

Art as Institution; as a Conceptual Argumentative Strategy to Contextualize Concepts in Art Practice

By Renato Osoy

Art as institution, the institution of art, art in the institution, art of the institution, art from the institution, art on the institution, institution and art, art and institution are phenomena as real as the earth and the sky, hence, clear indicatives of the symbiotic relationship that these two constituents of culture form. The use of the term symbiosis is generally attributed to living organisms¹, art and the institution are not alive, although they act and behave as if they were a sort of self-sufficient entity that could exist without anyone's intervention. That is an illusion of course, because we, persons, are the ones that move and fuel the existence of this symbiotic interaction by our very involvement, a daily activity that at times seems to be separated from us: here 'we' are, there 'it' is. As practitioners, we hardly position ourselves as being within art or say inside the institution on the daily, we can ponder on it and eventually come to conceptual grips and say: yes, we are in it, we are part of it, but clearly this demands some serious involvement, reflections and an awareness of what constitutes the condition we refer to on this paper, when we pronounce Art and the Institution in today's context, and what it might constitute for artistic practice.

Argumentation links fiercely to the word, to the spoken word, hence the written word, the word that produces concepts in our mind, concepts that link themselves to other worldly concepts, to the reasoning of the word, the argument, those lines of thought that seem to be only comprehensible through the spoken language, those that dwell in the intellectual realm, for the sake of the argument to exercise reason and at times to prove one's point as valid.² The Institution(of/in Art) is an ongoing discourse, a structure and a set of values of appreciation that set the context for artworks to be produced and displayed in a given cultural moment. It might be that the Institution is not fixed, it appears that it is movable, fluid, although it appears to be solid and eternal. The Institution can be just when it mediates consciously, but it can act tyrannically and unfair when its guiding members become corruptible. The Institution is a presence of power and authority, but it can be

¹ Symbiosis [ˌsɪmbɪəˈɒsɪs, -bɪ-] noun (pl. symbioses [-,sɛz]) Biology: interaction between two different organisms living in close physical association, typically to the advantage of both. A mutually beneficial relationship between different people or groups: a perfect mother and daughter symbiosis. ORIGIN late 19th cent.: modern Latin, from Greek *symbiōsis* 'a living together,' from *symbiōn* 'live together,' from *symbios* 'companion.' New Oxford American Dictionary 3rd edition, 2010 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

² An argument is a connected series of statements or propositions, some of which are intended to provide support, justification or evidence for the truth of another statement or proposition. Arguments consist of one or more *premises* and a *conclusion*. The premises are those statements that are taken to provide the support or evidence; the conclusion is that which the premises allegedly support. Because arguments are attempts to provide evidence or support for a certain claim, they often contain words such as "therefore," "thus," "hence," "consequently," or "so" before their conclusions. Similarly, words or expressions such as "because," "inasmuch as," "since," "for the reason that," etc., are often found accompanying the premises of an argument. IEP, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/argument/>

challenged. The Institution is an invention, a creation of values by a 'collective', a group that wishes to Institute certain functions as agreements in order to achieve certain goals. The Institution needs to build itself on discourse, it needs an argument, a language game that it deliberately constructs through the use of clever rhetoric in order to validate itself and hold power status.³

Art as something, or an activity for creating affections, links it self to a variety of mediums including the written language (like in poetry and literature), but it does so in order to manifest the experience it desires to provoke on the other, to feel an experience that touches, that that the theory can only speak of, that that the intellect cannot provide, because it is not intelligible.⁴ Although at times art also provokes intellectual activity, art does not solely stick to the production of those events, and it doesn't seek to prove one's right or wrong, in that sense it is not argumentative, it only manifests itself. Art has many forms and it is quite pervasive, but its main strength appears to be in its capacity to be non-reasonable and more gut-like, although not at all times. Art generally doesn't want to be defined, even though there are many definitions for art. While it appears that for the purpose of this paper, we rather not stick or try to formulate any concrete definition(s) of art, as we will travel intermittently through history in the different moments that particular artistic activities have taken place. It seems we rather remain somehow flexible and take art or put in a broader context 'artistic activity' as something that is there, to take it for granted, as something that is happening as we speak of.⁵ Across this text we might come to encounter some of the aspects related to the way that art handles or plays with concepts and affairs, as described before, but that is not entirely the purpose of this text. We are not looking to discuss art's reach and it's capacity to bring forth intuitive knowledge (better than/or), but rather, to survey what venues it utilizes to manifest and spread the information being produced, information that is mainly distributed and contextualized through the apparatuses of the Institution.

