another strategy of ambiguity on Tuttle's part. For, when the provisional objects, the ambiguous titles, and the exhibition's meandering arrangement are taken together, it is hard to ignore what seems to be a purposeful aim by Tuttle—that *contra* the conventional notion that it serves as an objective re-presentation of information, the map is somehow speculative, unfixed, or perhaps, always elsewhere, and thus, we may well be always only looking for it. Of course, maps are, at essence, controlled abstractions intended to provide guidance and orientation but, although rigorously plotted and structured, a map is never more than a subjective interpretation of information. It is but another system that can never be quite faithful to life as lived. As with *Walking on Air* and *Systems* from the previous chapter, Tuttle's *Looking for the Map* and *PlusMinus* suggest that maps, if they are to exist at all,

are processually-formed entities and should be created as one goes along—interrogated, rethought, and revised. It a process further encouraged by the muddled experience of Tuttle’s meandering and dissonant arrangement of these two series within the gallery.

That maps should be considered as entities in flux is additionally underscored by two curious features within the “Looking for the Map” exhibition. Consider these installation shots (Figures 5.11-5.12). At first glance, it would seem that we are looking at the directional signage conventionally provided throughout exhibitions that designate the start and the end of an exhibition. While these signposts seem unconnected to the exhibition and, indeed, are unmentioned in the gallery’s official checklist, these signposts, I would argue, are carefully designed. The type for these markers is circularly set and reads: “LOOKING FOR THE MAP-THE BEGINNING” and “LOOKING FOR THE MAP-THE ENDING” (Figures 5.13-5.14). What is more, this circular type encompasses Tuttle-made objects, thus lending these markers a greater significance. It is telling too that these signposts occupy opposing wall space at what is the entrance/exit of the gallery rather than different points throughout the space. In this regard, these markers become superfluous, less functional in their presumed purpose as signage and more suggestive of the exhibition’s conceptual premise.

Of course, beginnings and endings are conventionally regarded as discrete and different moments, but they are ambiguously conflated in the hands of Tuttle, here as elsewhere in his serial oeuvre. Briefly consider his markers more closely. In “THE BEGINNING,” a thin piece of square-shaped wood is cut in a gridded fashion, with nine square cut-outs, and painted blue, all in Tuttle’s typical slapdash fashion. Thus, in keeping with the exhibition’s title and the notion of the map, namely of gridding,

plotting, and charting, the blue grid-like square seems appropriate. But, unlike the conventional grids in a map, Tuttle's grid is porous and like the paper cubes fifty-years before, these pores are suggestive of something escaping or vanishing, a feature that emphasizes at the outset of the exhibition a map's inability to master information and to re-present, something the wire mesh in *PlusMinus*, with the cotton pulps seeping through, may have underscored all along.

In "THE ENDING," while equally provocative, the object included is of an entirely different configuration. Made of plywood blocks, it comprises what is obviously two different parts—a blue, slightly flattened square that seems to have been pierced by the black cube or perhaps the black cube is emerging from the blue square—it is hard to say exactly. In one respect, the flattened blue square recalls the blue grid-like square from "THE BEGINNING," but here there are no holes or grids. Aside from what appears to be a careless paint job (some of the wood remains unpainted in the black square), these shapes are smooth and whole and although this smoothness suggests a similar fluidity as was found in "THE BEGINNING," the movement here is differently articulated, as though one form were giving way to the other, just like the processual and emergent nature of the serial objects themselves and their curatorial logic.

Given the positioning of "THE BEGINNING" and "THE ENDING" and the curious objects that accompany these markers, Tuttle encourages us to consider that the process of looking and thinking about maps as well as the process of mapping itself are processes that are as exploratory and generative as they are utilitarian. In the hands of Tuttle, maps, as with his notions of systems, models, and series, are not conclusive but rather are modes that are contingent and modifiable that compel the ongoing search and

continually returns one to the processes of looking and thinking. There are echoes of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking on the map in such a proposition: that the map is a rhizome, which "must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable."²³⁶ To be sure, as with all of Tuttle's objects, those in *PlusMinus* and *Looking for the Map* do not disguise the graft of their making. Instead, they willfully image fluctuation and ambiguity, which encourages that maps are mutable systems, which can move with us and, likewise, keep us moving. Indeed, no map can duplicate the infinite variety and complexity of reality and there is always a distinction between objective maps and the subjective circumstances of the one who tries to follow them.

When seen in this light, the peculiar and provisional objects in the series of *Looking for the Map* become (somewhat) clearer. For, as evident in *Looking for the Map* 7, which refused to conform and cohere, the objects in this series seem less articulations of maps per se, as the *PlusMinus* series is, and more images of what it is like to live (and move) in the world with the notion of a contingent map. In fact, I would argue that such a notion is encouraged by the fact that several of the larger make-shift pieces appear as though make-shift rafts, which, in turn, conjure a sense of floating and wandering, of voyages and explorations, which returns us once again to the notions of adventures and the unknown.

The unknown would be the subject of Tuttle's large-scale textile project in the Turbine Hall. In hindsight, "Looking for the Map," as an exhibition billed as "studies" for the forthcoming Tate project, was never, as some believed, an attempt by Tuttle to

²³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 21.

obfuscate the public regarding his designs. Rather, “Looking for the Map” was, as we will see, an earnest investigation of ideas that would then find manifestation (and amplification) in the largest work that Tuttle had ever created.²³⁷ And if it can be said that the premise of the Tate project is generated by the series of *Looking for the Map* and *PlusMinus*, then it is also *as a series* that the Tate project is made manifest. But more pointedly, it is a single-object-as-series, like the now-lost painting with which this study began.

²³⁷ Achim Borchardt-Hume, “A Metaphorical Critique of Broad Reflection,” *Richard Tuttle: I Don’t Know. The Weave of Textile Language*, ed. Richard Tuttle, Magnus af Pertersens, and Achim Borchardt-Hume (London: Tate Publishing, 2014), 163. In his essay for the *I Don’t Know* catalogue, Achim Borchardt-Hume, Head of Exhibitions at Tate Modern writes in more detail of Tuttle’s method in preparing for the Tate piece, tying it back to the “studies” exhibited in “Looking for the Map.” Rather than making models or prototypes, Borchardt-Hume notes, Tuttle merely “produced a whole new series of works”: “Far from being drawings that bore any semblance to the Turbine Hall work, [the “Looking for the Map” exhibition] was a series of sculptures made from all kinds of textiles bunched, bundled, or draped over a different sized wooden frames and polls, some of them precariously leaning against the gallery’s walls, others firmly attached. To the nervous calls for technical sketches and defining production details Tuttle responded by making more art, insisting that it is only experience—the experience of making and looking—that can provide guidance that can provide guidance and that experience alone would dictate what questions can be answered....” Given what has been the insistence of this study on Tuttle’s serial art, Borchardt-Hume’s observations are insightful and to his observations, on Tuttle’s part, of the processes of “making,” “looking,” and “experience,” I would only add the importance of the process of thinking. For, thought, along with its attendant component of knowledge, is central to the logic of the Tate Piece, as it has been in the whole of Tuttle’s oeuvre, and which is all the more amplified in the central component of the Tate Piece. One further point: with regards to the Turbine Hall project, it is believed that Tuttle created at least two models. Thus, when taken in this excerpt, Borchardt-Hume’s text could be read as misleading. In fact, Borchardt-Hume in his essay that Tuttle created models (he does not say how many) but only specifically references the first model made in 2012, which is reproduced photographically as well. The other one was supposedly created nearer to the time that the building of the components of the work commenced.

II.

At first glance, there is nothing to recommend a connection between the “Looking for the Map” exhibition and Tuttle’s Turbine Hall project. At its unveiling in October 2014, Tuttle’s enormous and colorfully draped work entitled *I Don’t Know, or The Weave of Textile Language* (2014) (Figure 5.15) measured at roughly forty feet long and filled the eastern end of the hall. Suspended by cables attached to the hall’s industrial scaffolding, *I Don’t Know* overwhelmed the space such that it was impossible to glimpse the work entirely from one point of view and thus, it required observation from different vantage points within the museum: from above on the Turbine Hall bridge (Figure 5.16) and the windows in the upper gallery floors (Figure 5.17), as well as on the hall floor below, which, as we will find, is a purposeful ploy (Figure 5.18).

It takes time and multiple points of view for this work to come into focus but once it begins to do so, *I Don’t Know* becomes legible as a curious configuration comprising five separate pieces, all of which, it should be noted, are draped in fabric. Characteristic of Tuttle’s seriality, there is both sameness and difference in the Tate piece as a series. At its center is a larger and looming vertical structure, fully covered in swaths of a ruby-red cloth. This red structure is flanked on either side by two horizontally-oriented plywood and metal forms, which consist of alternating and intersecting ovals and planes. Although the four plywood and metal forms are identical to each other, they are each differently draped with a marigold fabric (Figure 5.19). When seen from above on either the Turbine Hall bridge or the upper gallery windows, these four horizontal pieces appear as though wings of a bird or plane, as many critics have noted, with a rounded red

structure as through a head/neck of a creature or a fuselage. Following further consideration of the work and its surroundings, however, it becomes apparent that these horizontal forms bisect the massive eastern end of hall, seemingly producing a kind of horizon line, an effect that is further amplified by the festooning of warm yellow fabric.

Given that the horizontal pieces are mirror images of their topsides, save for different positions of the swaths of marigold fabric, they still read from the underside of the work as the horizon, or even the firmament. But when viewing the piece from the Turbine Hall floor, one's attention is drawn predominantly to the central red structure, the majority of which, unlike above, is located on the underside (Figure 5.20). With its deep color and irregular shape, the massive red form is in contrast to the (mostly) uniform horizon. There also seems to be palpable movement in the red form, largely effected by the asymmetric application of the red fabric, which conjures a sort of viscous flow that is seemingly maneuvered by six quirky ledges. Tilted in ways that convey a sense of movement, as though they were paddles on a watermill, these ledges appear to churn the red fabric, its folds and gathers evincing a push-and-pull tension, a sluggish but constant movement. At some points, the flow of fabric seems to move downwards, moving it would seem to the only level ledge in the structure located near the bottom. Here large amounts of red fabric have accumulated in a lumpen pile, some of which even spill and hang over the edges (Figure 5.21). Yet at other points in the proximity of this ledge, the fabric's flow seems to change direction and is pulled upwards or even sideways. It is a seeming movement in the cloth that is further confused by the fact that the red structure, hung only at the top of the scaffolding, sways slightly with the airflow in the Turbine Hall.

The lowest point of the red structure looms just above one's head, about eight feet from the floor. From this point, the red fabric can be closely examined, where it becomes apparent that there is an under-cloth of midnight blue in-between some of the folds of red, a feature that is rendered imperceptible in reproductions. With the recognition of the blue, it becomes apparent that Tuttle has chosen tones of the three primary colors— of yellow, red, and blue. In color theory, these are, of course, the basic building blocks for all other colors, but when considered alongside its overwhelming scale, the colors of *I Don't Know*, especially its fiery red and golden light, become suggestive of something mystical and mysterious if not primordial. In part, this was intentional, as Tuttle admitted that color was an important conduit for meaning in this work: "The idea is based on the passage of the day from dawn, through noon, to dark which have been fundamental for art ever since the colours red, yellow, and blue have been associated with them."²³⁸ Tuttle's statement conjures the notion of landscape painting, but it is also suggestive of time—the passage of days and the cyclical nature of life. When these ideas are taken alongside Tuttle's use of primary or primordial colors, *I Don't Know* seems, once again, to image something fundamental about the nature of life.

When observed from above, there is a brightness and clarity of form in *I Don't Know*, the consequence of its careful spotlighting and the natural light from the hall's skylights. Although it is massive in scale, there is a sense of superiority and mastery in looking out over *I Don't Know*. From the vantage point of the hall floor, however, there is a decidedly darker lighting scheme, as a result of the horizon-like structure that

²³⁸ Rachel Spence, "Interview with Tate Modern artist Richard Tuttle," *Financial Time*, (September 26, 2014), accessed October 30, 2014, <https://www.ft.com/content/8e0828b6-4514-11e4-ab0c-00144feabdc0>.

practically blocks the skylights above and the dominance of the ruby-red structure.

Unlike above, to observe the work from underneath is uncomfortable, as one is forced to tilt one's head in awkward positions if not contort one's entire body. Indeed, to view Tuttle's *I Don't Know* beneath its massive forms is to do so from the most embodied of perspectives, where we are made to feel subsumed by its expansive and looming configuration. Amid our uncomfortable craning, we begin to sense (again) that we are in the presence of the sublime in Tuttle's work, confronted by an image of the universe as both overwhelming and unfathomable. It is a context made more evident by the fact that, over time and from various viewpoints, the red structure begins to read, that is, becomes legible *as emblem*. And yet, the emblem, in a fashion we now recognize to be quintessentially Tuttle, is one associated with uncertainty and irresolution. For what looms over the installation, upends the systematic regularity and relative sameness of the golden line, and promises clarity is in fact a question mark.²³⁹

III.

