



Pictures, Again

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PICTURES

The relation between painting and photography has been central to the understanding of both since photography first arose as a challenge to painting's traditional role of depicting the world. In what follows I am concerned with a particular moment in this relation that centres on the decade between 1967 and 1977; the former year marked by the publication of Michael Fried's 'Art And Objecthood', often seen in retrospect as modernism's last stand; the latter year marked by Douglas Crimp's *Pictures*, a foundational exhibition for postmodern theory. More accurately, the period I am concerned with begins when Fried first entered his caveats to Clement Greenberg's conception of medium-specificity in 'Shape As Form' (1966) and ends with the publication of Crimp's 'Pictures' and 'The Photographic Activity Of Postmodernism' (in 1979 and 1980 respectively). This period encapsulates the shift from modernism to postmodernism in art theory – as does the fact that Fried's papers appeared in *Artforum* and Crimp's in *October* – but my interest in this debate is less historical than conceptual. I believe that the aftermath of this episode continues to haunt thinking about the relation between photography and painting today.

I shall begin in 1980 and work my way back to 1966, before proposing an interpretation of how this relation between painting and photography as artistic media has played out more recently. In doing so, my goal is two-fold: to put pressure on the general tendency to construe painting and photography as somehow opposed arts; and, more specifically, to contest the technological determinism underwriting the widespread perception of painting as an *aesthetic* art by virtue of its basis in manual craft skills and photography as an *anti-aesthetic* art by virtue of its mediation by the mechanics of the optical apparatus. Against this, I want to suggest that the significance of advances in technology available to artists cannot be grasped in abstraction from how they are *used*, and thus depend crucially on the intentions, attitudes and dispositions of artists as agents, and not solely on any aesthetic, social or political values that supposedly accrue to media by virtue of the degree to which they internalise advanced technology. The same applies to the use of digital technologies today. In short: aesthetic status, significance or intent can neither be directly read off nor indirectly inferred from the presumed nature of a work's medium taken in isolation. Taking issue with the technological determinism that seems to pervade debates about painting and photography in art theory may even make it possible to apply pressure to the distinction between photography and painting itself. One reason for doing so would be to get beyond the residual tendency to use artistic media as default bases for assignments of aesthetic or anti-aesthetic intention or effect, this being one of the more distorting legacies of

modernism to later art theory. Against this, I shall argue that there is no a priori correlation between a work's medium and its *capacity* to function as a vehicle of aesthetic value.

In recent debates about painting and photography the idea that there is such a correlation can be traced back to Douglas Crimp's early work on postmodern photography. This is best known for Crimp's invocation of Walter Benjamin to underwrite an anti-aesthetic theory of photographic appropriation. What is less often recalled today is that Crimp's defence of photographic appropriation had its roots not in his endorsement of Benjamin, but in his opposition to Fried, specifically, in his generic conception of the 'picture' as a way of encapsulating a new artistic sensibility at odds with modernism. That Crimp should propose a *generic* conception of the picture as a means of opposing modernism is hardly surprising, given the *specific* terms in which Fried defended modernist painting and sculpture against minimalism's so-called 'specific' objects. But I believe that this generally neglected fact about the deeper motivation of Crimp's account of postmodern photography has been given renewed retrospective significance by Fried's more recent work on pictorial photography in the post-Bechers tradition. To see this, it is necessary to recall that Crimp characterises the 'Photographic Activity Of Postmodernism' (1980), with its appeal to Benjamin, as an attempt to make good a lacuna in the earlier 'Pictures' (1979): in that earlier text, Crimp presents the idea of a 'picture' as an expressly non-medium-specific rejoinder to Michael Fried's medium-specific critique of minimalist 'theatricality'.¹

Hence, despite the fact that Crimp opposed photographically-based appropriation to contemporaneous 'new image' painting, and despite the fact that 'Pictures theory' quickly became shorthand for a certain kind of critical attitude and anti-aesthetic refusal of painting as a result², it is important to remember that the idea of 'Pictures', both as a category of artistic production, and as a way of characterising a more general sensibility at odds with modernism, originated in Crimp's response to Fried's critique of minimalist 'theatricality'. Crimp defends theatricality from Fried's critique, but does so, not on the terrain of minimalism itself, but in the name of various staged, psychologically charged *tableaux*, often consisting of amalgams of performance and film projection, frequently involving some form of photographic mediation, and often (though not always) enduring in time, to which he gave the generic title 'Pictures'.³ The list of qualifications is important. In doing so, Crimp was concerned to defend what he saw as a theatrical impulse or legacy in recent art, rather than minimalism itself, about which he says little. The connection is that such practices, on Crimp's account, derive largely from the theatrical *staging* of minimalist installation, as this was taken over and transformed by various forms of performance and other time-based art during the 1970s.

Though Crimp's genealogy of such work is provocative, if not altogether persuasive – the leap from Donald Judd and Robert Morris to Jack Goldstein and Sherrie Levine in particular is a bit of a stretch – I want to suggest that his attempt to develop a theoretical framework for a new artistic practice and sensibility at

odds with modernism stops short to the extent that it is content to invert the normative dimension of Fried's critique, while leaving its underlying structure in place. As we shall see, the extent to which it does stop short in this way is hard to determine precisely, being linked to the list of qualifications above. Nonetheless, to the extent that this *is* the case, Crimp's account will turn out to be internal to the framework it is meant to contest: though theatricality and the blurring of artistic media are championed and anti-theatricality and medium-specificity denigrated, the terrain itself is understood largely in terms derived from Fried's own account. If this is correct, it reflects a wider phenomenon: it suggests that for Crimp, as for most other early theorists of postmodernism, postmodernism cashed out as an inversion or negation of the privileged terms of modernist art and theory, and not, as was routinely proclaimed, their 'deconstruction' – since that would imply their dissolution, or at least problematisation, through exposure to internal contradiction.⁴ In this respect it may be more plausible to see postmodernism, against its early self-understanding, as an *anti*-modernist reading of artistic modernity, and hence as a return of the modernist repressed (the historical avant-garde, notably Dada and surrealism and their various post-'Duchamp effect' artistic legacies). With the vantage of hindsight, 'high postmodernism' of the kind exemplified by 'Pictures' may prove to be something more akin to modernism's shadow or negative after-image than its overcoming. This would make postmodernism a late attenuated form *internal* to modernism itself – as Jean François Lyotard saw early on.⁵

The problem this creates for postmodern theory's self-understanding is twofold: it makes postmodernism a *reactive* episode of late modernism, rather than a genuinely new artistic phenomenon; moreover, it makes it an episode of late modernism understood *from within* the perspective of modernism itself. In other words, the critique comes too late: by taking on board so much of the modernist story about modernism itself, postmodernism risks reinforcing what it set out to contest. To achieve its goal of getting beyond medium-specific constructions of artistic value, Crimp's account therefore needs to do more than merely *invert* the privileged terms of modernist theory; it needs to take issue with its underlying structure. The latter is my goal here, and it may be that formulating it in these terms only became possible once the heat of modernism's original rejection abated. For only then did it become possible to give modernism a fair, properly critical hearing.⁶