The debate and the inevitable desire to institute and theorize this topic extends as far as Plato's Republic and beyond, in short we could back to the purity of the idea opposed to the falsity of representation, Plato and Socrates in a dialogue, debating, discussing and by effect of their authority instituting a concept, that of inquisition and suspicion on

³ For the above noted statements on the concept 'Institution', I have borrowed at large from the text by John R. Searle "What is an institution?" and from the text by A. Hauser, "Institutions of Mediation". As well as the New Oxford American Dictionary 3rd edition , 2010 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

⁴ "Experience in History and in Philosophy, The Rebirth of Centripetality" The first perspective originated in recent developments in history and historical theory and the other one originated in recent developments in philosophy. In both of them one may observe a shift away from language towards experience. This shift probably reflects a more general shift in our contemporary culture; one could describe it as a moving away from comprehensive systems of meaning to meaning as bound to specific situations and events. [...]Theory and meaning no longer travel in the same direction; meaning has found a new and more promising traveling companion in experience. Frank Ankersmit, "Sublime Historical Experience", Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 2005. Introduction, pg 1-2.

⁵ I rather provide more of personal and open concept as a 'temporary definition of art' for the purpose of this paper, a 'definition' (which I consider to be in constant motion as matters arise and my practice evolves) coming from the point of view of a practicing artist. I adhere to this posture since I am not trying to argue for the meaning of Art, but rather just to point out to that there are two activities taking place here, one mainly being artistic activity and the other the presence of a structure we call the Institution.

representation, a discussion that brings forth hidden notions and the mechanics of a matter, in the above case, the matter of Art and its effects. It is essentially the pillar, the posture of western scientific thought and it's theoretical development to be suspicious, to produce discussion and to be inquisitive in those topics that concern the activities of humans and the relationships that they produce among each other. This activity and its documentation has produced great amounts of knowledge inherited for the world from antiquity till today, this matter of course is nothing new, we are all more or less aware of this mechanism and its development. Actually what is to our concern on this paper, is to find a way or ways, on how to place this on-going debate 'Art/Institution' and its rhetorical game, into practical use(s) for artistic practice.

Claiming that there is a 'rhetorical game' in the 'Art/Institution' condition 'as value', is indeed a big claim, one which I don't intend to prove through this paper. But in any case it is worth noting that the amount of theory produced on the topic is overwhelming. For example, in the recent seminar "Art as Institution and it's Critique" Johan Hartle compiled a collection of texts from a variety of angles and positions that relate to the matter.⁶ Just by reading the name of the authors and the titles from this very seminar, one automatically becomes aware of the depth on the discussion that has been carrying-on since, and that in any case, might continue to do so in the progression of time, as art and institution evolve in concept and context in their symbiotic affair.

When expressing on the above mention concept, where art and institution are in some sort 'symbiotic affair', we are not assuming that there is some sort of idealistic notion where Art and Institution are both 'happily' and 'progressively' (as a notion in Modernism) evolving in an ever-flowing event to reach a higher or ultimate goal. This affair is certainly not only an event where the reciprocity of critiques, proposals and engagements that flow harmoniously and consequently. That will be completely mis-leading and unfair to propose when we consider the struggle, and in some cases to the martyrdom that the Institution has represented for many artists through out history. The Institution by means of imposing its canons and bureaucratic processes upon the artist, has generally presented its monstrosity and magnitude, to sometimes elevate and at other times censor the production of art as the different interests of the peoples involved in it have either wished, claim or even commanded according to their own justifications or caprices.