I Don't Know or The Weave of Textile Language was the title of a multi-venue exhibition celebrating the largest survey of Tuttle's work in the UK. Thus, *I Don't Know or The Weave of Textile Language* was not only the title of the Tate piece but also of a

²³⁹ In her review of *I Don't Know*, Anne Wagner confirms that the question mark was a purposeful reference on Tuttle's part, presumably after a conversation with the artist: "Tuttle named these components the 'question mark' (this is the piece in the centre, the one almost entirely shrouded in red) and the 'airfoils' (symmetrically flanking the question mark, these are four rather Judd-like tripartite pieces), which the orange fabric quite dramatically fails to shroud." See Anne Wagner, "At Tate Modern," *London Review of Books* 36:21 (November 6, 2014): 45.

contemporaneous exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery that considered Tuttle's use of textiles throughout his career to date. Primarily curated and designed by Tuttle, the Whitechapel survey included twenty-two selections from Tuttle's oeuvre that employed some sort of textile/fabric (e.g. rope, canvas, or thread). For example, the exhibition spanned from several of the *Cloth Pieces* (1967-1968) and *Ten Kinds of Memory and Memory Itself* (1974) to *How It Goes Around the Corner* (1996) and the more recent work of *Systems VI* (2011) and *Systems XI* (2012), as well as one of the make-shift raft-like pieces, *Looking for the Map 8* (2013-2014).²⁴⁰ While most surveys of this kind would proceed in a chronological arrangement, this was not the case for the Whitechapel exhibition. Instead, the twenty-two selections were presented in precisely a non-linear fashion. In fact, the secondary title, *The Weave of Textile Language*, was, in part, an attempt at a unifying theme on the level of medium for the disparate pieces within the Whitechapel exhibition and with the Tate piece as well, which, it could be argued, was a Tuttle-like serial arrangement on the subject of textiles.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ All twenty-two selections in the Whitechapel exhibition were serially produced. Some selections presented entire series, such as *How It Goes Around the Corner* (1996) while other selections contained either a few pieces from a series, as with nine of the eighty works in *Perceived Obstacles* (1991) or a representative object of a series, such as *Fiction Fish, 7* (1992).

²⁴¹ Of course, as the title *I Don't Know or the Weave of Textile Language* suggests, there is an ambiguous relationship for Tuttle between textiles and text, between art and language and this would be another productive interpretation for the Turbine Hall piece. The accompanying catalogue to *I Don't Know* contains some insightful essays that forge a basis for further investigations into what Tuttle's use of textiles might mean at the intersection of art and language. See the followings essays from *Richard Tuttle: I Don't Know. The Weave of Textile Language*: Magnus Af Petersens, "The Visual Poetry of Richard Tuttle" and Chris Deacon's "Weaving Words" as well as Tuttle's own "Structure of Space." Additionally, see Katy Siegel's earlier referenced essay, "As Far as Language Goes."

In an interview with the *Financial Times* about the joint exhibitions a few weeks ahead of their openings, Tuttle was characteristically vague: “Fabric always has a conceal/reveal aspect.... And in between that reveal/conceal, there’s a mystery.”²⁴² To be sure, the mystery of textiles has been a consistent interest of Tuttle’s throughout his oeuvre: “I realized that since I made the *Cloth Octagonals* in 1967, I have always been pursuing the mystery of textiles—that work showed me how mysterious—unfathomably so—the textile is.”²⁴³ At another point in the *Financial Times* interview, Tuttle said: “Most people are afraid of mystery.... Art might be there to help us form a more comfortable relationship with mystery.”²⁴⁴ Indeed, whether as domestic cloth, rope, canvas, string, or thread, the textile has been an enduring problem throughout his oeuvre, a medium that is as unyielding in terms of fixity and certainty as Tuttle’s series of art are in specificity and resolution.

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At this point in the study, Tuttle’s commitment to mystery and uncertainty is well documented. However, in the context of a larger audience that is perhaps unfamiliar with Tuttle’s art and certainly unfamiliar with Tuttle’s nuanced and gnomic ways of speaking about his art, *I Don’t Know* was considered by much of the public and the press to be obfuscating, if not outright abstruse. Because *I Don’t Know* was a Turbine Hall commission and thus a high-profile installation, it garnered considerable criticism. Most critics dismissed it as unsuccessful, and, if they were not wholly dismissive, they were

²⁴² Spence.

²⁴³ Deacon, 144.

²⁴⁴ Spence.

certainly skeptical.²⁴⁵ Moreover, and much to the Tate Modern's dismay (especially the education department), Tuttle refused to give a straightforward explanation of the work. In fact, Tuttle admitted that he begged the Tate Modern not to give the public a document explaining the piece but rather to provide one that detailed how the installation was made.²⁴⁶ Notably, the institution did not oblige. Apparently still frustrated by the Tate Modern's insistence on explication, Tuttle defended his position at a talk at the Whitechapel Gallery during the opening week of the joint exhibitions by insisting that his art did not have a singular meaning but rather was about "opening-up a field," that it was "about speculation," and that even he was "still learning so much" from it.²⁴⁷

Without the contextual or explanatory document usually provided by museums, many visitors to the Turbine Hall were, indeed, perplexed by Tuttle's piece. On the press preview day for *I Don't Know* at the Tate Modern, some of its staffers wore badges that stated in black and white "I don't know." On one level, the badges could be read as a marketing ploy for the newly unveiled commission. However, given the resistance that Tuttle's project had already faced from the Tate Modern, they also could be read a way to manage a problem, as art historian and art critic Anne Wagner has insisted in her review of the work—a way for staffers to absolve themselves from questions about a work that

²⁴⁵ As examples of those reviews, see Martin Herbert, "Richard Tuttle: Whitechapel Gallery & Tate Modern, London, UK," accessed November 1, 2014, <https://frieze.com/article/richard-tuttle-1?language=de>; Alastair Smart, "Richard Tuttle, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, review," accessed November 1, 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-reviews/11159082/Richard-Tuttle-Turbine-Hall-Tate-Modern-review-evokes-nothing-whatsoever.html>; Jonathan Jones, "Richard Tuttle's Turbine Hall flying machine is lovely...and forgettable," accessed November 1, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/oct/13/richard-tuttle-i-dont-know-the-weave-of-textile-language-review-tate-turbine-hall>.

²⁴⁶ Richard Tuttle, in conversation with Whitechapel Gallery Curator Magnus af Perthersens, Whitechapel Gallery, London, October 16, 2014.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

was mysterious and challenging. Of course, for Tuttle, mystery and challenge were intentional for *I Don't Know*, but Wagner was especially dubious of Tuttle's title:

I'm not sure it's possible to be entirely certain about an enterprise that itself so aggressively embraces doubt. To choose a single title for its three components [the two exhibitions and the accompanying catalogue] is one thing, but when that title is *I Don't Know: The Weave of Textile Language*, there's a risk things will go wrong. Apparently the idea was that the enterprise would embrace Tuttle's default answer ["I don't know"] to Tate's (necessary) questions about how his installation would find shape.... The risk Tuttle runs in the Turbine Hall is that his doubting title will become the voice of the exhibition....²⁴⁸

Certainly, *I Don't Know* is a more overt title, but, in some sense, Tuttle's "doubting title" was earnestly meant to be "the voice of the exhibition," just as it was also his constant and earnest response to the Tate Modern's requests for precise plans and models. Consistent with all of Tuttle's serial art, *I Don't Know* was a project dependent on Tuttle's searching and meandering method of inquiry, necessarily unfolding and emerging over time; hence Tuttle was always uncertain as to the final shape that the installation would take. When considered in this way, the title of *I Don't Know* can be seen to dramatically thematize Tuttle's entire serial practice.

~

Solutions are not always declarations or emphatic statements; a solution can be a question...

~Richard Tuttle²⁴⁹

Fifty years on from Tuttle's beginnings, *I Don't Know* brings full circle, as it were, the paradoxical serial logic of his oeuvre, which, as this study has argued, has consistently relied on ambiguity and doubt, speculation and inquiry, unearthing as many questions as it does answers. Indeed, mystery and uncertainty looms especially large in

²⁴⁸ Wagner, 45.

²⁴⁹ Donovan, 119.

the Tate piece, not least of all in the centrally located question mark. To be sure, *I Don't Know* is uncharacteristically explicit in form and title, but, as is typical of Tuttle's seriality, it is the middle, or what emerges in-between, that carries the most significance.

With its landscape-like construction, *I Don't Know* reads as a massive and bewildering abstraction of the cosmos. However, unlike any of Tuttle's series before, we are terrifyingly confronted by scale, and by a question mark no less, which prompts us, if not compels us, to engage with it. We might begin with a question: what does it mean? But to our anxious invocation, the question mark seems to reply only in the manner of its title: "I don't know." Such a response may well fill us with frustration and apprehension, and the more that we stand in its presence, the more we are made subject to the sprawling and unfathomable configuration of a cosmos that seems constant in its movement yet uncertain in its direction. From the push and pull of the red fabric and the hiddenness of the midnight-blue underneath to the unreachable swaths of marigold that flutter and soar above us, *I Don't Know* is an image of the unknown—the unknowable—made manifest, at least in Tuttle's oeuvre, in the most spectacular of means.

Tuttle's intention all along in this project was to find a way to "embrace the not-knowing"²⁵⁰ and, when in the presence of *I Don't Know*, we do—we must. It is telling that during the six months that *I Don't Know* was on display in the Turbine Hall, one of things that visitors did the most was to sit or to lie under it for long periods of time.²⁵¹ Despite the dominating presence of the work, there is a sense that *our presence* in and around this piece is essential to the installation's makeup. While much has been made in

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Of course, similar responses have occurred to large scale installations in the Turbine Hall, most notably Olafur Eliasson's *The Weather Project* (2003), which found many lying under the glow of digitally created sun.

this analysis of the question mark within this piece, a vital component of it remains missing—its “point.” It is, I contend, a space purposefully left open for us (Figure 5.22) but not for the purposes of completing the work. In fact, the area just under the red structure is cordoned off, thus preventing us from fully aligning with it on the level of form. Therefore, if it can be said that we are, in some sense, “the point” of the question mark, then this point is always somehow off-center, meandering, and, in some cases, multiplied by multiple bodies—an unpredictable feature that aids in sustaining the uncertainty and ambiguity of the work. Indeed, whether we sit or stand beneath it or lie prostrate before it, we are, as Tuttle intended, ultimately made to submit to and embrace the unknown, to become not only a part of a work that is about the unknown, but also to participate in the very processes that are generative of the unknown. For, here, as elsewhere in Tuttle’s work, in the presence of ambiguous and confounding objects, we are made to look, think, and question, over and over and in different ways, making *I Don’t Know*, in turn, a fitting punctuation to this study on Tuttle’s serial art.

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FIGURES



Figure 1.1 Richard Tuttle, *3rd Rope Piece* (1974). Image from The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/art-object-page.130203.html>.



Figure 1.2 Richard Tuttle, *Second Green Octagonal* (1967). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 1.3 Richard Tuttle, *Titel 3* (1978). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 1.4 Richard Tuttle, *Fiction Fish I, 15* (1992). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.

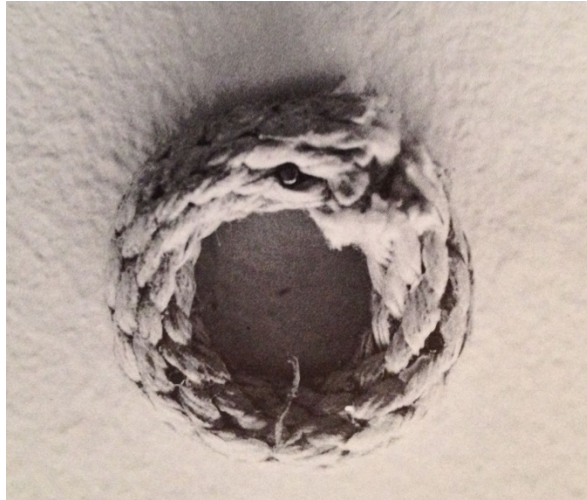


Figure 1. 5 Other selections from Richard Tuttle's *Rope Pieces* (1974). Image from Marcia Tucker, *Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 1.6 Selections from Richard Tuttle's *Wire Pieces* (1972). Image from *Chaos, Die/ The Form*.