THEATRICALITY

To establish whether Crimp's account is in fact an inversion of the privileged terms of modernist theory, it is necessary to gain a better purchase on the meaning of these terms for Fried – particularly the notion of theatricality at stake between himself and Crimp. Notoriously, both 'theatre' and 'theatrical' function as wholly pejorative terms in Fried's lexicon, conveying his absolute rejection of both the staging and the effect typical of minimalist installations. Fried described minimalism as 'theatrical' by virtue of its relation to the space in which it was set, a relation he saw as a self-consciously theatrical *mise-en-scène* projected towards the beholder required for its completion. Soliciting a viewer in such a manner constitutes an ever-present risk



for authentic (modernist) art in Fried's account. Fried argued that artists such as Carl Andre and Robert Morris incorporated the work's viewer into the work itself, by installing it in such a way as to draw attention to the time it took its viewer to navigate the physical space of its installation.⁷ This whole *situation* – consisting of the work, its placement within a given architectural container, and the viewer – was responsible for the literal presence of such works, a presence that was 'theatrical' on at least four counts for Fried. First, because it set up an experience that was elaborately staged and to that extent 'sure-fire'. Second, because it persisted (in principle endlessly) in time, rather than gathering itself into the punctual plenitude, or 'presentness', characteristic of the best modernist works according to Fried.⁸ Third, and most importantly, because it *required* a beholder for its completion, the viewer being an anticipated component of the work itself, towards whom its installation was projected, in contrast to the self-subsistence (at least as regards its mode of address) of the autonomous modernist work of art.⁹ And, fourth, because it alienated and estranged its viewers, both physically and psychologically, as a result of its hollowness and public non-personal mode of address. All four, it should be clear, are specifications of what Fried took (and still takes) to be wrong with the relation such work sought to impose upon their projected beholders.

In doing so, minimalism transformed the idea of a 'work' from a discrete,

[14] Robert Morris (from left to right) *Untitled (Table)*, *Untitled (Corner Beam)*, *Untitled (Floor Beam)*, *Untitled (Corner Piece)* and *Untitled (Cloud)*, installed at Green Gallery, New York, 1964.

internally complex entity on the wall or floor to that of a simple object plus its spectator plus the spatio-temporal location in which it was installed, and hence from a one-term to a three-term relation: that is, from a complex, internally rich work to a simple, internally empty object embedded in a complex installation. Fried maintained that, both in its practice and its theoretical apologia, this expansion served to blur the boundaries between media, going on to declare that the concepts of value and quality only apply – indeed *can* only apply – to works not so-expanded: ‘theatre and theatricality are at war today, not simply with modernist painting (or modernist painting and sculpture), but with art as such’.¹⁰ From this now notorious statement Fried goes on to draw a sequence of even more infamous conclusions:

- 1) *The success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theatre ...*
- 2) *Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre ...*
- 3) *The concepts of quality and value – and to the extent that these are central to art, the concept of art itself – are meaningful, or wholly meaningful, only within the individual arts. What lies between the arts is theatre.*¹¹

Consider the final formulation; it might be thought to imply that because *this* work is bad art, no work that fails to respect the boundaries between artistic media *could* be good art. But given the openness of art to transformation over time, and the concomitant obligation to judge each work on its merits, this is a claim that cannot be upheld – regardless of whether Fried is right in his estimation of minimalism.¹² The latter, it should be clear, is not something I am concerned with here; disputes about the value of minimalism are a matter for criticism, and my interest here is conceptual rather than critical.¹³ That said, it bears remarking how odd a claim this would be for Fried to make, if we interpret it in this way, given his own insistence on the openness (albeit within limits) of artistic media to transformation over time. This should give us pause before unhitching this claim from its specific historical moment – viz: ‘theatre and theatricality are at war *today* ... with art as such.’ On an even-handed reading of Fried, the fact that ‘Art And Objecthood’ was intended to intervene in a particular, now historical, debate has to be kept in mind. Taking this into account, Fried’s equation of medium-specificity with the possibility of good art might be understood, in a more minimal spirit, to mean only that contemporaneous work (namely minimalism, circa 1967) that blurs the boundaries between artistic media is not (good) art.¹⁴ Reading Fried’s remarks in this more ‘minimal’ spirit is to retrieve their critical – that is, normative rather than prescriptive – force, despite the more contentious claims he goes on to raise off the back of them.¹⁵

That said, the ‘minimal’ reading just proposed does not capture the force of the claims Fried makes in ‘Art And Objecthood’ or explain the artworld furore they unleashed. In sum: it is hard to ignore the more programmatic dimensions of the essay altogether. Perhaps it is more plausible to say that the idea of medium-specificity functioned for the young Fried in this respect much as it did for the mature Greenberg: that is, as a necessary though not sufficient condition of a work



[16] Robert Longo *Sound Distance Of A Good Man* performance at Franklin Furnace, New York, 18 April 1978. IMAGE: Franklin Furnace Archive.

possessing aesthetic value.¹⁶ This 'thicker' reading retains the more substantive implication that art that falls between media is void as art. Not surprisingly, it is reading Fried in this more substantive spirit that led many theorists and critics closely aligned with later non-medium-specific art – such as Crimp – to reject his theory outright. Indeed, this reaction has been so pervasive that it might well be regarded as the 'orthodox' response from the anti-aesthetic wing of postmodern theory.

Crimp is clearly right to say that Fried lost this battle, as the proliferation of theatrical art practices over the decade between 'Art And Objecthood' and *Pictures* attests. Fried himself would be the first to acknowledge this, though he differs fundamentally with his critics over the stakes of having done so. Crimp maintains that such practices – by which he has in mind not just performance, but any form of art that builds in a situation that either literally endures in time or, more weakly, implies a temporal or narrative horizon – inherit that aspect of minimalism that Fried took issue with. In this respect Crimp's account, though he does not thematise the fact himself, relies on a much broader notion of duration than that which Fried applied to minimalism. Although some of the works Crimp discusses – such as Robert Longo's 'performance tableau' *Sound Distance Of A Good Man*, with its central projection of a what looks like a frozen movie frame – do enact exactly what Fried opposes, namely, the hypostatisation or objectification of time itself, it remains the case that even a *still* photograph can be 'theatrical' in Crimp's sense, simply by virtue of implying a psychological or narrative dimension. Crimp's example is the sense that Cindy Sherman's *Film Stills* convey of something happening, or just about to happen, just off-camera. With Sherman and Goldstein in mind, Crimp describes this as a 'psychological temporality' to emphasise that such works function by engaging the affective and emotional capacities of their viewers (anticipation, foreboding and the like) rather than by revealing the *literal* temporality of their (often hybrid) medium or media: as the example of Sherman in particular makes clear, temporality is here a matter of how a given image, moving or otherwise, is staged.

At root, then, the issue between Crimp and Fried is neither photography versus painting, nor minimalism itself, but competing conceptions of temporality and its staging in art. In the case of photography this is a staged or psychological temporality for Crimp, rather than an intrinsic feature of its nature as an artistic medium; in this respect, even a literally *atemporal* art such as photography may be 'temporal' in Crimp's sense. Hence, at least initially, Crimp was neither counter-posing a temporal conception of the arts to Fried's atemporal or spatial conception of the same – 'spatial' being understood here in the broadly Wittgensteinian or Cavellian sense of being 'perspicuously presented' or 'wholly open to view'¹⁷ – nor, more narrowly, defending photography at the expense of other media, such as painting or sculpture. Rather, his conception of a 'picture' was presented in expressly non-medium-specific terms, so as to suggest a way of staging images in *any* medium or media that departed from Fried's ideal of instantaneous 'presentness'.¹⁸

It is this *generic* notion of the 'picture' that strikes me as most interesting about



Crimp's original account today, in the light of Fried's more recent tendency to read contemporary pictorial photography through the optic of his early criticism of modernist painting.¹⁹ For the idea that photography might be 'read through' the optic of painting does not look so different – at the level of its formal structure, if not in terms of the substantive (theatrical or anti-theatrical) ends to which that structure is then put – from Crimp's generic notion of the picture.²⁰ Indeed, precisely because Crimp did not simply oppose one medium to another, I believe there may have been a productive dimension to his original response to Fried that went by unexplored, because it disappeared when Crimp's position hardened under the pressure of contemporary painting in the later one.²¹ Thus, even though Crimp may be sanctioned for inverting the normative dimension of Fried's account by opposing his own conception of staged time to Fried's notion of presentness, the kind of duration Crimp has in mind – as implied as it is literal – is not simply that which Fried opposes; it is not *real* time. Yet despite not opposing one medium to another or merely championing the conception of time that Fried opposed, at a more general level Crimp undeniably celebrates what Fried denigrates: namely, intermedia and multimedia art and the theatrical, even if these terms undergo various displacements and modifications in the process. Moreover, given that Crimp positions *Pictures* in a lineage of theatricality derived from minimalism – a bastardised form that falls

between the arts for Fried – he does so in full knowledge of the fact that the work he is championing would be regarded as meretricious (at best) on the more substantive interpretation of Fried’s argument canvassed above. Indeed, that it would is presumably part of the rhetorical point of Crimp’s essay, which sets out to map a new artistic sensibility at odds with modernism.