⁶ The Seminar "Art as Institution and it's Critique" at University of Amsterdam in 2012. In coordination of *Dr. Johan Frederik Hartle* J.F.Hartle@uva.nl *UvA, Room Number 2.17, OTM 143. A lists of the texts that where read and reffered during the seminar:* John Searle: What is an Institution? / Arnold Hauser: Institutions of Mediation / Theodor W. Adorno: Valéry Proust Museum / Arnold Hauser: The Art Trade / Walter Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility / Peter Bürger: Theory of the Avant-Garde / Benjamin H.D. Buchloh: Theorizing the Avant-Garde / Hal Foster: Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde / Peter Bürger: Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde: An Attempt to Answer Certain Critics of Theory of the Avant-Garde / Arthur C. Danto: The Artworld / The End of Art / George Dickie: What is Art? / What is Anti-Art? / Pierre Bourdieu: A Sociological Theory of Art Perception / The Historical Genesis of a Pure Aesthetic / Tony Bennett: The Political Rationality of the Museum / James Clifford: On Collecting Art and Culture / Brian O'Doherty: Inside the White Cube / Douglas Crimp: On the Museum's Ruins / Rosalind Krauss: The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum / Nicolas Bourriaud: Relational Aesthetics (ch. 1) / Hal Foster: Arty Party / Clair Bishop: Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics / Boris Groys: The Logic of Equal Aesthetic Rights; On the New / Andrea Fraser: From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique.



Untitled, 2001, wax, pigment, human hair, fabric, and polyester resin.



Gallery owner Massimo de Carlo, attached to the wall of his gallery, 1999



In front of the MOMA in NY and actor performs Pablo Picasso, 1998

But, let's not give the institution complete authorship for this condition, and let's not forget either that the artist is not necessarily an innocent victim, but has also been an author of creating terrorizing proposals that confront the different forms and obstacles that the institution sets forward to halt the pace of the artist. In recent years artist Maurizio Cattelan, has produced a series of works that are somehow conceptually linked to the idea of challenging the Institution of Art or to put it in the words of Arthur C. Danto, the "art-world", that simple term that encapsulates the complex structure of institutions that forms the grand concept of the Institution of Art.

In 1998, Cattelan arranged for an actor to wear an over-sized cartoon mask of Pablo Picasso to meet and greet visitors in front of the New York's Museum of Modern Art. A year later, in 1999 he taped to the wall of the gallery, the very owner of the gallery that represented him, basically 'hanging on the wall', was it the gallerist thirst for fame and profit that made him a victim of his own ambition? We really don't know the motivation behind it, as it is with a lot of the works from Cattelan, he usually becomes evasive when he is being confronted and questioned on the the meaning of his artworks. In 2001 he also exhibited a small sculpture of a man that appears to be Cattelan himself trying to enter or maybe escape the confines of the museum through a hole in the floor, we don't know what to make out of this figures facial expression, is he scared, is he arriving, is he going, is he good or bad?

As we stop to briefly examine this three artworks we find by no coincidence: artist, gallery and museum coming vis-a-vis with their own integrity, maybe without being fully aware of the set-up they fall in, where Cattelan webs an ingeniously designs a trap (artist, dealer and museum) that automatically exposes their hidden operations by means of raping their own protocols. Although Cattelan's work appears to be humoristically absurd, it actually propels the opposite when we view it in detail as the layers of the artworks begin to peel-off and as it settles down in our psyche. Revealing not only what is tragically absurd about it, but what is in a sense absurdly tragic while they reciprocally expose the conditions where

the effort of the Artist, the Artwork and the Institution conspire to function within their own systems.

It feels we cannot mention Cattelan without first mentioning Duchamp, and this is not necessarily to run through historicity or to find similarities in their *modus operandi*, but more in the effort to point the case of Duchamp as a hallmark on this approach, we have all heard the phrase “art after Duchamp” one of those that usually pops-up when people refer to Picasso as the great maestro of modernism. Although we cannot assert with accuracy a valid way to measure which artist has been the most influential in thought and practice since modernity till today, we can clearly take into account how Duchamp by means of challenging the institution introduced some key concepts into art that have had a powerful impact for the last century, and that in a way have caused a real shift in our aesthetical and practical approach towards the discussion of art.