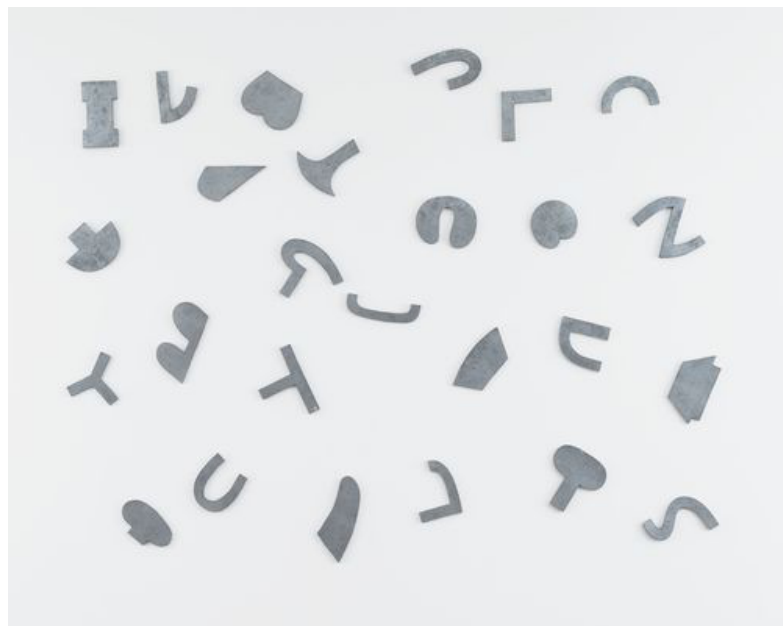


Figure 1.7 Richard Tuttle, *Letters (Twenty Six Series)* (1966). Image from Museum of Modern Art, New York, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/86630?locale=en>.



Figure 1.8 Installation View of “Richard Tuttle: 26” at Pace Gallery, May 2016. Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 1.9 Andy Warhol, *Campbell Soup Cans* (1962). Image from Museum of Modern Art, New York, https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/andy-warhol-campbells-soup-cans-1962.



Figure 1.10 Donald Judd, *Untitled (Bernstein 78-69)* (1978). Image from Mnuchin Gallery, New York, <http://www.mnuchingallery.com/exhibitions/donald-judd>.



Figure 1.11 Donald Judd, *Progression* (1965). Image from Whitney Museum of Art, New York, http://whitney.org/image_columns/0001/6009/66.53_judd_imageprimacy_compressed_800.jpg?1367685331.



Figure 1.12 Richard Tuttle, *Light and Colour* (2011). Image courtesy of Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London.

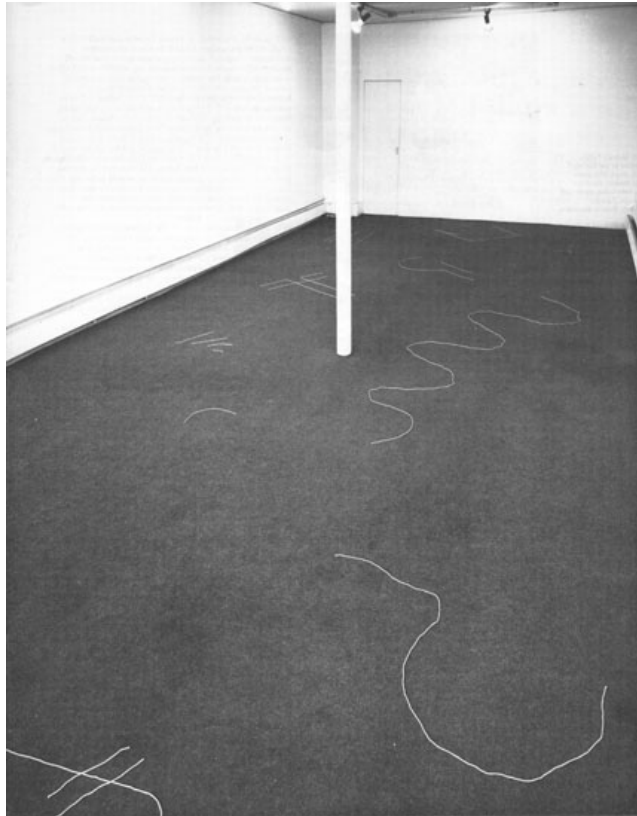


Figure 1.13 Richard Tuttle, *Ten Kinds of Memory and Memory Itself* (1973). Image from [http://res.cloudinary.com/bombmagazine/image /upload/v1412020060/tuttle_02_body.jpg](http://res.cloudinary.com/bombmagazine/image/upload/v1412020060/tuttle_02_body.jpg).

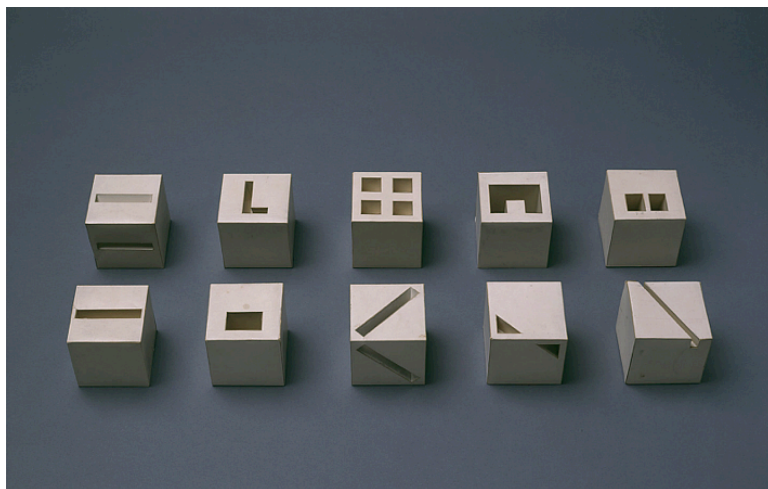


Figure 2.1 Richard Tuttle, *Untitled (Paper Cubes)* (1964). Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.

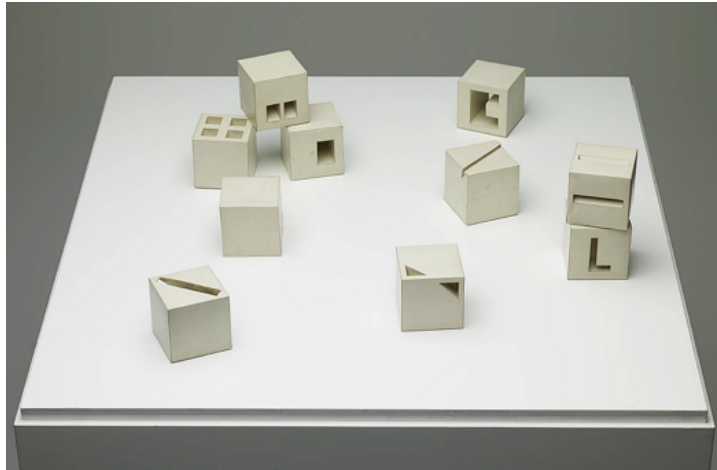


Figure 2.2 Richard Tuttle, *Untitled (Paper Cubes)* (1964). Image from Moderna Museet, Stockholm, http://www.modernamuseet.se/stockholm/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2016/05/Tuttle-Richard_Utan-titel_1964_F_Prallan-Allsten_1500x971-1440x932.jpg.

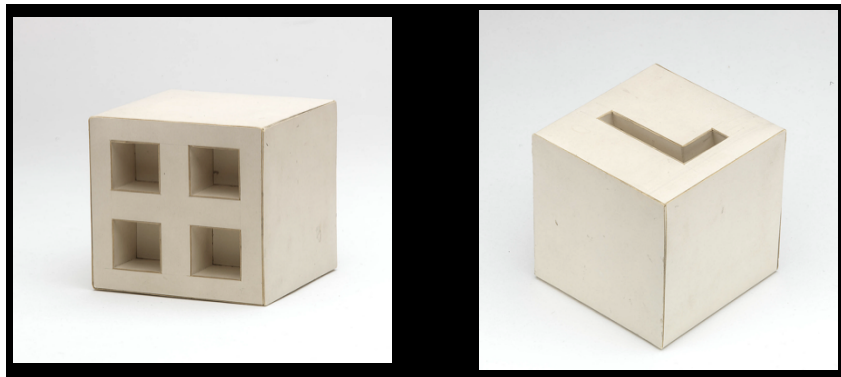


Figure 2.3 Details of *Untitled (Paper Cubes)* (1964). Images from Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

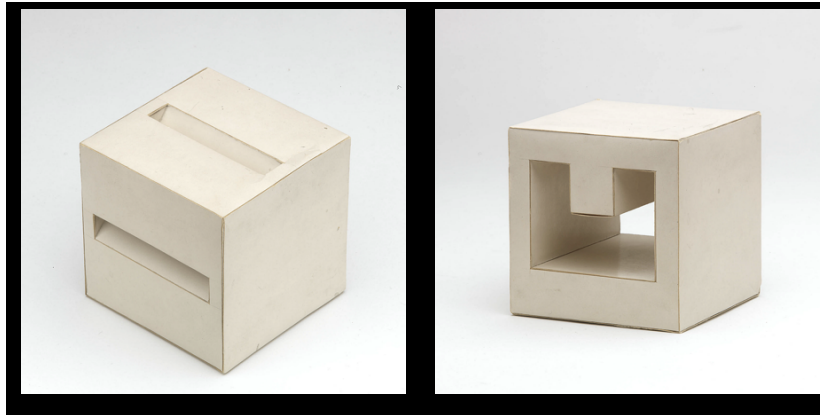


Figure 2.4 Details of *Untitled (Paper Cubes)* (1964). Images from Moderna Museet, Stockholm.



Figure 2.5 Detail of *Untitled (Paper Cubes)* (1964). Image from Moderna Museet, Stockholm.



Figure 2.6 Andy Warhol, *Brillo Box* (1964). Image courtesy of Byron Gallery Records, Archives of American Art.

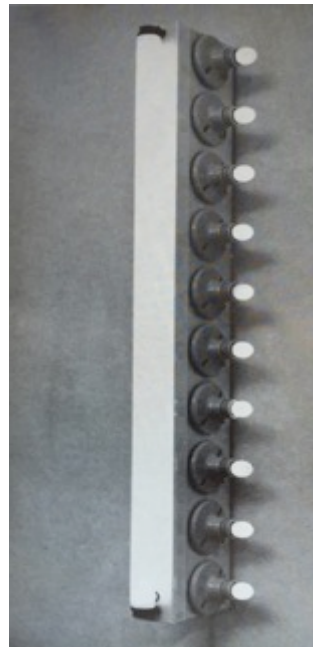


Figure 2.7 Dan Flavin, *Untitled* (c. 1964). Image courtesy of Byron Gallery Records, Archives of American Art.

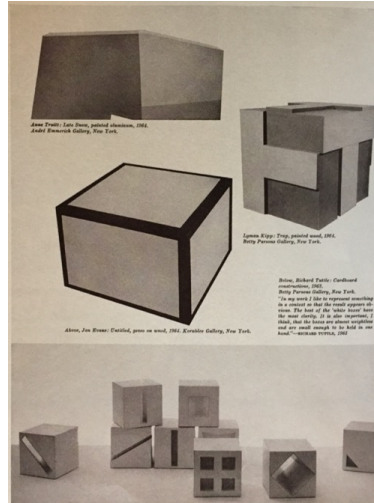


Figure 2.8 Tuttle's paper cubes as included Barbara Rose's essay. Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 2.9 Donald Judd, *Untitled* (1964). Image courtesy of Byron Gallery Records, Archives of American Art.

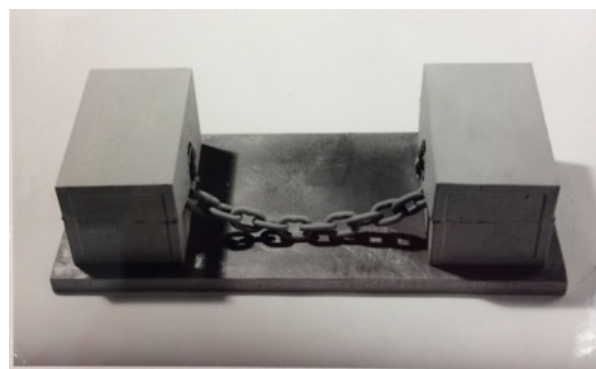
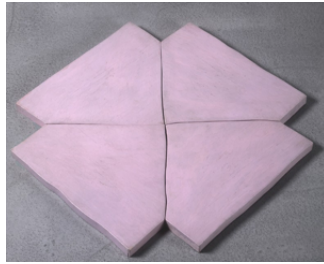
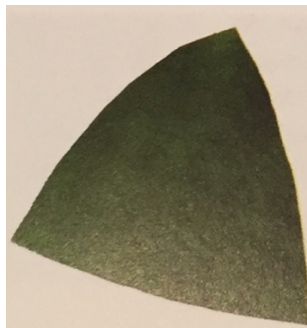


Figure 2.10 Robert Morris, *Untitled* (c. 1960-1964). Image courtesy of Byron Gallery Records, Archives of American Art.