This is just the sort of situation – in which a given work either cannot be art or, if it can, can only be bad art, on the theory against which the critic is reacting – that led many theorist-critics close to art post 1967 to reject modernist theory outright. I have already said that I want to avoid the typical postmodern reflex when confronted with situations of this kind, which has been to reject Fried’s modernism *externally*, by insisting on the value of what it is forced to exclude. By inverting the normative dimension of Fried’s criticism while leaving its underlying structure in place such responses remain *internal* to the very framework they mean to contest: although they champion art that Fried may be expected to dismiss, they continue to view it through the optic of his theory. Crimp’s positioning ‘Pictures’ in a lineage of minimalist theatricality is a case in point: the widespread perception of minimalism as ‘theatrical’ – hardly the most obvious adjective to capture its serial machined aesthetic – which Crimp endorses, is nothing if not a product of the force of Fried’s critique. Moreover, nothing that Fried need regard as a serious challenge to modernist theory follows from the fact that his detractors rate various practices more highly than he does – from his perspective it could all be so much more theatre.²²

Given this, I suggest that the only way to seriously challenge Fried’s modernism is to put pressure on the framework underwriting the evaluation, rather than the evaluation itself. This entails revisiting the foundational move in Fried’s theory of modernism, the amendments he proposed in 1966-7 to Greenberg’s conception of ‘medium-specificity’. Here Fried develops a distinctive philosophical foundation for his own theory, one that owes more to Stanley Cavell’s interpretation of the later Wittgenstein on convention – used by Fried to illuminate the essential nature of artistic media – than it does to Greenberg’s recourse to Kant to underwrite a teleological conception of artistic self-criticism. Of course, Fried does not reject Greenberg’s idea of self-criticism outright – if he did his theory would no longer deserve to be called ‘modernist’ – he reformulates it. The question I want to pose here is whether these revisions leave room, conceptually, for his denigration of minimalism as ‘theatre’. This is to ask whether the more programmatic claims of Fried’s essay, to the effect that what lies ‘between’ artistic media cannot be an object of aesthetic judgement or a vehicle of aesthetic value, are even *compatible* with his contemporaneous critique of Greenberg’s essentialism. This is what I want to address now. Hence, rather than sanctioning the early Fried for his restrictive view of what could count as (good) art – this being what I have called postmodernism’s *external* rejection of modernism – I shall try to bring out a fault-line *internal* to Fried’s modernism itself.

MODERNISM

Greenberg's theory of modernism as a self-critical practice is now well known, and space precludes going over it here.²³ Suffice it to say that, by the time he wrote 'Modernist Painting' and 'After Abstract Expressionism' (in 1960 and 1962 respectively), Greenberg held that modernism works by incrementally sloughing off all 'norms and conventions' that prove inessential to a work's existence as an instance of a given art. On this account, modernism is a process of immanent self-criticism through which each art sets its house in order by shedding everything it shares with any other art.²⁴ Only by laying claim in this way to an 'area of competence' that is neither shared with any other art, nor capable of being abandoned without abandoning the activity itself, Greenberg believed, would each art demonstrate that it offered its own, intrinsically valuable form of experience, and thereby underwrite its survival. As is well known, Greenberg identified this 'unique and irreducible' source of value with the intrinsic properties of its medium: in the case of painting this turned out to inhere, notoriously, in the flatness of the support and the delimitation of that flatness by the support's edges:

Under the testing conditions of modernism more and more of the conventions of the art of painting have shown themselves to be dispensable, unessential. 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 that the observance of merely these two norms is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture.²⁵

There are several assumptions built into this account. The two most obvious are that each art *has* an irreducible essence, and that modernism may be understood as a teleological process through which each art tries to locate it – irrespective of whether this was apparent to its executors. It is on these two points that Fried, initially Greenberg's leading follower, takes issue with his theory. But before turning to Fried's criticisms, I want to point to a deeper assumption that he does not question and that returns to haunt his own theory as a result. It is that the process of self-criticism operates *within*, but not *across*, the individual arts. This is premised on an assumption, shared by both Greenberg and Fried, that the individual arts are individual in principle, and not merely in practice, hence that they *can* be parsed on non-question-begging grounds. Hence, although Fried takes issue with Greenberg on the question of whether the arts have *timeless* essences, he nonetheless endorses his view that the arts have *distinct* essences. This commitment was to prove a hostage to fortune once minimalism forced the question: what grounds are there for assuming the arts may be distinguished in principle simply because to date they have been distinct in practice? One way of understanding minimalism is as a practical counter-example, forged in a spirit of critical self-interrogation typical of modernism, to this very assumption.²⁶

Fried, by contrast, came to view minimalism as the manifestation, within art itself, of what was wrong with Greenberg's theorisation of modernism.²⁷ In effect,

Fried thinks that minimalism, a literalist art that aggressively projects its own objecthood, arose from drawing the wrong conclusion from Greenberg's reductive conception of modernism: the conclusion that to foreground the essence of painting, say, understood in terms of the literal properties of its support, was to stop short of foregrounding art's literal nature per se, its existence as an object. On this understanding of minimalism it is an *extension* of modernism's reductive logic, albeit pushed beyond the point at which Greenberg would have seen it halted, such that it tips over from the specific to the generic, or from art into objecthood. In Fried's terms, this is to mistake modernism's 'acknowledgement' of the properties of the support as simultaneously both enabling and limiting conditions on the production of paintings as vehicles of pictorial meaning for their hypostatisation as brute facts about paintings as empirical objects.²⁸ For Fried, if an art form like minimalism could arise as an unexpected consequence of Greenberg's theorisation of modernism, then Greenberg's conception of modernism had to be amended.

By 1966-7, Fried was doing just that, by laying out his differences with Greenberg in the footnotes to 'Shape As Form' and 'Art And Objecthood'. Thus, although Fried has always acknowledged his debt to Greenberg's criticism, by 1966 he was already taking issue with the theory that underwrote it.²⁹ It is important to grasp that Fried does not contest Greenberg's claim that modernism *is* each art's attempt to locate the essence of its medium through a process of immanent self-criticism. Instead, he argues, drawing on Stanley Cavell's interpretation of the later Wittgenstein, that the perceived 'essence' of an artistic medium is itself a product or projection of convention and hence open to revision, along with those practices, over time. Reviewing his early criticism, Fried recently cited Wittgenstein directly in support of this point:

I say ... : if you talk about *essence* – you are merely noting a convention. But here one would like to retort: there is no greater difference than that between a proposition about the depth of the essence and one about – a mere convention. But what if I reply: to the *depth* that we see in essence there corresponds the *deep* need for the convention.³⁰

This way of conceiving convention, and of thinking about the relation between what is 'conventional' and what is 'natural' – the depth of the former founded ultimately on the tyranny of the latter, that is, on 'very general facts' of *human* nature – pervades Cavell's interpretation of the later Wittgenstein.³¹ Cavell's early thought, particularly his reading of Wittgenstein's remarks on convention, was crucial to the formation of Fried's theory of modernism, which took shape during a period of intense intellectual exchange with Cavell in the mid 1960s.³² 'Wittgenstein's discovery', Cavell writes, 'is of the depth of convention in human life; a discovery which insists not only on the conventionality of human society but ... on the conventionality of human nature itself.'³³ This includes what might be thought of as our 'natural reactions' to certain kinds of situation, and our 'natural understanding' of certain sorts of instruction – famously, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, rules.