Duchamp’s breakthrough achievements in challenging the Institution of Art are plentiful, “Consider once again Marcel Duchamp, whose art neither Hegel nor any of his contemporaries could have considered as such. It was Duchamp above all others whose work was intended to exemplify the most radical dissociation of aesthetics from art, particularly in his readymades of 1915-1917.”⁷ This achievement comes even to a greater stage or level of consideration, when we read the artist modestly rhetoric statement on a symposium held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1961: “I don’t want to destroy art for anybody but for myself”.⁸ In an article published by Duchamp’s magazine “The Blind Man” where he wrote about “The Richard Mutt Case” right after the rejection of “Fountain” at the Armory Show, saying that: “Mr. Mutt... took an ordinary article of life, placed it in a way, so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view—created a new thought for that object.”⁹ Although he kept busy with scattered art activities and his later involvement with Breton and Surrealism, around the 1920’s, Duchamp headed into his chess-stage leaving the heat of the scene for almost twenty five years, setting the game on the table, waiting for the next move to react, although we never really knew with whom he was really at play: either with him, the Audience, the Artwork or the Institution.

On this brief reflection we are trying to get more of what is, or of what could have been an essential aspect in understanding one of Duchamp’s original contributions to the art/institution condition, clearly pointed by Arthur C. Danto’s “The Transfiguration of the Common Place” here, Danto at some moment points out how for example ‘holy water’ is just regular water, and that through an act of gesture, in this case spiritual, the simple tap water can just become something else, being that of course ‘holy’. Further on he states that

⁷ Arthur C. Danto, “The Abuse of Beauty”, *Aesthetics and the Concept of Art* (2006). Pg. 94-95, Open Court publishing company.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

“Duchamp’s work is not the urinal at all but the gesture of exhibiting it ” And when we consider these implications we might just bump into the concern of meaning, which Danto replies by saying: “[...] the object was not a work until it was made one. As a transformative procedure, interpretation is something like baptism, not in the sense of giving a name but a new identity, participation in the community of the elect”.¹⁰ Danto’s reflections might bring us somewhat closer into grasping the conceptual purity on the meaning of ‘gesture as art form’.



Certainly we might feel inclined to cheer for triumph on the artist side, and somehow applaud the efforts of the artist to challenge the establishment with such cleverness, but let’s not forget that the structure of this symbiotic situation we are discussing is so intermingled as we shall read further on, that the moment the artist tries to get one step ahead, the institution follows like a shadow, an immediately as that step lands on the ground, the shadow disappears and by default new sets of question and standards arise, as a new spaces opens up for the institution to display its overwhelming reach. The gesture of the artist as ‘art-form’ is just another taken for granted aesthetic criteria in today’s valorization of art-forms, taken as ‘common sense’ in the contemporary art-world, as we stroll endlessly, observing samples, repetitions at galore down the corridors of the grand museums and halls of the greatest world art fairs, we catch a whiff of the institutionalized art.

There is always a hungry crowd around, hungry for the next new thing, hungry for sensation and surprise, there is an art-market, there are tabloids to be written, exhibitions rooms to be filled in, tv programs to be recorded, theories and discussions to follow, books to be published, and in these activities, the cycle reopens it self, resetting the game endlessly, that game that at times can be productive but at other times it only creates sensationalism, stagnation and repetition.

¹⁰ Arthur C. Danto, “The Transfiguration of the Commonplace” (1981). Harvard University Press.

We have mention two artists that have cleverly played with the structure art/institution we have been discussing. Duchamp on the one hand comes from a well formed academic background, he also participated in a variety of institutionalized activities. Duchamp was well aware of the structures of institutionalized art as he proceeded to tease or react on the matters that concerned him, and not only him but what about the great DADA? Or going a bit further and remembering Courbet statement: “when I am dead let this be said of me: “He belonged to no school, to no church, to no institution, to no academy, least of all to any régime except the régime of liberty.” This is of course awe inspiring, also when we point out to his biography and how he challenged the great salons of Paris until his artworks were not only accepted but praised.