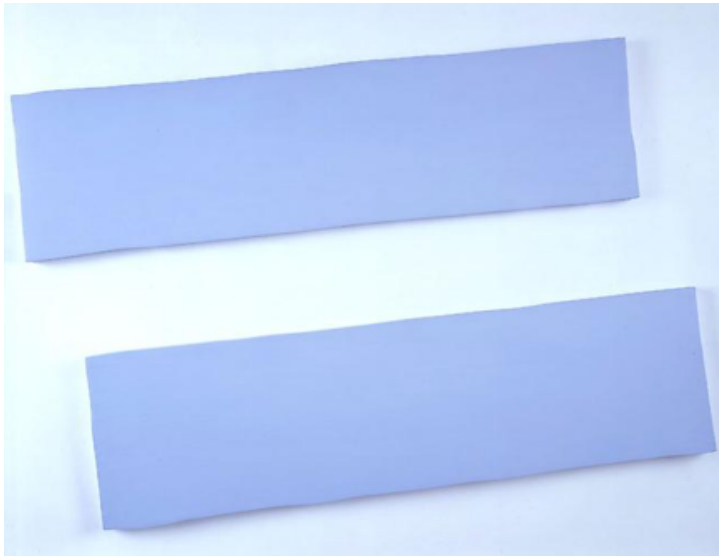
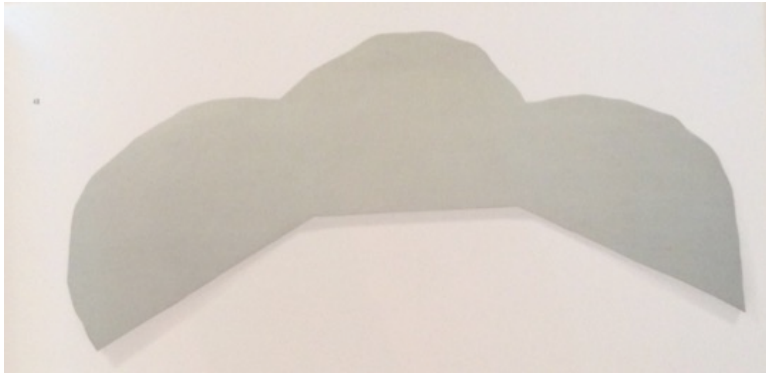
Figures 2.11-2.16

Selections from *Constructed Paintings* (1964-1965). Clockwise from top left: *Flower*; *Shadow*; *Water*; *Fire*, *Hill*, and *Table*. Images for *Flower*, *Water*, *Fire*, and *Table* from Peter Freeman, Inc., New York and for *Shadow* and *Hill*, from Christine Jenny, *Transformation im Werk von Richard Tuttle, 1965–1975*.



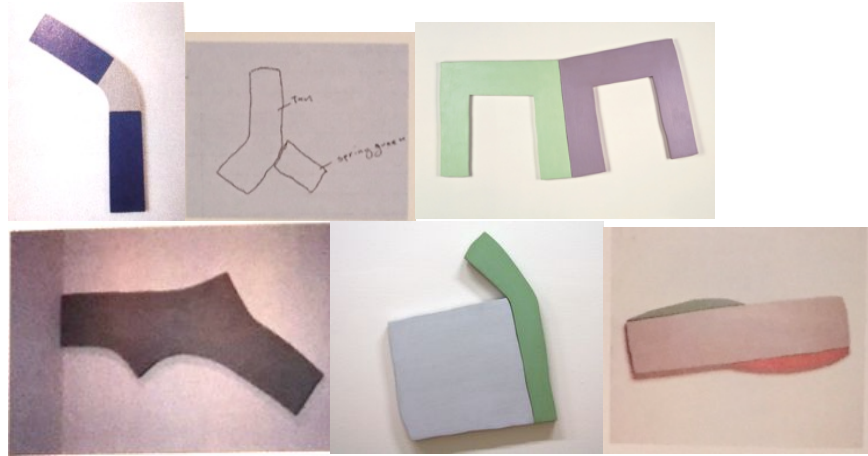
Figures 2.17-2.21

Selections from *Constructed Paintings* (1964-1965). From top to bottom: *Green*; *Silver Abstraction*; *Chelsea*; *Mist*; and *Mountain*. Images from Christine Jenny, *Transformation im Werk von Richard Tuttle, 1965–1975*.



Figures 2.22-2.23

Selections from *Constructed Paintings* (1964-1965). From top to bottom: *Any Ideas* and *Equals*. Images from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figures 2.24-2.29 The “Drift” works from *Constructed Paintings* (1964-1965), in chronological order (left to right): *Begin of Drifts*; *Drift II*; *Drift III*; *Drift IV*; *Drift V(Drifting)*; and *End of Drifts*. Images from Christine Jenny, *Transformation im Werk von Richard Tuttle, 1965–1975*.



Figure 2.30 Photograph from “The Avant-Garde: Subtle, Cerebral, Elusive,” *Time Magazine*, November 22, 1968, showing (left to right) artists Keith Sonnier, Bruce Nauman, Robert Ryman, Bill Bollinger, Robert Morris, Richard Tuttle, and David Lee. Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.

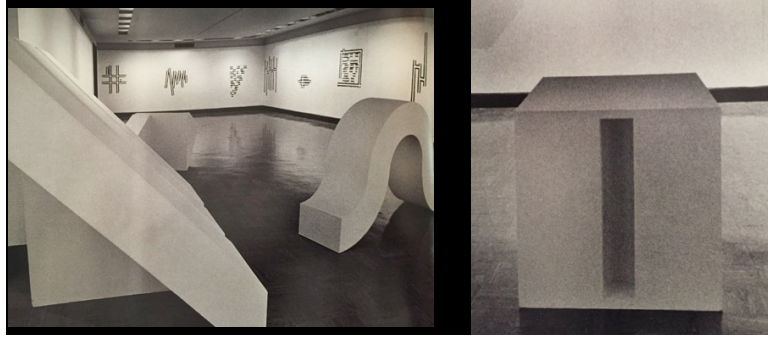


Figure 2.31 Installation views from “Richard Tuttle” at Dallas Museum in 1971. Images from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 2.32 Photographs of the *Paper Octagonals* in situ. Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 2.33 Selections from Richard Tuttle, *Wire Pieces* (1972). Unless otherwise noted, all images of the *Wire Pieces* are from the 1986 catalogue, *Chaos, Die/ The Form*.



Figure 2.34 1st Wire Piece.

Figure 2.35 2nd Wire Piece.

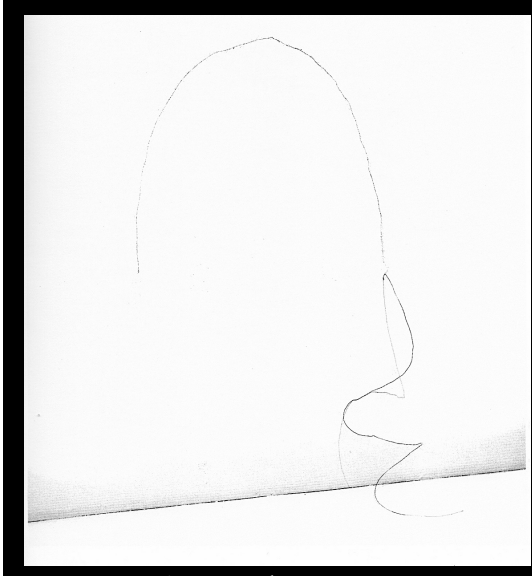


Figure 2.36 4th Wire Piece.



Figure 2.37 6th Wire Piece.

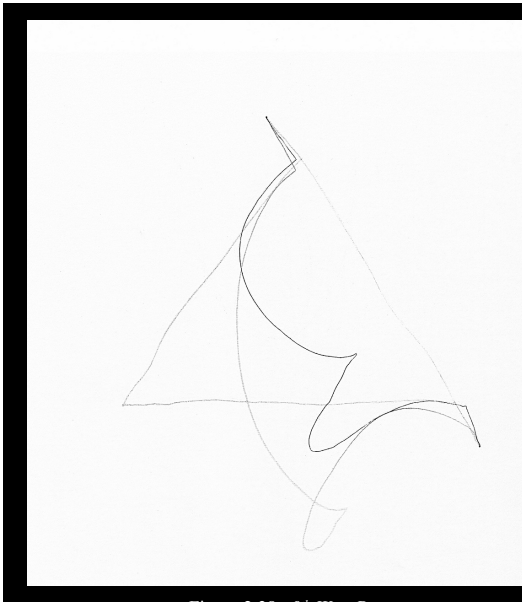


Figure 2.38 9th Wire Piece.

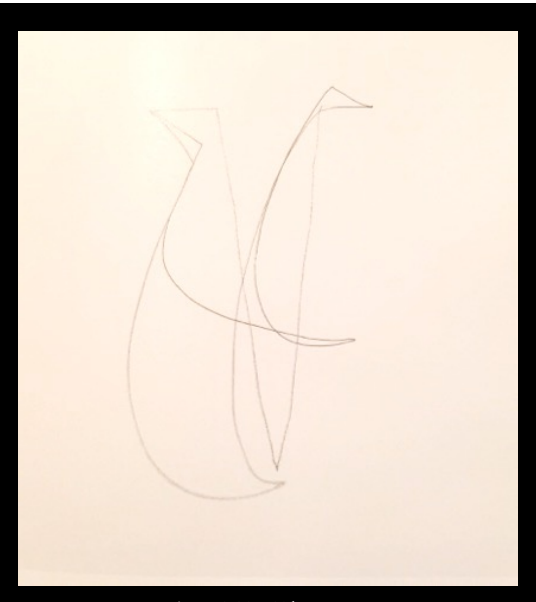


Figure 2.39 10th Wire Piece.



Figure 2.40 *13th Wire Piece.*

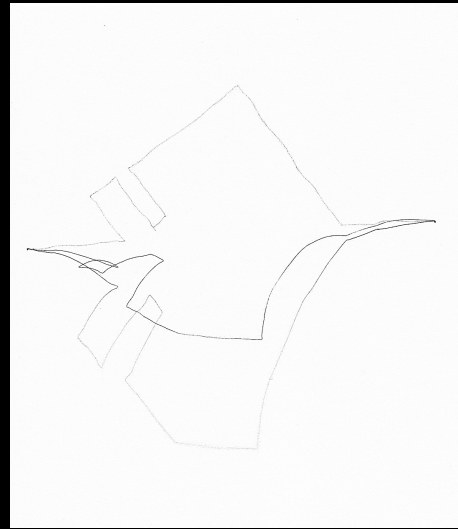


Figure 2.41 *14th Wire Piece.*



Figure 2.42 *26th Wire Piece.*

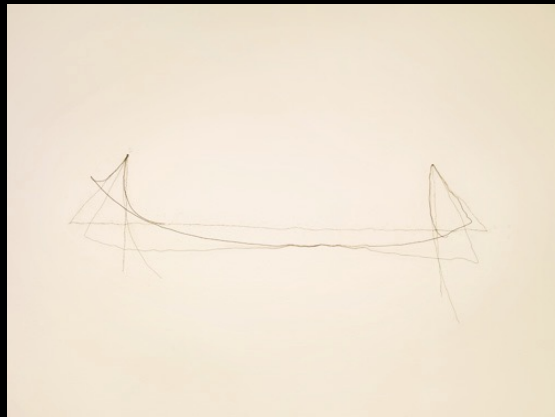


Figure 2.43 *31st Wire Piece.*



Figure 2.44 *38th Wire Piece.*



Figure 2.45 *39th Wire Piece.*

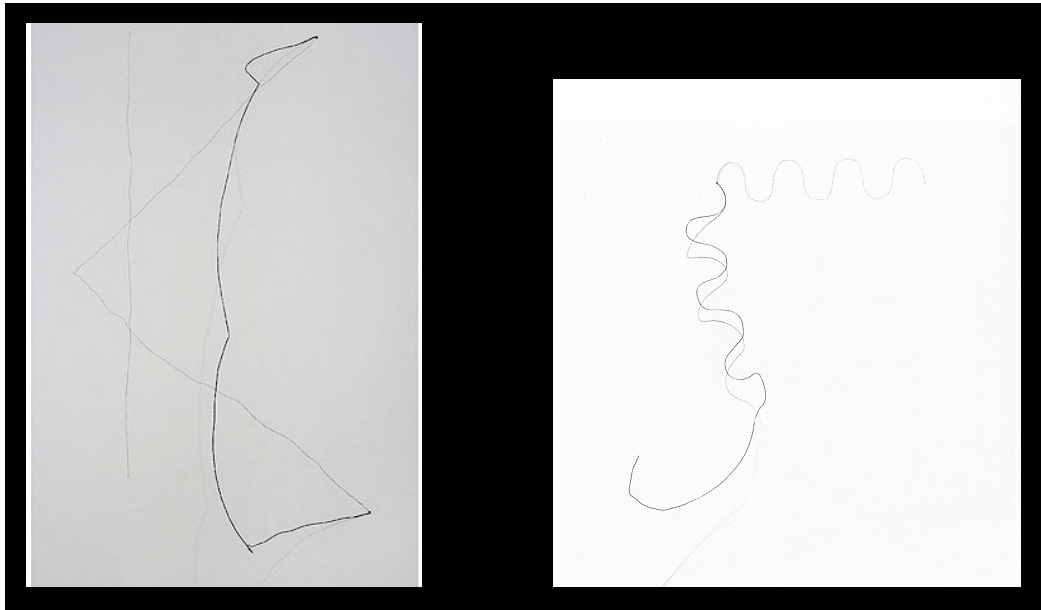


Figure 2.46 44th Wire Piece.