All of which, as Cavell reads Wittgenstein, are indexed to the development (or 'natural history') of various forms of human practice over time. Being indexed to the ongoing development of human societies, such practices are in principle open to transformation over time – though not through mere agreement or fiat.³⁴

Building on the thought that the conventions on which human practices are based evolve over time, Fried maintains that the essence of a practice such as painting will be open to transformation by the ongoing practice of the discipline itself. It is important to recognise that, to Fried and Cavell's way of thinking, this does not make the essence of an artistic medium somehow arbitrary or insubstantial – as would be suggested by calling it 'merely conventional' – as that would imply there is something *deeper* than convention, to which the latter might be unfavourably contrasted. On the contrary, conventions – to echo the *Investigations* on the conventionality of following a rule – constitute 'bedrock'.³⁵ Rooted in 'forms of life', that is pervasive underlying patterns of agreement or attunement in the absence of which we could not understand one another at all, and constrained, in the last analysis, by the natural capacities of human beings (the 'very general facts of human nature'), conventions are all we have. As Cavell reads Wittgenstein, conventions rest on nothing more – but also nothing less – than agreement in such 'forms of life'.

For Wittgenstein, 'forms of life' must therefore be accepted as *given* – 'What has to be accepted, the given, is ... *forms of life*'³⁶ – though what this means is far from obvious. Cavell tends to gloss the idea of 'forms of life' by invoking Wittgenstein's cognate notion of 'agreement in judgements'.³⁷ This does not pick out individual instances of agreement so much as what must be presupposed by the fact that we are able to take ourselves to be in agreement (or otherwise) about anything at all. This is not to say that 'agreement in judgements' resides, mysteriously, somewhere 'behind' or 'below' everyday empirical agreements in a relation of condition to conditioned; rather, it is to draw attention to the pervasiveness of agreement that manifests itself in and through shared understanding in everyday life. As such, the conception of agreement at stake here is not that of coming to agreement on particular occasions so much as already being, in some more fundamental sense, in agreement or attunement *throughout*.³⁸ It is, one might say, the very capacity to make sense of one another at all.

On the notion of conventionality that, I have been arguing, falls out from this perception of agreement in judgements or forms of life, to say that 'essence is conventional' is to say that while it is not immutable – that is, not a fixed feature of the furniture of the world – it is nonetheless not arbitrary. Rather, as a product of human needs and a reflection of human practices; as our convention-bound practices change over time, so too will the perceived essence of those practices. This, it should be clear, amounts to a *historicisation* of essence, rather than its rejection. Applying this thought to art, Fried arrives at the following conclusion: the idea that the arts have distinct essences is retained, as is the belief that modernism is an attempt to isolate them; what is dropped is the thought that the essence of a given art endures *independently* of its ongoing practice. The upshot for theorising artistic media is clear: to conceive the essence of a given art as timeless, for example to

understand modernist painting as an attempt to uncover the ‘irreducible essence’ of painting once and for all, is to misconstrue the nature of modernist painting as a historical enterprise. In Fried’s words:

flatness and the delimitation of flatness ought not to be thought of as the ‘irreducible essence of pictorial art’, but rather as something like the *minimal conditions for something’s being seen as a painting* ... the crucial question is not what those minimal and, so to speak, timeless conditions are, but rather what, at a given moment, is capable of compelling conviction, of succeeding as painting. This is not to say that painting *has no* essence; it is to claim that essence – i.e., that which compels conviction – is largely determined by, and therefore changes continually in response to, the vital work of the recent past. The essence of painting is not something irreducible. Rather, the task of the modernist painter is to discover those conventions that at a given moment *alone* are capable of establishing his work’s identity as painting.³⁹

On Fried’s historicised conception of essence, rather than seeking to discover the ‘irreducible essence of pictorial art’ once and for all, modernist painters are better understood as aspiring to make work that ‘compels conviction’ as painting. To compel conviction in this sense is to make work capable of withstanding comparison to the greatest works from the history of the discipline, the quality and identity of which are no longer in doubt: ‘Unless something compels conviction as to its quality’, Fried writes immediately prior to the remarks cited above, ‘it is no more than trivially or nominally a painting’. What will pass this test cannot be determined in advance: it is what the activity of modernist painting is an attempt to find out. Fried first made this point in ‘Shape As Form’:

What the modernist painter can be said to discover in his work – what can be said to be revealed to him in it – is not the irreducible essence of *all* painting but rather that which, at the present moment in painting’s history, is capable of convincing him that it can stand comparison with the painting of both the modernist and the pre-modernist past whose quality seems to him beyond question.⁴⁰

What is at stake in modernist painting, then, is not a quest to reveal the timeless essence of painting as a medium – Greenberg’s ‘flatness and the delimitation of flatness’, say – but making works in the present felt able to stand comparison to the medium’s highest past achievements. There are no absolute constraints on, or criteria for, what might prove capable of compelling conviction in this way that may be stipulated in advance; rather, it is a function of the ongoing development of art to bring these out.⁴¹ In Cavell’s words: ‘it is the task of the modernist artist to show that we do not know a priori what will count for us as an instance of his art.’⁴² This leaves open in principle, if not entirely in practice, what *might* count as an instance of painting and thereby warrant comparison to painting’s past achievements: what does will, ultimately, always be a matter of judgement.

The point is to purge Greenberg's conception of medium-specificity of its ahistorical essentialism, the belief that there is some timeless essence to painting that it is the function of modernist painting to uncover once and for all; it is *not* to dispute the idea of medium-specificity per se. On the contrary, Fried (like Cavell) remains committed to this idea in his early writings. Neither takes issue with Greenberg's view that self-criticism operates within, but not across, artistic media. For all their differences, then, all three concur at a deeper level that the arts are distinct in principle and not merely in practice, and hence that they *can* be parsed on non-question-begging grounds.

MEDIUM

But consider the following possibility: if a photograph should succeed in rivalling the achievements of past painting, would that make it a (great) painting on Fried's account? Conversely: were a painting to rival the achievements of past photography, would that make it a (great) photograph, again on Fried's account? Recall that what counts as an exemplary work in a given medium, according to Fried, is one that compels conviction that it can withstand comparison to past achievements in that medium. *Prima facie*, this might seem to preclude a photograph, say, being compared to past painting, since they are (allegedly) in distinct media. But Fried and Cavell also maintain that we are unable to say a priori what *might* count as an instance of a given medium, it being a function of the ongoing development of the medium to bring this out. Hence it is not open to Fried to respond that a given work *cannot* be a painting because it is not made of paint, say, since that would be to fall back into precisely the essentialist approach to artistic media that his own theory was intended to outflank. Given this, if it turns out that a photograph *can* be made to withstand comparison to past painting (or vice versa) in the relevant sense, what happens to the function of 'medium-specificity' in Fried's account? If a photographer can make paintings utilising the means of photography, or a painter make photographs by painting, thereby blurring the boundaries between media in practice, is it still plausible to suppose that artistic media are distinct in principle?