Same goes to Cattelan, there are endless rumors of the controversies he has caused with the pieces mentioned above and other recent artworks. Artists and movements (think of earlier Neo-Avant-Garde, Fluxus, Minimalism) have in the last century concentrated an effort to undermine the power of the institution, by reacting to it, in the fashion of producing artworks that challenge the accepted canons. But by doing so, do to the nature of the mechanics of the institutionalization in/of art, a paradoxical situation recurs. This paradox is somehow hinted out by Cattelan in his piece “Untitled, 2001” shown below. In this piece which we don’t know with exactitude, if it is only the doll, the hole, the room, the museum room or the museum in general, we find an opportunity to sketch this matter of recurrence.



This character who appears to be Cattelan himself, hence an ‘Artist’, has dug a hole, maybe to escape or to arrive, we don’t know, he clearly points out at this ambiguity by giving a sense of suspense to the figure, like if he was caught on the spot, the doll is not only in the hole but it is deliberately touching the ground with his hands, the ground of the museum. We don’t know if this ‘artist character’ is looking one last time at the interior of the room,

maybe trying to say good bye to the museum, or if he is arriving and finding himself in an odd situation at the museum space, like he was caught in an infinite loop, every time he digs a hole to go somewhere, he appears back once again into the museum. We don't know with absolute certainty what this piece wants to say, but one thing we might dare to say is that this character finds himself suspiciously confused to where he stands, but at the same time he does not appear to be surprised of this condition. Cattelan seems to point out in a way, that there is a paradoxical condition where the artist cannot escape the institution in any way he attempts to do so. No matter how clever the artist is, it seems he will always be destined to come back.

Somehow it appears that the artist is attached to develop strategies or counter reactive events that would take effect, by posing himself or his artworks 'against' the Institution of Art, but this posture conflicts with the premise that it always departs from the Institution of Art as bearer of authority. The artist is confined to the paradox. It is like the atheist, he can never be, because by being, he is already implying that there is a God to deny, by saying there is no God, he recognizes what he denies, he makes a sort of advertisement for its existence. For our case, we find that the reactionary artist, eventually becomes part of the doctrine of the institution that he tries to abolish, the Devil is as much part of God as one is to the other, it is a game, a game of instituting power. In the Gramscian notion of hegemony, power is not only seen as oppressor to the oppressed, but is seen as hegemonic when there is a struggle, where there is conflict, in a complex crux where oppressor and oppressed confront each other. This interaction maintains affairs in a constantly irresolvable condition, in a game of resistance to confinement.

So far we have pointed out at the condition art/institution and it's symbiotic nature, we have directed the argument by the use of this concept as a 'look through' device. To see it under the light of 'symbiosis' appears to be less aggressive than the somehow misleading term antagonism, an attitude or posture that many participants of the art-world might feel eagerly inclined to adopt in the discussion art/institution, probably because of it's clear cutness on creating binary opposition. Although it was well asserted and cleverly pointed out by C. Bishop on her text "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", a key text where among other matters she points out to the handling and the institutionalization of new artistic values. She strongly addresses and points at the fact that the artist or the curator, or the artwork, or the institution should engage with the concept antagonism as an active element in their respective practices, that, rather, than by being playful and inviting in dealing with their respective productions and interactions with society. Nevertheless a valuable thought, she somehow forgets to point out to the attitude or role that the audience could adopt, maybe we could say or just contemplate for a moment, that the audience could stop being a victim, and maybe, given the chance, the audience could be the ones to pose in front of 'institutional art' with this 'antagonistic' viewing glass, and function as legislators of this oppositional melodrama. But we can suspect, although not confirm that there is a reason why the audience does not take any part in playing this role, which might be related to the fact that the audience has never been invited to play a role in the whole

art/institution scheme, except as 'silent movable structures' that constitute directly a part of the artwork, or more directly, as consumers.