Figure 2.47 47th Wire Piece.



Figure 2.48 48th Wire Piece.

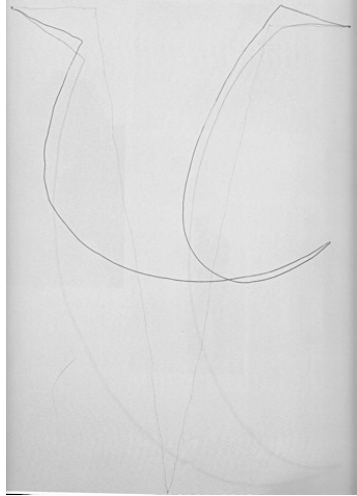


Figure 2.49 Photograph of *10th Wire Piece* taken in 1972. Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 2.50 Photograph of *10th Wire Piece* taken in 1986.

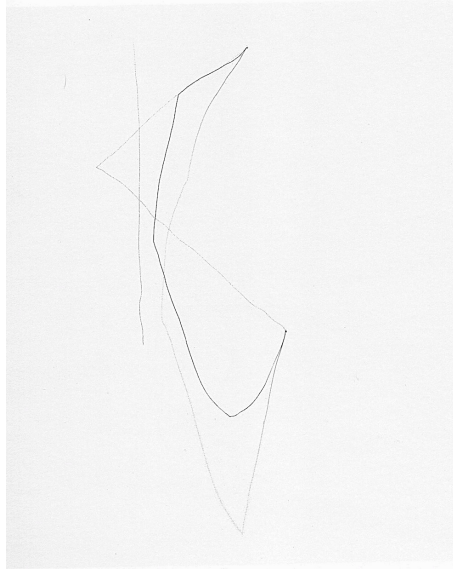


Figure 2.51 Photograph of *44th Wire Piece* taken in 1986.



Figure 2.52 Photograph of *44th Wire Piece* taken in 2012. Image courtesy of Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

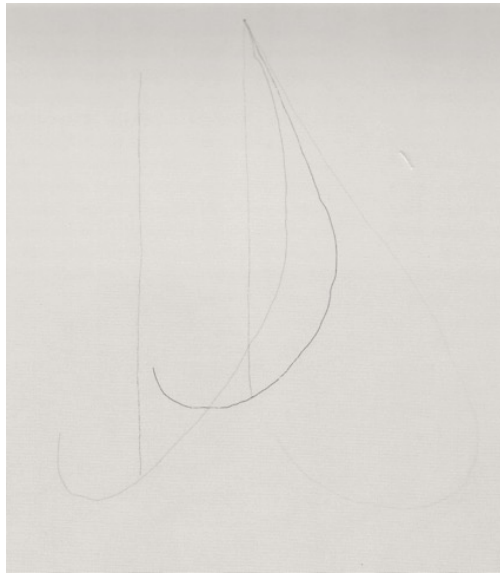


Figure 2.53 Photograph of 48th *Wire Piece* taken in 1972. Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.

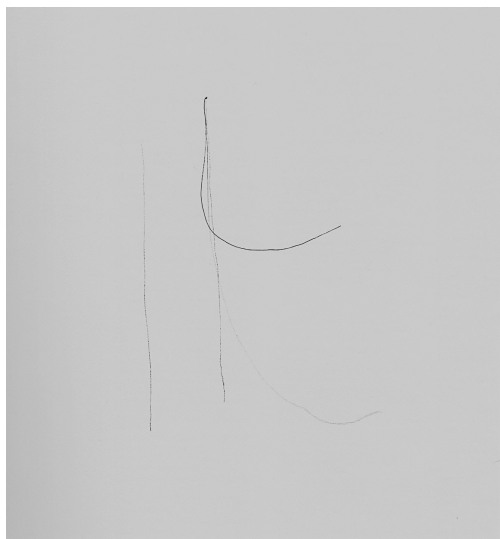


Figure 2.54 Photograph of 48th *Wire Piece* taken in 1986.

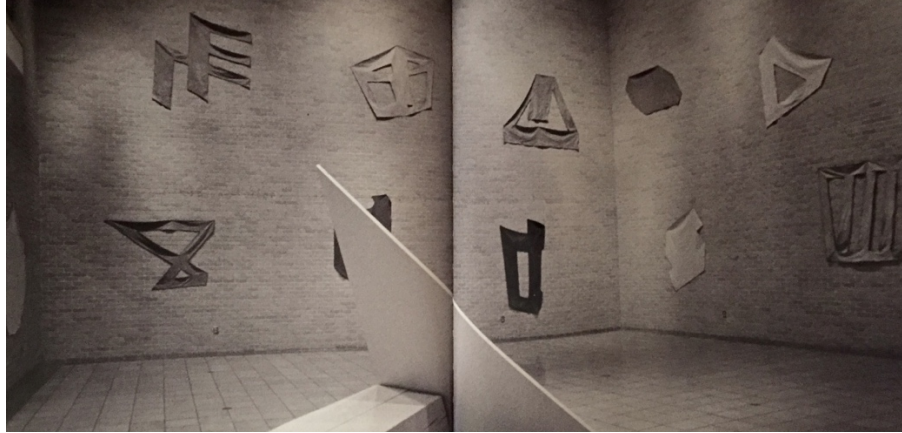


Figure 3.1 Installation view of *Cloth Pieces* from “Richard Tuttle” at Dallas Museum in 1971. Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.

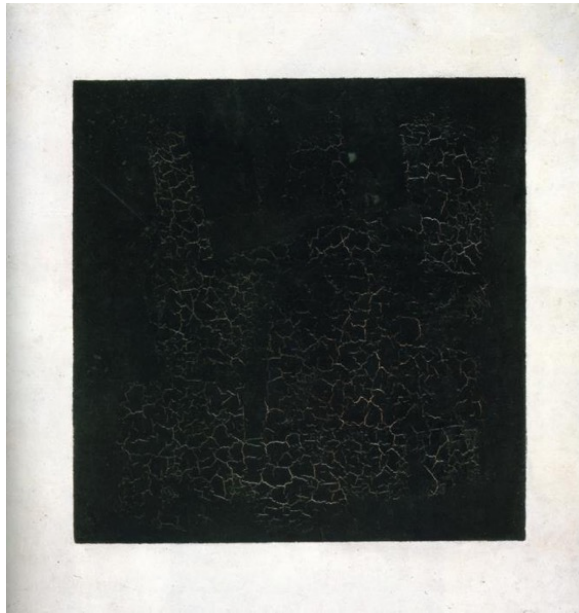


Figure 3.2 Kazimir Malevich, *Black Square* (1915). Image from <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/five-ways-look-Malevich-Black-Square>.



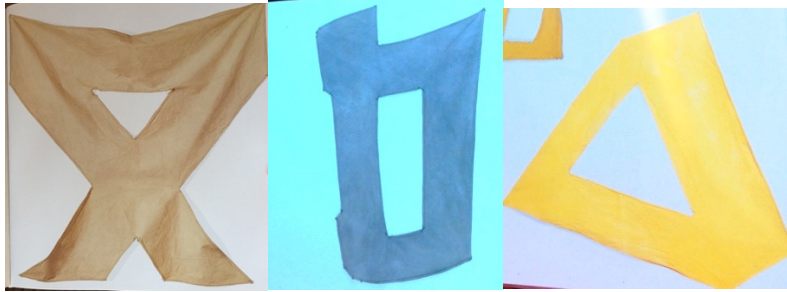
Figure 3.3-3.5 (Left to Right) Selections from Richard Tuttle, *Cloth Pieces* (1967-1968). Images from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 3.6-3.8 (Left to Right) Richard Tuttle, *Purple Octagonal*, *First Green Octagonal*, and *Octagonal Cloth Piece* (1967-1968). Images from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 3.9 Richard Tuttle with several *Cloth Pieces* on the wall and floor. Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figures 3.10-3.12 (Left to Right) Richard Tuttle, *Bow-Shaped Light Blue Canvas*, *Dark Blue Canvas*, and *Yellow Triangle with Three Thicknesses* (1967-1968). Images from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.

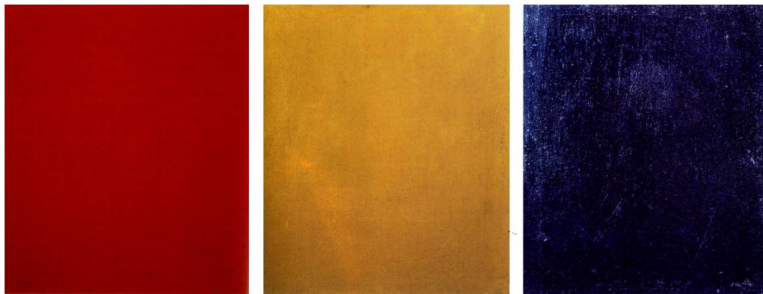


Figure 3.13 Aleksandr Rodchenko, *Pure Red Colour*, *Pure Yellow Colour*, and *Pure Blue Colour* (1921). Image from http://greg.org/archive/2013/11/07/hito_alexander_october_yves_peintures.html.



Figure 3.14

Installation view of two of Robert Rauschenberg's *White Paintings* (1951). Image from https://s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/sfmomamedia/media/uploads/images/WHIT_98.308_026.jpg



Figure 3.15

Helen Frankenthaler, *The Bay* (1963). Image from http://www.artfixdaily.com/news_feed/2012/01/04/5511-helen-frankenthaler-abstract-expressionist-remembered.

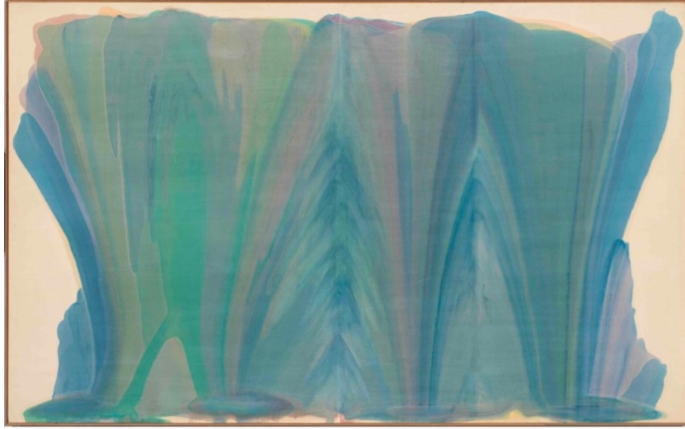


Figure 3.16

Morris Louis, *Veil Painting* (1958). Image from <http://www.mnuchingallery.com/exhibitions/morris-louis-veils>.



Figure 3.17

Robert Morris, *Untitled* (Felt piece) (1967-1968). Image from Tate Modern, London, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/morris-untitled-t14224>.



Figure 3.18 Robert Ryman, *Adelphi* (1967). Image from <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/564x/7f/76/4e/7f764e86b1ebd95c06d51a0a3abc5d81.jpg>.



Figure 3.19 Selections from Richard Tuttle, *Waferboard* (1996). Images (left) courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York and (right) from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 3.20 Selections from Richard Tuttle, *New York, New Mexico* (1998). Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 3.21 Richard Tuttle, *Prologue I* (2001). Image from *Richard Tuttle: Triumphs*.



Figure 3.22 Richard Tuttle, *Prologue II* (2001). Image from *Richard Tuttle: Triumphs*.



Figure 3.23 Richard Tuttle, *20 Pearls* (2003-2007). Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 3.24 Richard Tuttle, *Cycle I-XII* (1994). In chronological order, left to right. Images from *Richard Tuttle: Triumphs*.



Figure 3.25 Installation view of *Cycle* at 2010 exhibition, “Richard Tuttle: Triumphs” at the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane. Image from *Richard Tuttle: Triumphs*.