I shall address this question by briefly considering the work of Jeff Wall and Gerhard Richter. I want to suggest that, if one takes Fried's critique of Greenberg seriously, the photographer Jeff Wall may emerge, albeit with certain important qualifications, as a 'painter' who paints with the means of photography, and the painter Gerhard Richter may emerge as a 'photographer' who makes photographs with the means of painting. I put painter and photographer in quotation marks and say *may* in both cases to indicate that I regard this conclusion as provisional. But if it is along the right lines – which is to say, if it is a plausible extrapolation of Fried's conception of an artistic medium – then Fried's critique of minimalism would appear to fall foul of his objections to Greenberg. Once the consequences of his own reformulations of Greenberg are cashed out, and artistic media are shown to be this accommodating, there can only be provisional boundaries between them: what constitutes a given medium today need no longer do so tomorrow, indeed

what counts as a work in one medium today need no longer count as a work in the same medium tomorrow; as a corollary, what counts as a work 'in', 'between' or 'across' an artistic medium or media will be continually up for grabs. Nothing may be said to 'fall between' artistic media once and for all, and thereby rule itself out as art of high aesthetic ambition. On his own theory, there are neither historically nor ontologically fixed media between which to fall.

It might be thought anachronistic to take issue with Fried's critique of minimalism on the basis of subsequent art. But my contention is that Richter and Wall's work demonstrates an *intrinsic* possibility of Fried and Cavell's early conception of artistic media, even if it took subsequent artistic developments to make this fact fully apparent. Again, I take this claim to be isomorphic to Fried's own, that minimalism was an intrinsic possibility given Greenberg's conception of an artistic medium, even if it took later developments to make that apparent. Alternatively, it might be objected that it is at best counter-intuitive and at worst wilful to describe Wall as a painter and Richter as a photographer, even on such an explicitly anti-essentialist historicised conception of an artistic medium such as Fried's. But consider the evidence. Jeff Wall has repeatedly described his practice as reviving the project, marginalised by modernist painting's stress on autonomy, of the 'painting of modern life'.⁴³ Here is Wall describing his involvement with this idea in conversation with T.J. Clark:

Some of the problems set in motion in culture not only in the 1920s, but in the 1820s and even in the 1750s, are still being played out, are still unresolved ... that's why I felt that a return to the idea of *la peinture de la vie moderne* was legitimate. Between the moment of Baudelaire's positioning this as a programme and now, there is a continuity which is that of capitalism itself.⁴⁴

And again, from the same interview:

[W]hen the concept of a painting of modern life emerged with particular clarity in the nineteenth century, it changed the way the history of art could be seen ... Manet's art could be seen as the last of the long tradition of Western figuration, and of course at the same time, as the beginning of avant-gardism ... So it seems to me that the general programme of the painting of modern life (which doesn't have to be painting, but could be) is somehow the most significant evolutionary development in Western modern art.⁴⁵

Wall, a photographic artist trained in art history, and steeped in the history of painting in particular, has taken on one genre of painting after another in his work, the scale of which is explicitly keyed to painting, rather than that of the photographic plate, print or album, as traditionally conceived – Wall's recent protestations to the contrary notwithstanding.⁴⁶ Above all, Wall has sought to rival the pictorial ambition, scale and mode of address of the highest genre of painting, history painting, often deriving the compositional strategies of his most ambitious



works from this tradition, such as *Dead Troops Talk [A Vision After An Ambush By A Red Army Patrol Near Moqor, Afghanistan, Winter 1986]* (1992). That said, it would not be right to describe Wall as a contemporary history painter. It would be more accurate to say that he has brought the compositional resources, mode of address, and scale of history painting into dialogue with Baudelaire's call for a painting of modern life – 'which doesn't have to be painting, but could be' – to produce a 'painting' of everyday contemporary scenes and events, and hence modern life, *as* historical; that is, historically freighted, significant, worthy of the closest inspection. I put painting in quotation marks to indicate that I am not claiming that Wall *is* a painter; my claim is rather that there may be no reason *not* to regard him as such on Fried's early account of how artistic media develop over time.

In fact, it may be more accurate to call this a *picturing* than a painting – something I doubt Fried would today want to disagree with. For all the differences in Wall's oeuvre, not least what might be regarded as its basic oscillation between the rhetoric or mode of address of the documentary and the staged, the straight and the manipulated (which has clearly tilted towards the former over the last decade), what his images share is a commitment to the depiction of everyday life. More specifically,

they share a conception of what it is to depict everyday life keyed, if not exclusively to painting, then certainly more to painting, photography and cinema construed as a *pictorial continuum* – or to what Crimp would call ‘pictures’ – than to photography conceived as a discrete medium. Wall himself has recently made this clear:

Photography, cinema, and painting have been interrelated since the appearance of the newer arts, and the aesthetic criteria of each are informed by the other two media to the extent that it could be claimed that there is almost a single set of criteria for the three art forms. The only additional or new element is movement in the cinema.⁴⁷

In other words, Wall now seems to be proposing something remarkably close to the *generic* conception of the pictorial advanced by Crimp, if clearly not the theatrical uses of that model that Crimp himself advocated. On the contrary, Fried has written persuasively about the pronounced absorptive dimension of Wall’s recent work, a tendency that Wall himself has thematised in interviews.⁴⁸ On Fried’s conception of an artistic medium – a conception grounded not in any literal properties of artistic media, recall, but on a work’s participation in what might be called a ‘structure of artistic intention’, as embodied by its mode of address to a particular artistic tradition, and the kind of conviction it seeks to elicit in its viewers as to its standing in relation to past work in that tradition – Wall’s generic conception of the pictorial would make him as much a *picture-maker* as a photographer ‘proper’. For it is as much, if not more, the achievements of not only past painting, but of a more inclusive, non-medium-specific or *generic conception of the pictorial*, that embraces painting, film and photography, than it is of past photography per se, that Wall seeks to rival in a contemporary idiom.

Now consider the contrasting case of Gerhard Richter. Richter, who worked as an assistant in a photographic laboratory before training as a social-realist painter in former East Germany, describes his practice of painting from photographs as ‘photo-painting’. By this Richter has in mind something much stronger than simply painting pictures *of* photographs, or painting pictures *from* photographs, something more accurately thought of as putting painting in the service of photography: namely, *making photographs by painting*:

[Photography] has no style, no composition, no judgement. It freed me from personal experience. For the first time, there was nothing to it: it was pure picture. That’s why I wanted to have it, to show it – not use it as a means to painting but use painting as a means to photography ...

When the interviewer then asks: ‘How do you stand in relation to illusion? Is imitating photographs a distancing device, or does it create the appearance of reality?’ Richter replies:



I'm not trying to imitate a photograph; I'm trying to make one. And if I disregard the assumption that a photograph is a piece of paper exposed to light, then, I am practicing photography by other means: I'm not producing paintings of a photograph but producing photographs. And, seen in this way, those of my paintings that have no photographic source (the abstracts, etc.) are also photographs.⁴⁹

So Richter understands his own practice as an attempt to make photographs – or what he calls ‘pure pictures’ – by hand. If we take Richter at his word (and perhaps we shouldn't) this effectively turns him into an automatic or perhaps quasi-automatic recording device mimicking the mechanical apparatus (strictly speaking that of the enlarger rather than the camera, in so far as Richter's practice is one of enlarging an existing image) to the best of his abilities with the laborious work of the hand – in an attempt, apparently, to escape the strictures of subjectivity and personal experience. ‘Automatism’ is Cavell's term for what has been understood by numerous theorists over the years as photography's mechanical nature: it captures the widespread intuition that in photography something fundamental – *the formation of the image itself* – takes place automatically, where this means without human manipulation, but simply by virtue of tripping the mechanical apparatus.⁵⁰ It is not my purpose to take issue with this view, which I do not share, here: rather, I am interested in Richter's perception of his own practice, and its implications for how it might appear on Fried and Cavell's conception of an artistic medium.