In the last few paragraphs the terms confinement and game appear quite often, we shall explore further into them, as it is somewhere in the intersection of this two concepts where we might find a space to consider how artistic practice can develop strategies that could profit or benefit from this paradoxical situation where artist and institution seem to be irreparably confined to. A condition we might find not necessarily needed to be seen on a negative light, but rather as a place-space where intellectual frictions and affective energies dwell, a conceptual field where new forms and questions can take shape as art evolves with its tempo. The ways in which different artists have dealt with this matter, varies as the movements of the clouds, some of these attempts have been notably successful and others have failed unnoticed. For the concern of this paper we shall focus on a couple of them only, especially on those that have succeeded, and also only on certain aspects of their different tactics, as it is not intended to come to a major conclusion on this text, but rather to bring this concept into consideration for further development. With as much seriousness as we take Duchamp, Schwitters, Beuys, Cattelan, Koons, Hirst, Smithson and Burden to name a few, as being artists that have somehow challenged the establishment with their practices, we must also take into consideration that in their approach a certain ludic aspect is present, a mode of playfulness is latent in their methods of engagement with artistic practice as they confront and tamper with the institution.

Robert Smithson brought forward, although not exclusively the notion of ephemerality and the claim of 'the outside' or the 'alternative space' as contextual setting in art practice. Smithson also known for his extensive oeuvre in texts about art, question firmly the situation of the artist in relation to his institutional environment, stating: "Cultural confinement takes place when a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition, rather than asking an artist to set his limits. Some artists imagine they've got a hold on this apparatus, which in fact has got a hold of them. As a result, they end up supporting a cultural prison that is out of their control. Artists themselves are not confined, but their output is." Later he adds: "Confined process is no process at all. It would be better to disclose the confinement rather than make illusions of freedom."¹¹ This last statement, 'it would be better to disclose the confinement than to make illusions of freedom' is no lite-comment when its mentioned as statement for a "Documenta exhibition", we rather make a detailed observation on his words as stated on his "Cultural Confinement" text, because it appears than in one way or another, Smithson asserts on the actual condition art/institution as inescapable, an as this condition seems unescapable for the artist, he suggests a tactic, 'it would be better to disclose', or bring to light maybe, as an ultimate escape venue or rather as a remedy for the afflictive condition of the artist which finds itself in permanent confinement.

¹¹ Robert Smithson, "Cultural Confinement". Originally published for Documenta 5, exh. cat. 1972. Later appeared in Artforum 11, no. 2, October 1972.



Spiral Jetty 1970, Salt Lake, Utah, USA.



Broken Circle 1971, Emmen, Holland.

Smithson's work has not fallen short of becoming another institutionalized art-form in some ways. As much as Smithson made a statement back in the day, he is still making a struggling statement today. The recent spiral jetty controversy has sprawled a number of questions concerning conservation of the artwork according to institutional standards and desire, in opposition to the artist statement, or better said, to the actual intention of the artist for the artwork.

In a recently published article by New York Times, the whole controversy is brought to light, "I am for an art that takes into account the direct effect of the elements as they exist from day to day (states Smithson). And with the creation of his greatest work — "Spiral Jetty," the huge counterclockwise curlicue of black basalt rock that juts into the Great Salt Lake in rural Utah — he certainly put that conviction to the test."¹² and later as the article unfolds: "And if any conservation plans were to go forward, then the really complicated work would begin: trying to figure out what Mr. Smithson would have thought about it." Further the article ends by directly quoting a statement by Smithson, "Nature does not proceed in a straight line," he wrote. "It is rather a sprawling development. Nature is never finished." As Spiral Jetty naturally comes to face the forces of nature and its imminent deathly destruction, so does it come to face the forces of the institution and its resurrecting desire to conserve and protect.

This becomes an evident case with "Broken Circle", most notably when we take into account the number of institutional efforts that have been made in order to conserve this artwork, originally intended to be an ephemeral piece of land art, Smithson works remains intact, while the surrounding landscape has changed quite dramatically over the last forty years. Smithson's artistic approach in his conception towards ephemerality as reactionary activity to broaden the context of art, in opposition to institutionalized spaces, condenses intensely in this confrontation artist/institution. At this moment we can only wonder how would the inmate Smithson react towards this inevitable situation, today. "Broken Circle"

¹² Randy Kennedy, "How to Conserve Art That Lives in a Lake?" Art & Design Section of the New York Times, November 17th, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/18/arts/design/18spiral.html?_r=0

is still an issue to date, this tittle almost eludes to the singularity of the art/institution confinement that Smithson speaks of, where the artist is incapable of escaping, at best he can disclose the condition, the circle is not closed, it is not closed and it cannot be closed because it is broken.