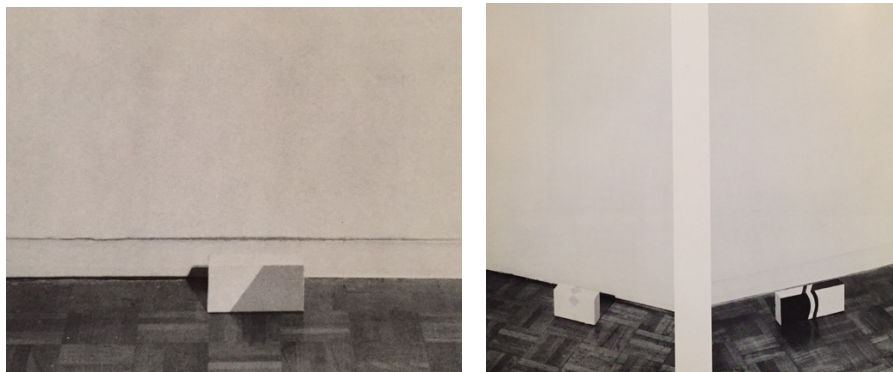


Figure 3.26 Selections from Richard Tuttle, *Blocks* (1973). Images from Marcia Tucker, *Richard Tuttle*.

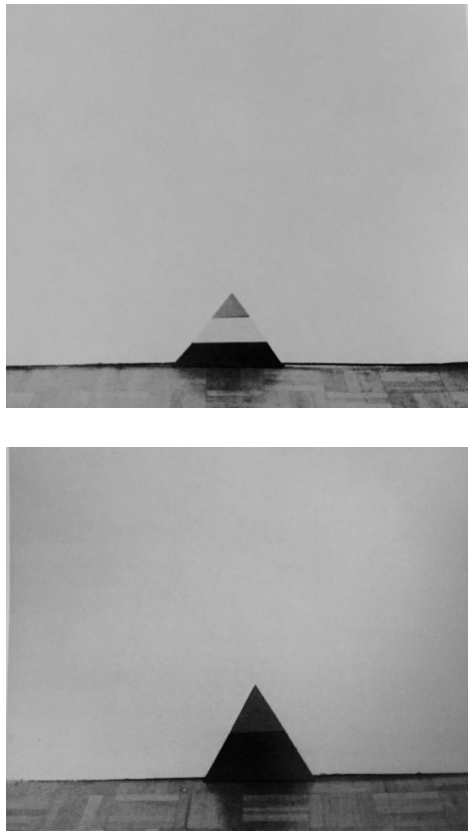


Figure 3.27 Selections from Richard Tuttle, *Colored Triangles* (1974). Images from Marcia Tucker, *Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 3.28 Tony Smith, *Die* (1962). Image from the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., <https://media.nga.gov/public/objects/1/2/7/6/2/3/127623-primary-0-440x400.jpg>.

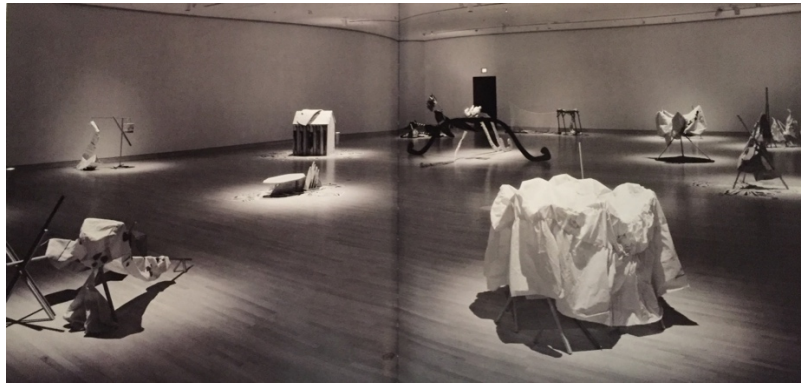


Figure 3.29 Installation view of Richard Tuttle, *Floor Drawings* (1987-1989) at the Indianapolis Museum of Art in 1991. Image from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 3.30 Richard Tuttle, *Turquoise I* (1987-1989). Image from *Richard Tuttle*. (The Hague: Sdu Publishers, 1991).

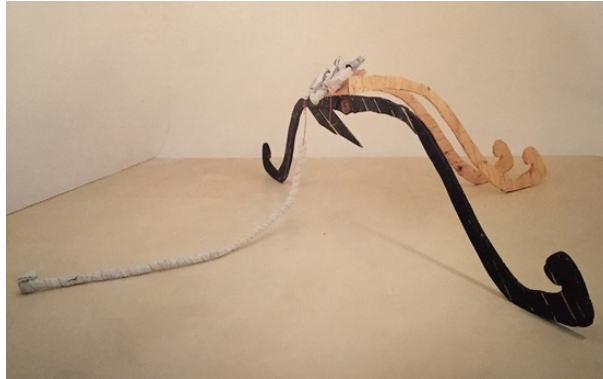


Figure 3.31 Richard Tuttle, *There's No Reason a Good Man is Hard to Find IV* (1987-1989), with detail. Image from *Richard Tuttle* (The Hague: Sdu Publishers, 1991).



Figure 3.32 Installation views of Richard Tuttle, *Source of Imagery* (1995-2010) at Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Denmark. Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 3.33 *Source of Imagery (Tangle)* (1995-2010). Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 3.34 *Source of Imagery V* (1995-2010). Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 3.35 *Source of Imagery (Wall)* (1995-2010). Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 3.36 *Source of Imagery VI* (1995-2010). Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 3.37 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane I* (1996-1999), detail. Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.38 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane I* (1996-1999), details. Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.

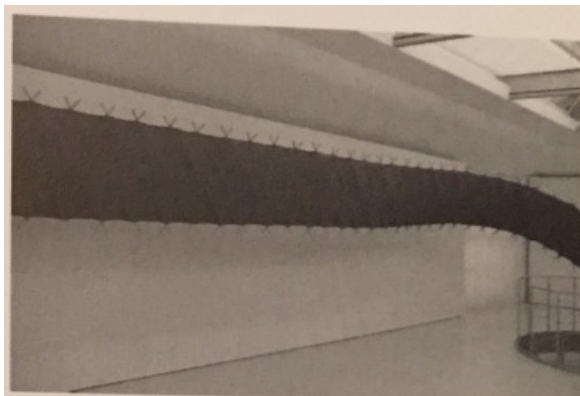
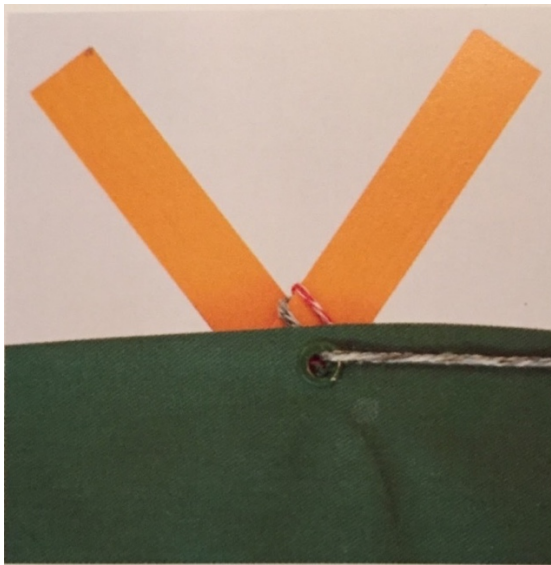


Figure 3.39-3.41

Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane I* (1996-1999), details, from top to bottom. Images from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.42-3.43

Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane I* (1996-1999), details, from top to bottom. Images from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.44 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane II* (1996-1999). Image courtesy of Kunsthhaus Zug, Switzerland.

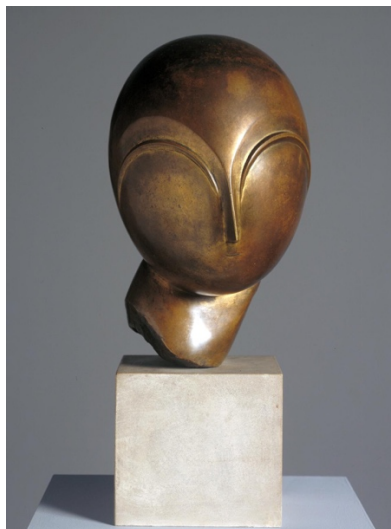


Figure 3.45 Constantin Brancusi, *Danaïde* (c.1918). Image from the Tate, London, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/brancusi-danaide-t00296>.



Figure 3.46 David Smith, *Cubi XX* (1964). Image from <http://www.publicartinla.com/UCLAArt/cubixx.html>.



Figure 3.47 Tuttle's "expressive arcs" amid the casting process. Images from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.48 Richard Serra, *Casting* (1969). Image from <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/8c/0c/a7/8c0ca71ddaf3e705053983ec266ba98c.jpg>



Figure 3.49 Installation view of *Replace II* (top) and *Replace III* (bottom). Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.

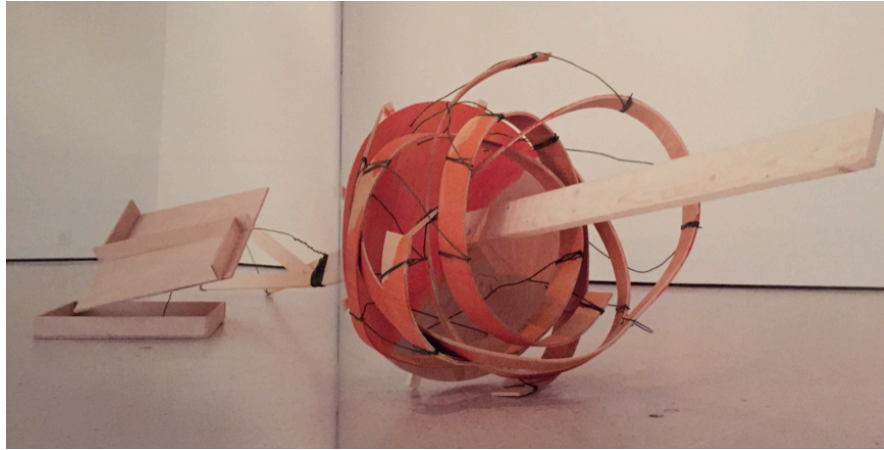


Figure 3.50 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane III* (1996-1999). Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.

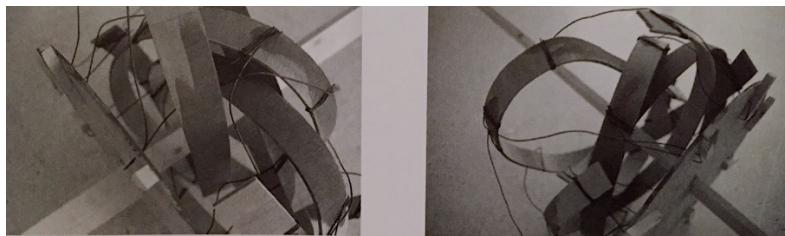


Figure 3.51 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane III* (1996-1999), details. Images from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.

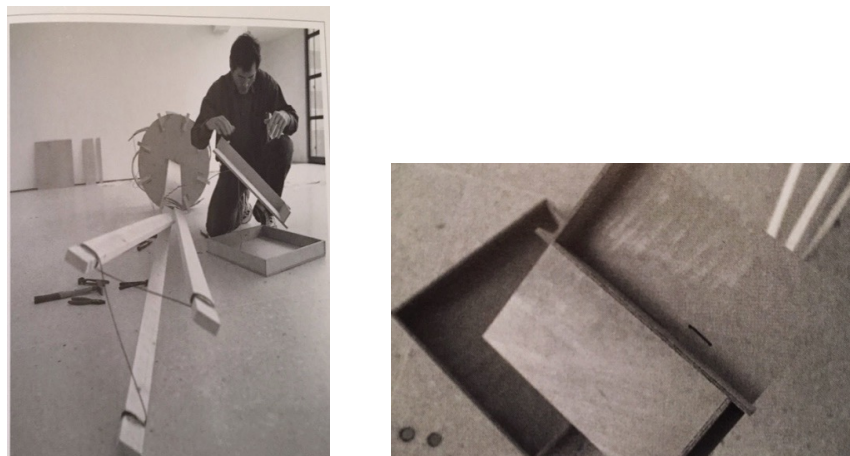


Figure 3.52 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane III* (1996-1999), details. Images from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.53 Installation views of Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane IV* (1996-1999) at Kunsthaus Zug. Images from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.54 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane IV* (1996-1999), detail. Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.

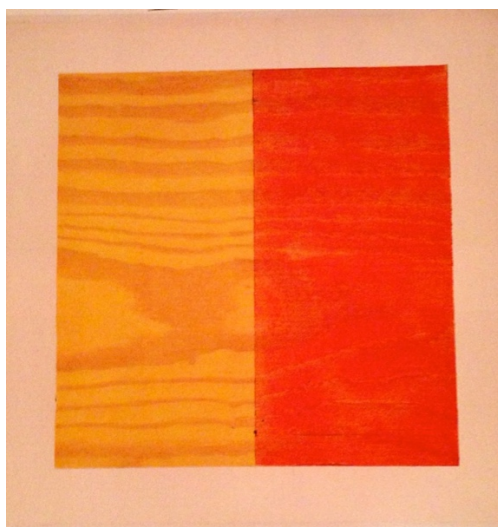


Figure 3.55 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane IV* (1996-1999), detail. Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.