In terms of how Cavell understands photography, Richter's practice replicates both the ‘automatism’ and the ‘sterility’ of the photographic apparatus, by virtue of bracketing out his own subjectivity (or at least attempting to do so) and by virtue of its ‘inhuman’ mechanical nature – at least once the image to be transcribed has been chosen.⁵¹ In fact, on Cavell's conception of photography, Richter's attempt to produce ‘pure pictures’ by turning himself into a transcription machine, and in so doing removing himself from the scene of representation – ‘no style, no composition, no judgement. [Photography] freed me from personal experience’ – might be regarded, at its deepest level, as a variant of the skeptic's self-defeating desire to arrive at an indubitable knowledge of the world unconstrained by the limits of human finitude.⁵² For Cavell, this is the true philosophical significance of photography's automatism.⁵³ From Cavell's perspective, then, Richter's practice might be thought to partake of scepticism's fundamental paradox: namely, that by removing subjectivity from the reproduction of reality, photography facilitates reality's perfection, but the price to be paid for such perfection is a world from which subjectivity is mechanically cut adrift, and so cannot acknowledge as its own.⁵⁴ To the extent that Fried shares the temperament of Cavell's philosophy – to the extent, for example, that minimalism might be thought to reflect an analogous abdication of authorial subjectivity and responsibility in favour of each viewer's private experience of the work – Richter's ‘scepticism’, *if* that is what it is, may bear on Fried's apparent aversion to his work to date.⁵⁵

But should we really take Richter at his word? How could artworks that are so



obviously paintings 'count as' photographs? To take this thought seriously it is necessary to remove several of the more obvious obstacles to endorsing Richter's perception of what he does as 'photography'. The first is the aspect of photography that he specifically and, one might think, egregiously elides, namely its indexicality: 'if I disregard the assumption that a photograph is a piece of paper exposed to light, then, I am practising photography by other means'. But can Richter *justifiably* disregard this assumption? That photographs are, considered causally, the result of reflected light (focused by a lens and captured by a shutter) impacting on a light sensitive surface is generally thought to be a distinguishing mark of photography, and this seems to rule out Richter's claims a priori: if photographs have a direct causal dependence on what they depict, then this cannot be photography. But taking indexicality as a necessary feature of photography is not an option for Fried or

Cavell – and it is their account that I am interested in here – since on their theory, artistic media are not defined materially, causally or ontologically, but in terms of compelling conviction, first in the artist and then in their audience, that a given work stands up as an exemplar of its kind. The only relevant question is whether it does, and that is a question that cannot be answered in advance of experience.

Indeed, *were* one to define photography in terms of indexicality, that would immediately rule out Wall, many of whose images are manipulated to such an extent that the final image (as opposed to its constituent parts) no longer functions as an indexical guarantor of the past existence of what it depicts in any straightforward sense. Of what one sees in Wall's images one can never say with certainty: 'that has been'.⁵⁶ One cannot tell simply by looking at them, and may never know. Even the most seemingly naturalistic images often consist of any number of fragments, shot in different times or places, and stitched together in the computer.⁵⁷ In sum, recourse to C.S. Peirce's distinction between icons and indexes no longer serves to underwrite categorical distinctions between photography and other media with the advent of digital technology – if it ever did.⁵⁸ Indeed, taking this route actually only serves to exclude the supposed 'photographer' Wall, rather than just the supposed 'painter' Richter, which is too severe; whereas understanding photography more broadly, in terms of what Cavell calls its 'automatism', rules in much of Richter, given the quasi-mechanical nature of his process, while ruling out much of Wall, most of whose works are anything but automatic, and so presumably cannot count as photographs on Cavell's conception of the latter.

This brings me to the second obstacle to accepting Richter's claims for his own practice. Richter may (arguably) 'bracket out' his own subjectivity – or at least attempt to do so – but that is a feat that it would make no sense to predicate of the camera itself, where the issue cannot even arise. But this is no obstacle to regarding Richter as a photographer on Fried's conception of an artistic medium. Given that Richter consistently aims to achieve just this, and Fried understands artistic media to be constituted by just such 'structures of artistic intention', this would seem to count in favour, rather than against, the thought that Richter aspires to record what he pictures automatically, that is, *like a camera*. While the full significance of Richter's attempt to do this may only come into view as a negation or refusal of the previous conventions of painting – that is, as 'not-painting' in some sense – Richter carries through this project of making photographs by painting with the same degree of seriousness and commitment as Wall's attempt to reinvigorate the painting of modern life with the means of photography.⁵⁹ Indeed, this is just what 'structures of artistic intention' mean for Fried. The equally obvious fact that Richter has to choose his source material is also no obstacle to regarding what he does as photography, in the sense proposed here, since even the photographer must, at the very least, decide where to point his camera – a fact that Cavell's account of 'automatism' need not deny.



PICTURES, AGAIN?

Not only can one argue that these artists invert their ostensive media's standing with respect to specific issues like automatism or mechanicity, they also do so with respect to several more general values and functions standardly attributed to them. If one sees Richter *as a painter*, the banality and absence of affect of his images sits uncomfortably with standard intuitions about painting as an expressive art by virtue of its causal history – however one cashes out expression. Against such expectations, Richter positively embraces the anomie of the photographic document. Conversely, if one sees Wall *as a photographer*, the way in which his work brackets photography's documentary function, by constructing images in a manner more reminiscent of painting (or even cinema), confounds standard intuitions about photography as an art of recording rather than constructing – however one cashes out the idea of a document.⁶⁰ Hence, where Richter undercuts the perception of painting as an expressive medium by producing pictures so devoid of personality, so automatic, as to be unsettling as paintings, Wall undercuts photography's role of recording the world by constructing images in a manner that sows doubt they may be taken for documents, no matter how straight they may appear. If this is granted, it seems

difficult not to suppose that – at least on Fried and Cavell’s conception of an artistic medium – Richter counts as a ‘photographer’ and Wall as a ‘painter’ (in the highly qualified sense set out above).

I said earlier that I regarded this conclusion as provisional. An explanation is in order as to why. I have proposed that Fried and Cavell’s conception of an artistic medium turns out – against all expectations – to be *so accommodating* as to undercut the very idea of a specific medium it was meant to capture: such that, on their own conception of an artistic medium, Wall may be understood as subsuming painting, photography and (no doubt more contentiously) cinema into a generic conception of the pictorial, with the means of digital photography, and Richter as aspiring to reproduce the anomie and automatism of the photographic document – or, to use his own terminology, ‘pure pictures’ – with the means of painting. If this is correct – which is to say, if it is a plausible extrapolation of Fried and Cavell’s conception of an artistic medium – it begins to look as arbitrary to call what either of them does ‘painting’ as it does to call what either of them does ‘photography’. If one can make painting-like pictures with the means of photography and photograph-like pictures with the means of painting is there any principled basis on which to call one painting and the other photography? Or does their practice render that distinction itself undecidable on this conception of an artistic medium? If so, this would appear to undermine the applicability of distinctions between the pictorial arts in terms of media categories altogether – at least to the cases at hand. For if it ultimately makes as much or as little sense to call Wall a painter as it does to call him a photographer, and vice-versa for Richter, it may be more prudent to conclude that these are just two ways in which it is possible to make a picture today.