On the one hand there is the argumentative, exercised by the institutional structure through the means of the written language, building on discourse, setting rules, making logic and constantly attempting to make senses of what Artists produce. On the other hand , there is the experiential, brought forward and put into practice by artists, by means of a variety of artistic devices. Although this case might appear to us, too much as a black and white statement, and we know this is not entirely the case, as it is in today's contemporary art practice, where the boundaries, the borders, the territory or the frames of where, who and what stands where, are dissolving further more as artist and institution challenge their very own positions in a constant bases. If the Institution says that art should be inside on a defined space, the artist wants to do it outside, if the institution agrees with this after several artistic attempts, or after a number of 'demonstrations' (curiously this word is used quite often in scientific practice, to demonstrate, to prove) then the institution agrees and adds it to its own discursive repertoire. We cannot but feel the presence of Ouroboros in this discussion, what is the artist to do, if all attempts are destined to follow such a fatalist nature? Well, as suggested by Smithson, the artist has a way, to disclose, or to put it in other words, the artist can 'artify' his situation, the artist can make things, the artist can do things, the artist can draw, if the institution takes away the pen and paper, the artist can make a sculpture, if the institution takes away his materials, he can talk, if the institution tapes the artist mouth, the artist can contort and emit movements, if the institution ties the artist up, the artist looks like a sculpture, if the institution disappears the artist, the institution disappears.

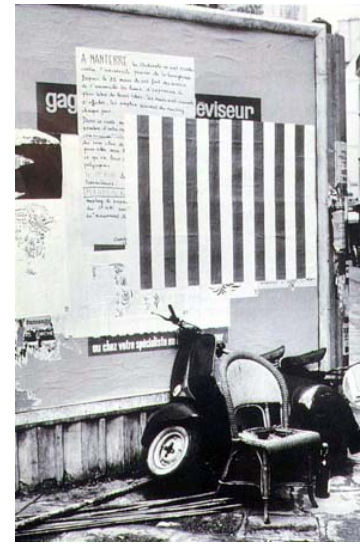
As mentioned before, the artist needs a frame, the frame contextualizes the work, the institution provides clearly defined frames, determined frames, spaces and territories that the artist constantly seeks to tamper with. Daniel Buren has been one of those artists that constantly challenges the institutional in this sense, the sense of the institutionally framed context, by doing so he has inevitably come to be institutionalized himself, we can look at those striped motifs and say, that is a Buren. Of course we can say that today, but we must take into account, that monochromatic stripes randomly appearing in urban surroundings have not always been considered artworks. Nevertheless we must also take into account Buren's clever moves in order to out-play possible pitfalls that his works could face as appearing to be a mere random-anonymous-graffiti-like gestures.



“Papiers collés blancs et verts”, Apollinaire Gallery, 1968.



“Untitled” Detail, Paris, 1968.



“Untitled” Detail, Paris, 1968.

“Of all the frames, envelopes, and limits--usually not perceived and certainly never questioned--which enclose and constitute the work of art (picture frame, niche, pedestal, palace, church, gallery, museum, art history, economics, power, etc.), there is one rarely even mentioned today that remains of primary importance: *the artist's studio*. Less dispensable to the artist than either the gallery or the museum, it precedes both. Moreover, as we shall see, the museum and gallery on the one hand and the studio on the other are linked to form the foundation of the same edifice and the same system. To question one while leaving the other intact accomplishes nothing.”¹³ In this text Buren brilliantly brings into awareness this symbiotic condition we have been discussing, but in the case of his argument, he brings attention to the place where art is born and the inevitable end that artworks should follow if they are to survive and to become. In 1968 Buren set to do a number of performances in the streets of Paris, where a few men that he hired were to walk around town wearing some structures that carried the stripe motifs. During that period he had installed randomly in a variety of places posters of the stripe motifs. Later, “He barred the entrance to the gallery by pasting the green and white paper strips over the doorway, so the opening had to be held outside and nobody could go into the gallery during the exhibition. By not using the inside walls, where exhibits are usually hung, he questioned the very function of the gallery while focusing attention on one of its architectural elements.”¹⁴ If we can rightly credit Buren as a contributor of artistic concepts, it is in his constant play of contextual setting for his artworks, in his desire to expand the context. In his decentralized conceptions on how to perceive and/or present art, he dealt with unusual tools, “At first he thought the stripes would make an interesting background for a painting: “This pattern has two advantages: firstly it stands out and cannot be taken for a neutral background; and secondly it can be used as a guide for whatever is put on the canvas.” That made him realize that the painting’s environment was more arresting than the

¹³ Daniel Buren, “The Function of the Studio”, translated by Thomas Repensek, October Magazine, 1971.