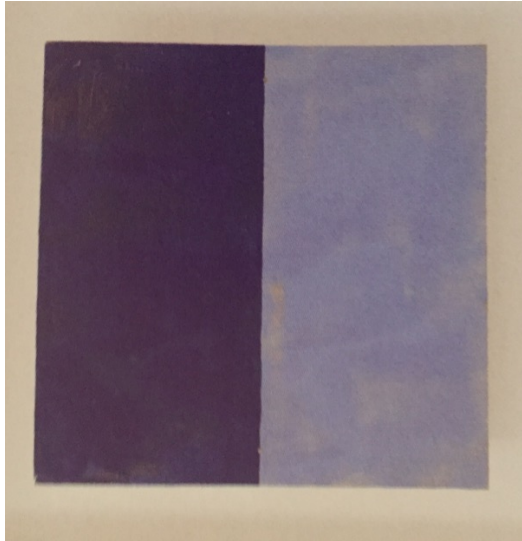


Figure 3.56 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane IV* (1996-1999), detail.
Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.57 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane IV* (1996-1999), detail.
Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.58 Richard Tuttle, *Replace the Abstract Picture Plane IV* (1996-1999), detail. Image from *Richard Tuttle: Replace the Abstract Picture Plane*.



Figure 3.59 Selections from Richard Tuttle, *Old Men and their Garden* (1982). Images from *The Art of Richard Tuttle*.



Figure 3.60 Richard Tuttle, *How It Goes Around the Corner* (1996). Image courtesy of Whitechapel Gallery, London.



Figure 4.1 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air B4* (2008-2009). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.2 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air B5* (2008-2009). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.3 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air B12* (2008-2009). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.4 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air B10* (2008-2009). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.

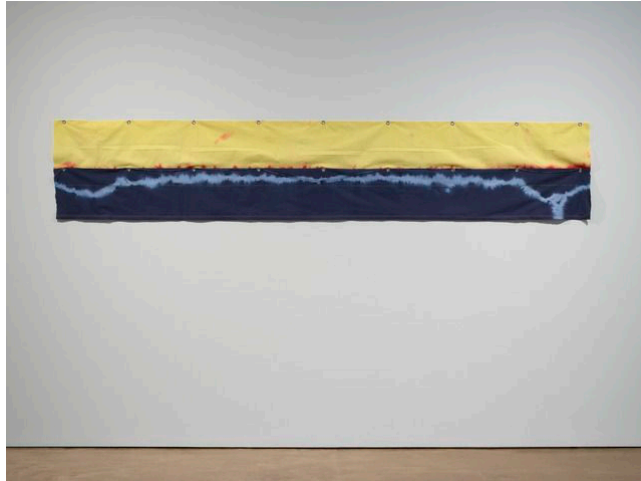


Figure 4.5 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air B11* (2008-2009). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.6 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air C1* (2008-2009). Image courtesy of Stuart Shave/Modern Art, London.



Figure 4.7 Tuttle installing *Walking on Air B4*. Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.8 Detail of Tuttle installing *Walking on Air B4*. Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.9 Detail of *Walking on Air B10*. Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.10 Caspar David Friedrich, *Monk by the Sea* (c.1810). Image from http://images.tate.org.uk/sites/default/files/styles/grid-normal-12-cols/public/images/caspar_david_friedrich_monk_by_sea.jpg?itok=Ib0aq6Ww.



Figure 4.11 John Frederick Kensett, *View of Shrewsbury River, New Jersey* (1859). Image from <https://www.wikiart.org/en/john-frederick-kensett/view-of-the-shrewsbury-river-new-jersey-1859>.

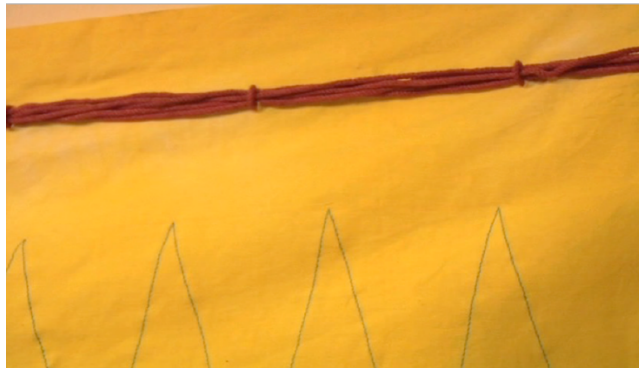
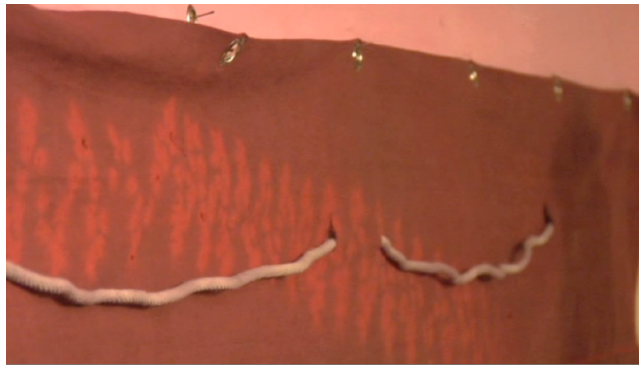


Figure 4.12-4.14

Details from *Walking on Air* pieces, from top to bottom. Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.15 Claude Lorrain, *Landscape with Cattle and Peasants* (1629). Image from Philadelphia Museum of Art, <http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/102999.html>.



Figure 4.16 Canaletto, *The Grand Canal in Venice from Palazzo Flangini to Campo San Marcuola* (c. 1738). Image from <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/225593/canaletto-giovanni-antonio-canal-the-grand-canal-in-venice-from-palazzo-flangini-to-campo-san-marcuola-italian-about-1738/>.

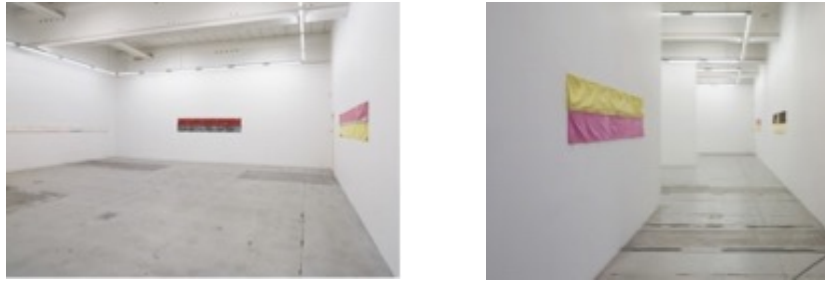


Figure 4.17 Installation views of Tuttle's 2014 exhibition "1, 2, 3" at the Galleri Nicolai Wallner in Denmark. Images courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.

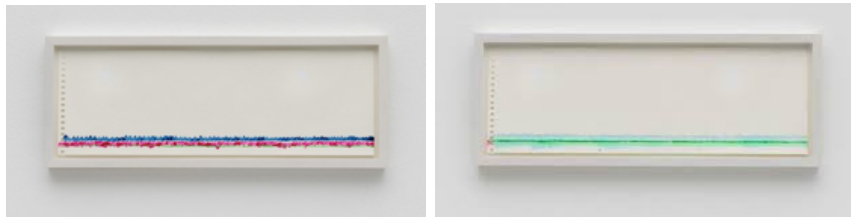


Figure 4.18 Richard Tuttle, *Sharing 1-25* (2009), with details. Images courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 4.19 Installation views of Tuttle's 2014 exhibition "1, 2, 3" at the Galleri Nicolai Wallner in Denmark. Images courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 4.20 Details of *Sharing 1-25*. Images courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 4.21 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air E1* (2009). Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 4.22 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air E7* (2009). Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 4.23 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air E5* (2009). Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 4.24 Richard Tuttle, *Walking on Air E4* (2009). Image courtesy of Galleri Nicolai Wallner.



Figure 4.25 Installation view of Tuttle's 2009 exhibition "Walking on Air" at the Pace Gallery, New York. Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.

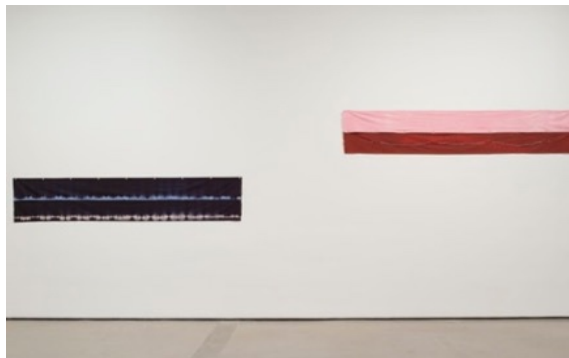


Figure 4.26 Installation view of Tuttle's 2009 exhibition "Walking on Air" at the Pace Gallery, New York. Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.

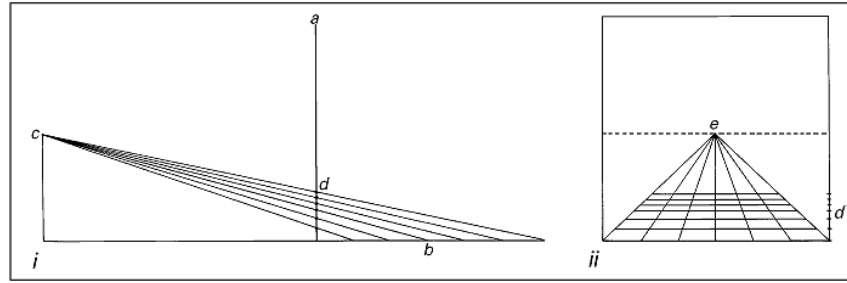


Figure 4.27 Diagram of Alberti's Perspective Scheme. Image from <http://csmt.uchicago.edu/glossary2004/perspective/alberti.gif>



Figure. 4.28 Anonymous print showing the implementation of the perspectival grid. Image from http://public.media.smithsonianmag.com/legacy_blog/durer-perspective1.jpg.



Figure 4.29 Richard Tuttle, *Perceived Obstacle No. 76 (Oil Painting #5)* (1991). Image from <http://media.wsimag.com/attachments/8fc0f6bbb1c3062a9bd0deb0257afb013c2ca8e8/store/fill/408/306/6007d6d02ba3a66f8c16abb67e210ef0c3e7e0e63005b2b0cc6169adc752/Richard-Tuttle-Perceived-Obstacle-No-76-Oil-Painting-number-5-1991-Oil-and-graphite-on.jpg>

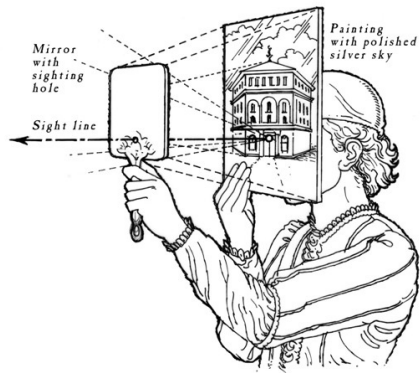


Figure 4.30 Diagram of Brunelleschi's Experiment. Image from <https://s-media-cacheak0.pinimg.com/564x/48/c7/0d/48c70d639bf27608213a1e8072afa2a8.jpg>

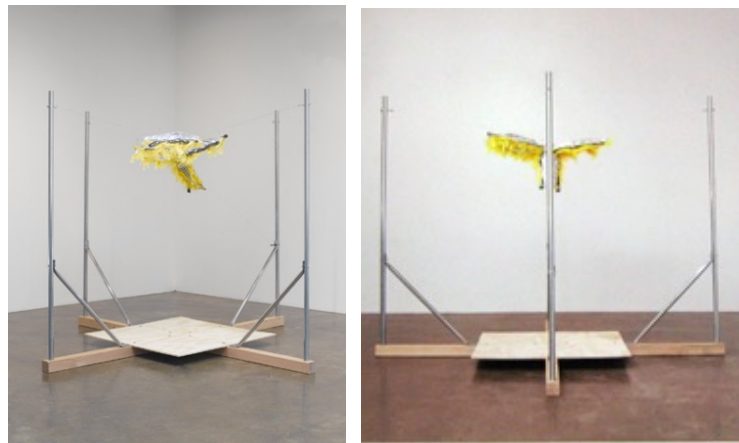


Figure 4.31 Richard Tuttle, *Systems I* (2011-2012). Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.32 Richard Tuttle, *Systems II* (2011-2012). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.