Of course, claiming that Richter and Wall are both just making pictures, when all is said and done, according to Fried’s own conception of an artistic medium, is neither to claim that ‘pictures’ on Fried’s account need mean the same thing as ‘pictures’ on Crimp’s, but nor is it immediately to rule this out. I have cautioned against conflating conceptual and normative questions from the outset. Moreover, no value judgement *need* be entailed in classifying something as a ‘picture’ as opposed to a ‘painting’ or ‘photograph’: that is, nothing about a work’s *capacity* to function as a vehicle of aesthetic value follows from the sheer fact of its categorisation in terms of media-categories alone.⁶¹ It all depends on what a given theorist means by ‘pictures’, and the ends to which artists put them. This is why I have paid close attention to the detail of what Crimp has to say about pictures, and to extrapolating what this notion might mean for Fried in the context of contemporary art, given the conception of an artistic medium at play in his early criticism, and what Richter and Wall have to say about what they are up to.

Of course, in abstraction from the specific ends to which they put them, to say that both Richter and Wall ‘make pictures’ is to say very little. This is one reason for my recourse to Richter and Wall’s first hand testimony here. From this it emerges that what Richter’s use of painting to evacuate subjectivity in favour of the anomie of the pure photographic document and Wall’s use of photography to transfigure the world in the image of his imagination rather than to record it have in common,

for all their evident differences, is that they are equally antithetical to orthodox perceptions of their *prima facie* medium, on views that forget that techniques and technologies are as much tools as artistic media as vehicles for artists. In this respect I am in fundamental agreement with Fried: Fried and Cavell both stress the significance of an artist's intentions for what their work seeks to achieve vis-à-vis past work in a given tradition, and hence, I have suggested, what their work, if successful, should be taken to count as. Similarly, I have stressed the significance of an artist's intentions, as embodied in *how* they employ a given medium or media, for their work's aesthetic standing. At root we are both concerned with the pursuit of aesthetic ambition in art.

One might legitimately ask, in response, why I take the relation between an artist's choice of medium and his or her aesthetic ambitions to be so significant. I remarked at the outset that one reason for revisiting this debate between Fried and Crimp in the light of more recent art was to resist a form of technological determinism that typically cashes out in terms of competing claims about the 'intrinsic nature' of various artistic media, especially in subsequent debates about the aesthetic status of painting and photography. Ironically, this tendency has only been exacerbated by the literature on digitalisation, to the extent that it is taken, of itself – that is, in abstraction from how it is used – to transform the 'intrinsic nature' of photography. As I have presented it, taking issue with determinism about artistic media is actually *compatible* with the strong anti-essentialist dimension of Fried's thinking about artistic media, even if that is not how his theory has generally been perceived – largely as a result of his critique of minimalism, with which I have suggested this aspect of his thought is ultimately *incompatible*. For that reason I have sought to counter determinism about artistic media – which arguably shackles postmodern theory to the same extent as, and indeed precisely *because*, it shackled modernist theory – not by rejecting modernism externally, but by bringing out a fault-line internal to modernism itself.

In making this argument, my underlying goal has been to uncouple the discourse of aesthetic value, which I would like to see reinvigorated for debates about recent art, from the discourse of medium-specificity, which I take to be largely orthogonal to questions of value in art. This, it should be clear, runs counter to the dominant tendency in postmodern theory, especially as it approaches photography, which is to defer (if only implicitly) to a modernist conception of the aesthetic, only to conclude that the artistic merits of what the latter is forced to exclude warrant discarding the aesthetic altogether. This is the animus that motivated postmodern anti-aestheticism, as exemplified by Crimp circa 1979-80, and it lingers in the continuing, and in my view symptomatic, marginalisation of aesthetics in the contemporary artworld. If I am right, this is a product of failing to disentangle medium-specificity, the modernist conception of aesthetic value, from aesthetic value per se. It remains the fate of aesthetics in our time.

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1. See Douglas Crimp 'Pictures' *October* 8 Spring 1979; reprinted in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (ed. Brian Wallis) New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1984; and 'The Photographic Activity Of Postmodernism' *October* 15 Winter 1980, reprinted in Douglas Crimp *On the Museum's Ruins* MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993.
2. The press release for Crimp's 1977 show states: 'The fundamental relationship between the artists under consideration for the show is their use of recognizable, non-abstract images, without, however, resurrecting representation as it is traditionally understood. (The return to figurative painting is at the farthest remove from this new work.)' Thus, as early as 1982, Hal Foster was commenting on a postmodern orthodoxy of the 'purloined image' in 'Re: Post'. Originally published in *Parachute* 26 Spring 1982; reprinted in *Art After Modernism* op cit, p197.
3. Though Crimp does not refer to Fried's work on 18th Century French painting explicitly, his use of the term *tableau* to characterise the kind of art he calls 'Pictures' seems too pointed to be coincidental. Fried's *Absorption And Theatricality* (Chicago University Press, Chicago) did not appear until 1980, though Fried had previewed most of it in lectures and articles over the previous decade. Fried takes the term from Diderot, who uses it to characterise what theatre – or better, drama – should learn from painting, in order to make itself less theatrical by refusing to play to its audience; Crimp uses it to characterise works that foreground their own staging, which he then casts in a lineage derived from minimalism – presumably because he accepts Fried's claim that minimalism is incomplete without the beholder it actively solicits. Fried has commented on this tendency of hostile critics to invert the normative dimension of his criticism while leaving its fundamental claims untouched. See Fried 'An Introduction To My Art Criticism' *Art And Objecthood* University of Chicago Press, 1998, p52. James Meyer makes a similar point about Annette Michelson and Rosalind Krauss's relation to Fried's account of Robert Morris. See Meyer 'The Writing Of "Art And Objecthood"' *Refracting Vision: Essays On The Writings of Michael Fried* (eds. Jill Beaulieu, Mary Roberts and Toni Ross) Power Publications, Sydney, 2000, p81ff.
4. Crimp's relation to Fried here is akin to Krauss's relation to Greenberg in *The Optical Unconscious* MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993; and (with Yves-Alain Bois) *Formless: A User's Guide* Zone Books, New York, 1977. On the former see Stephen Bann's review 'Greenberg's Team' *Raritan* Vol. 13, No. 4, Spring 1994, and on both see my 'Greenberg's Kant And The Fate Of Aesthetics In Contemporary Art Theory' *Journal Of Aesthetics And Art Criticism* Vol. 65, No. 2, Spring 2007.
5. See Jean-François Lyotard 'Answering The Question: What Is Postmodernism?', the appendix to *The Post-modern Condition: A Report On Knowledge* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1984, for a persuasive account of the post-modern as a moment within the modern. For a reading of Lyotard's postmodernism as itself a form of late modernism, see my 'Lyotard's Modernism' *Parallax* 17 ('To Jean-François Lyotard' special issue) October 2000.
6. I would like to acknowledge the importance of Thierry de Duve and Stephen Melville to this way of formulating my own project. De Duve's work on Greenberg, Kant and Duchamp, and Melville's work on Fried and Smithson are exceptions to the generalisation that postmodernism cashes out as an inverted modernism. Each engages with their target account's underlying framework, rather than merely negating its privileged terms and valuations; as a result the work of neither simply entrenches established oppositions and orthodoxies. See Melville *Seams: Art As A Philosophical Context* G+B Arts, Amsterdam, 1996; and 'On Modernism' *Philosophy Beside Itself: On Deconstruction and Modernism* Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, 1986; and de Duve *Kant After Duchamp* MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1996; and *Clement Greenberg: Between The Lines* Dis Voir, Paris, 1996. For more on the latter's project, see my own 'Retrieving Kant's Aesthetics For Art Theory After Greenberg: Some Remarks On Arthur C. Danto And Thierry de Duve' *Re-Discovering Aesthetics* (eds. Francis Halsall, Julia Jansen and Tony O'Connor) Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2008.
7. The essay itself concerns mainly the writings of Donald Judd and Robert Morris, and an interview with Tony Smith. But reviewing the essay in an 'Introduction To My Art Criticism' Fried specifies that he had the installations of Andre and Morris in mind. See *Art And Objecthood* Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1998, p40.