¹⁴ Monumenta 2012 website, document: “PAPIERS COLLÉS BLANCS ET VERTS”, <http://www.monumenta.com/en/green-and-white-pasted-paper>

painting itself. It then occurred to him that the striped motif was a tremendous revelatory instrument to be deployed in space. He called it his ‘visual tool’.”¹⁵



Views of “EXCENTRIQUE(S)”, Monumenta 2012, Paris.



Today Buren re-utilizes his own concepts to distort the calmness of his own artwork, as the institution generously condescends to the maestro’s desire, he has to bring his own ‘mediational tool’ into play, as is the case in his work “EXCENTRIQUE(S)” created for the recent Monumenta 2012 in Paris, a blend of forms, frames, territories and boundaries, frames within frames that take the viewer for a ride. Although Buren’s artwork appears to be installed in an easily continuous flow of colorful juxtapositions, frames within frames and echoing mirrors, he has acutely design his works, not to be mediated by the institution, but by himself, not Buren the person, but Buren the artist. In this case, by creating as he previously did with his ‘visual tools’, now he once again conceives a tool, as a set of devices to frame, de-frame and re-frame what is already framed. He has created the work “EXCENTRIQUE(S)” as a set of devices, as tools that mediate the work on their own.¹⁶ Once again, Buren frames the artist and the institution, in a frame within a frame.

We have briefly surveyed the work(s) of four different artists in order to find some grain of sense in relation to the ideas that have been proposed in this text. Essentially, that Art and the Institution need each other, neither one or the other precedes, they both seem to be dependent on each other to verify, to magnify and propel their existence, their expansion. This mechanism occurs somehow in the intersection of different events and actions that artist and institution bring forward, this occurrence is in constant motion and cannot be directly pointed, but it can be somehow suggested. For example, by creating ‘frames’, as expressed Brian O’Doherty in his text “Inside the White Cube”, “[...] the frame is as necessary as an oxygen tank is to a diver. Its limiting security completely defines the experience within.”, both artist and institution enter an area, a court of play. This situation is inevitable because art forms a part of our being, of our humanness, in this sense,

¹⁵ Ibid, document: “Visual Tool”, <http://www.monumenta.com/en/visual-tool>

¹⁶ Daniel Buren has created 11 Devices with their respective sub-categories. Ibid, document: “THE DEVICES OF EXCENTRIQUE(S), WORK IN SITU”, <http://www.monumenta.com/en/Excentriques-en>

everything that is part of our interactions with each other becomes a set of conditions and actions, events that demand to have an understanding of what is at stake in the transaction of communicative exchange.

Art and our understanding of it has grown in complexity as time progresses and humanity evolves. In our communicative exchange we might find that language, and in this case the language of art has developed in such a way, that different and sometimes unique apparatuses in the form of conventions and concepts have come to existence in order to deal with this precise exchange of information. “By a language here, of course, I mean a system of representations rather than a system of uses, or it is to understand the system of uses as a set of symbols through which the members of a culture live their way of representing the world”¹⁷ We might not want to turn a blind eye to this matter, as practitioners or members of the art-world. The inter-play, the activity, the friction, the contact, the coming of events, the oppositions, the liaisons and the break-ups of/in/and within art as institution, the institution of art, art in the institution, art of the institution, art from the institution, art on the institution, institution and art, art and institution are phenomena as real as the earth and the sky, hence, clear indicatives of the symbiotic relationship that these two constituents of culture tend to form.

¹⁷ Arthur C. Danto, “The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art”, chapter: “Language, Art, Culture, Text”. Columbia University Press 1986.