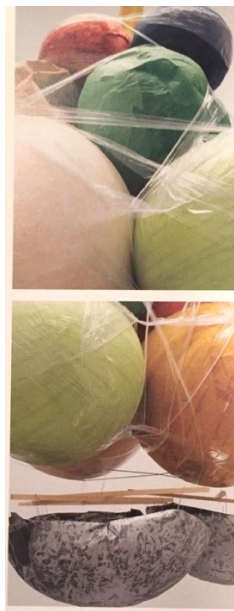


Figure 4.33 Richard Tuttle, *Systems III* (2011-2012), with detail. Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.

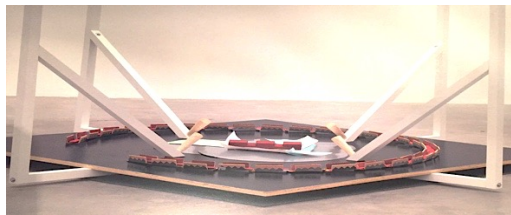


Figure 4.34 Alternate view of *Systems III* (2011-2012), with detail. Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.35 Richard Tuttle, *Systems IV* (2011-2012). Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.36 Richard Tuttle, *Systems V* (2011-2012). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.

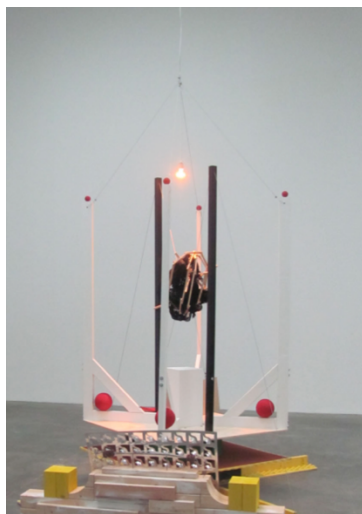


Figure 4.37 Richard Tuttle, *Systems VI* (2011-2012). Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.38 Richard Tuttle, *Systems VII* (2011-2012). Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.39 Richard Tuttle, *Systems VIII* (2011-2012). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.40 Richard Tuttle, *Systems IX* (2011-2012). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.41 Richard Tuttle, *Systems X* (2011-2012). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.42 Richard Tuttle, *Systems XI* (2011-2012). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



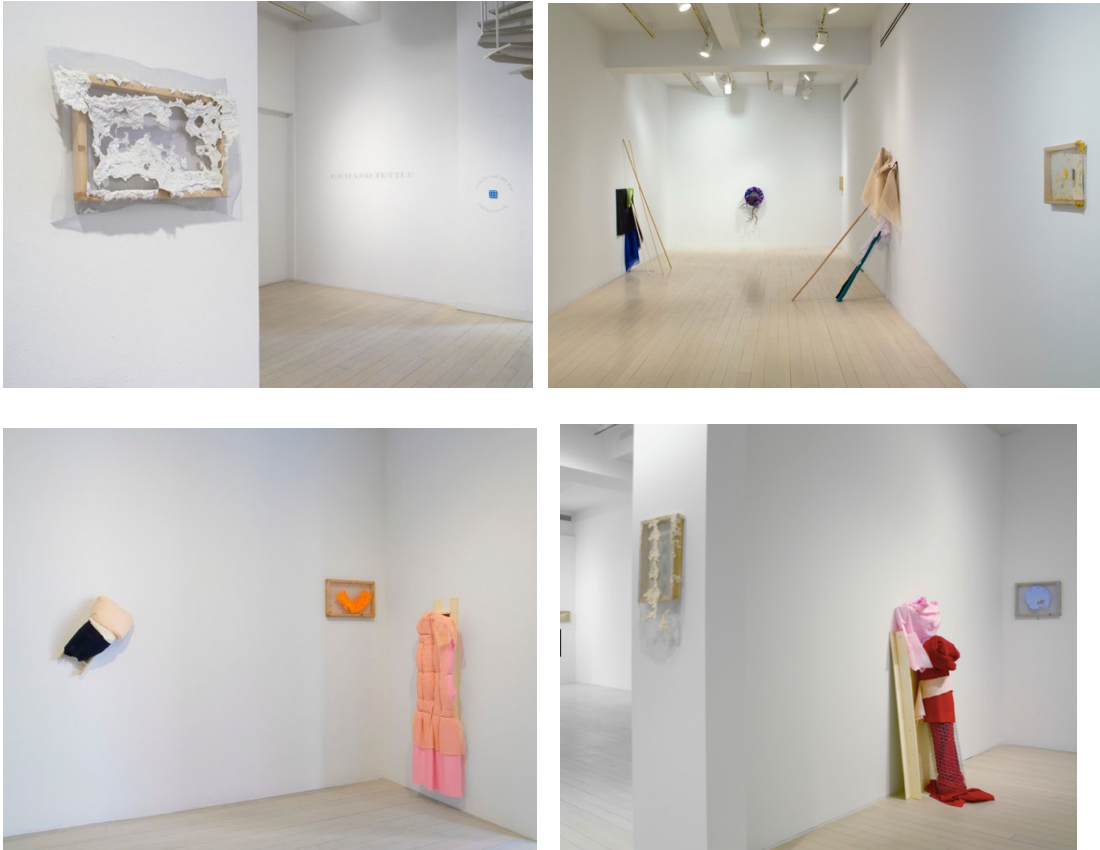
Figure 4.43 Richard Tuttle, *Systems XII* (2011-2012). Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.44 Installation view of *Systems* at Pace Gallery in 2011. Image courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figure 4.45 Details of *Systems I* (2011-2012). Images courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figures 5.1-5.4 Installation views of “Looking for the Map” at Pace Gallery, New York, in 2014, featuring the two series by Richard Tuttle of *Looking for the Map 1-11* (2013-2014) and *PlusMinus 1-9* (2013-2014). (Clockwise from top left). Unless otherwise noted, all images for these series and this exhibition are courtesy of Pace Gallery, New York.



Figures 5.5.-5.6 (Left to Right) Richard Tuttle, *Looking for the Map 10* and *Looking for the Map 4*.



Figure 5.7 Richard Tuttle, *Looking for the Map 7*, with detail.



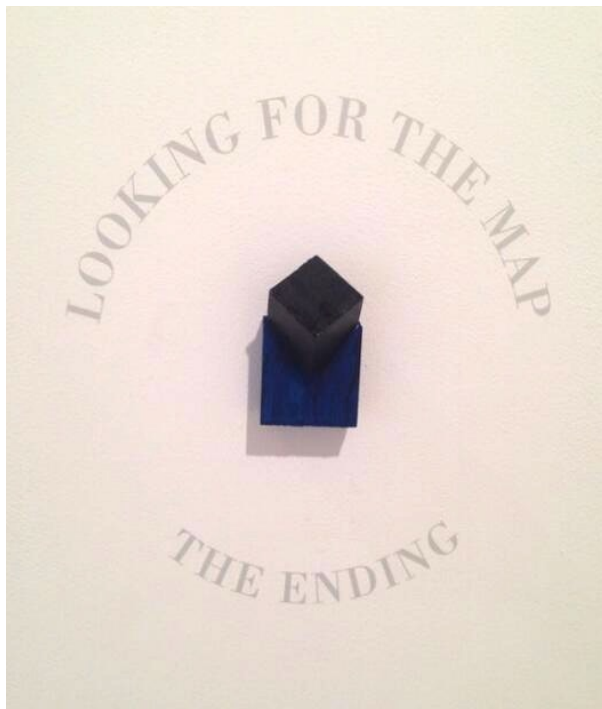
Figure 5.8-5.9 (Left to Right) Installation views of “Looking for the Map” at Pace Gallery.



Figure 5.10 Richard Tuttle, *PlusMinus 9*.



Figures 5.11-5.12 (Left to Right) Installation views of “Looking for the Map” at Pace Gallery.



Figures 5.13-5.14 (Top to Bottom) Details of signage in “Looking for the Map.”



Figure 5.15 Richard Tuttle, *I Don't Know: The Weave of Textile Language* (2014). Installation view at Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London. Image from http://images.tate.org.uk/sites/default/files/images/tuttle7.10.140030_1.jpg.



Figure 5.16 Views from Turbine Hall bridge. Unless otherwise noted, this image and all subsequent images of this work are courtesy of the author.

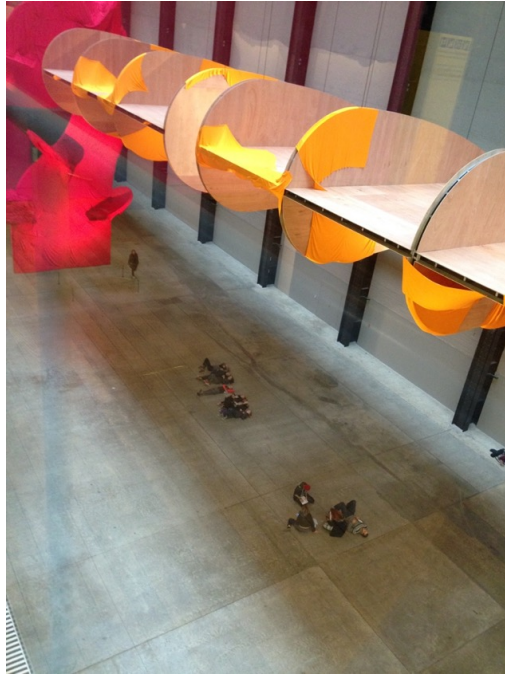


Figure 5.17 View from upper galleries.

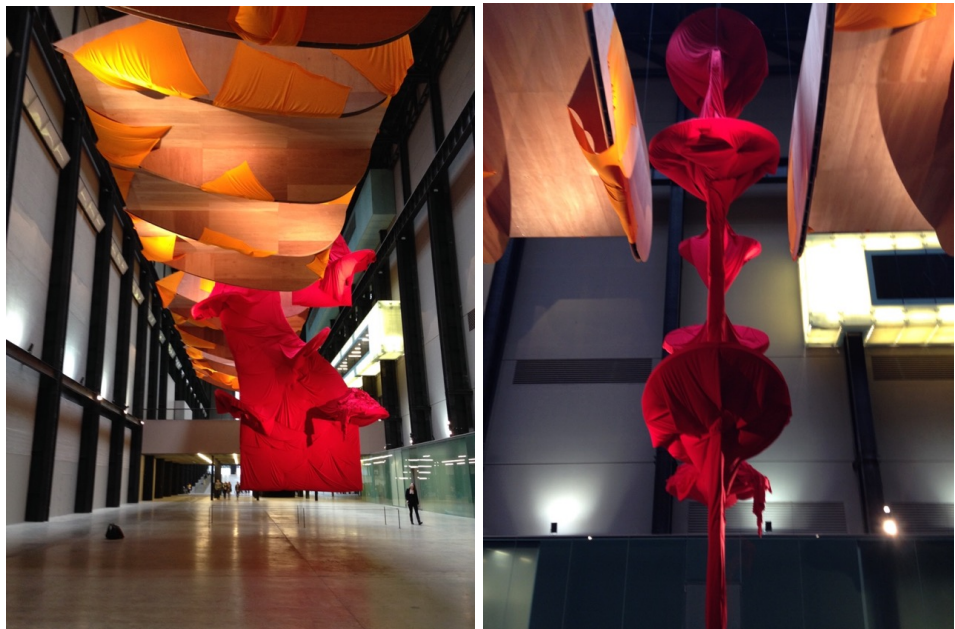


Figure 5.18 Views from Turbine Hall ground floor.

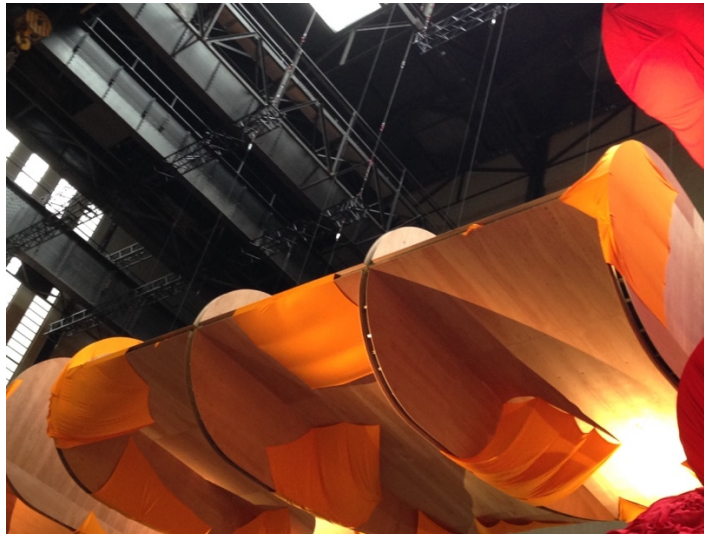


Figure 5.19 Detail showcasing marigold fabric.



Figure 5.20 Details showcasing the underside of the work.



Figure 5.21 Details showcasing the red fabric.



Figure 5.22 Author sitting under *I Don't Know*.