8. At one point Fried suggests that it is a concern with duration, and in particular with the consciousness or presentation of *endless* duration, such that time itself is hypostatized, rather than just a concern with time per se, that makes such work literalist. See 'Art And Objecthood', originally published in *Artforum* June 1967, and reprinted in Fried's *Art And Objecthood* op cit, pp166-7.

9. For an account that teases out the contradictions engendered by trying to resist or deny 'the primordial convention that paintings are made to be beheld' see Stephen Melville 'On Modernism'. Stanley Cavell develops this theme of the self-sufficient modernist work, the work that is 'complete in itself' and in that sense 'closed to me' in 'Excursus: Some Modernist Painting' *The World Viewed* (enlarged edition), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1979. For a discussion see Jonathan Vickery 'Art And The Ethical: Modernism And The Problem Of Minimalism' *Art And Thought* (eds. Dana Arnold and Margaret Iversen) Blackwell, Oxford, 2003.

10. Fried 'Art And Objecthood' op cit, p163. Melville has commented perceptively on this attempt to present minimalism as *non-art* as opposed to *bad art*. Melville's deconstructive strategy is to show that when Fried tries to consign minimalism to the non-art no-man's land of theatre, the very gesture by which he does so immediately re-inscribes that domain within the sphere of autonomous art itself: it redraws this line within art, rather than between art and everything else, in so far as those works that Fried deems successful are such in virtue defeating their *inherent* theatricality as entities made to be beheld, making this the *internal* motor of art in the modern period, by Fried's own account. See Melville 'Notes On The Reemergence Of Allegory...' *October* 19 Winter 1981, pp157-60 and especially 'On Modernism' op cit, pp8-16.

11. Fried 'Art And Objecthood' op cit, pp163-4.

12. Less charitably than Melville, De Duve claims that Fried's response to minimalism exemplifies a *refusal* to judge aesthetically that has dogged the criticism of modern art; on de Duve's account, it therefore comes into effect prior to aesthetic judgement. See De Duve 'The Monochrome And The Blank Canvas' *Kant After Duchamp* op cit, p241. Where De Duve sees Fried's relation to minimalism as a refusal of judgement that reveals the limits of his theory as to what can count as art, arising from the fact that judgements honed on the *specific* practices of painting and sculpture can find no purchase on it, Stephen Melville reads 'Art And Objecthood' not as a conclusion derived from a theoretical position about what can and cannot count as an object of aesthetic judgement, but as a description of the experience of minimalism that is itself the elaboration of a judgement to the effect that this is not an experience of art. See Melville 'Michael Fried' *Art: Key Contemporary Thinkers* (eds. Diarmuid Costello and Jonathan Vickery) Berg, Oxford, 2007. I believe that Melville and de Duve are both right, and hence also both wrong. Melville is right about the argument from theatricality; it is a negative aesthetic judgement to claim that minimalist works set up an invidious relation to their spectators. De Duve, on the other hand, is right about the argument from theatre; the programmatic claims Fried makes towards the end of his essay suggest an a priori conviction that the concepts of quality and value *cannot* be predicated on works that fall between artistic media. But both are wrong about what the other is right about because neither disentangles the argument from theatre from the argument from theatricality. On this distinction see my earlier 'On The Very Idea Of A "Specific" Medium' op cit.

13. It is my intention that everything I say here be as compatible with the critical view that Fried was right about minimalism as it is with the view that he was wrong. No assumptions about my own critical views are warranted one way or another simply because I criticise Fried's theory. Fried's objections to Greenberg operated at this level, and I would like to do Fried the courtesy of responding in kind.

14. To say that Fried's claims, read minimally, need only entail that 'minimalism is not (good) art' remains equivocal between claiming that minimalism is *bad art* and minimalism is *not art*. I put it this way because Fried himself equivocates in places as to whether minimalism fails as painting or sculpture, and hence is merely meretricious *as art*, or, more damningly, fails to even *be art*. Ultimately, the former is too close to Greenberg's view, which Fried rejects, to be his own. Fried writes, apropos Greenberg's claim in 'After Abstract Expressionism', that 'a stretched or tacked up canvas already exists as a picture – though not necessarily as a *successful one*', that 'it is not quite enough to say that a bare canvas tacked to a wall is not "necessarily" a successful picture; it would ... be more accurate to say that it is not *conceivably* one. It may be countered that future circumstances might be such as to *make* it a successful painting, but I would argue that, for that to happen, the enterprise of painting would have to change so drastically that nothing more than the name would remain ... it is, I want to say, as though unless something compels conviction as to its quality it is no more than trivially or nominally a painting'. See *Art And Objecthood* op cit, pp168-9, fn6. Here Fried does not equivocate between the descriptive and evaluative; he collapses them. Under the testing conditions of Fried and Cavell's modernism, if a work fails to 'compel conviction' as painting, as sculpture, etc., it courts the charge of fraudulence *tout court*. On Cavell's formulation, in the absence of established criteria for judging whether or not something is a painting, sculpture, etc., modernism raises the issues of fraudulence

and sincerity with a vengeance: such that it is not only the work, but also the judge, who is put on trial in the act of judging. A work judged fraudulent on this account is no work at all; it is at best the illusion of one. See Cavell 'Music Discomposed' and 'A Matter Of Meaning It' *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979.

15. This pattern of critical insights generating unwanted theoretical commitments is familiar: Fried himself draws attention to it in Greenberg. See 'How Modernism Works: A Reply to T.J. Clark' *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 9, No. 1, Fall 1982.

16. I use designations such as 'early' and 'mature' as descriptive, and never evaluative terms. For a division of Greenberg's work between 'early', 'mature' and 'late' periods see my 'Clement Greenberg' *Art Key Contemporary Thinkers* op cit. For an overview of Fried's work see Stephen Mulhall 'Crimes And Deeds Of Glory: Michael Fried's Modernism' *British Journal Of Aesthetics* Vol. 41, No. 1, January 2001; and Robert Pippin 'Authenticity In Painting: Remarks On Michael Fried's Art History' *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 31, No 3, Spring 2005.

17. See §122 and §133 of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* Blackwell, Oxford, 1953; see also Cavell's remarks on modernist painting as wholly open in 'Excursus: Some Modernist Painting' op cit.

18. 'Presentness' is Fried's way of formulating a standard trope of post-Kantian conceptions of aesthetic experience, namely the idea that such experience is in part the felt transcendence of space and time. This is implied in Fried's conception of modernist works as *entirely* manifest at *every* moment. Fried's conclusion – 'We are all literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace.' – acknowledges that, in a disenchanted world, the aesthetic experience of art becomes a privileged space for encountering value in the world. That 'presentness' figures such experience as a momentary *transcendence* of finitude no doubt explains the heat that remark has drawn.

19. See, for example, 'Barthes's Punctum' and 'Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein And The Everyday' *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 31, No. 3, Spring 2005, and Vol. 33, No. 3, Spring 2007, respectively.

20. As I imagine Fried would be the first person to balk at that last statement, I should clarify that I am not claiming that Fried's current position cannot be distinguished from Crimp's historical position – that would be absurd. Rather, I am suggesting that there *may* be more structural isomorphism at the level of the role the medium plays in their respective accounts than is immediately apparent. If so, that is worth exploring, given Fried's recent 'photographic turn'.

21. On the distorting impact of contemporaneous painting on Crimp's early essays on photography, see my 'Aura, Face, Photography: Re-reading Benjamin Today' *Walter Benjamin And Art* (ed. Andrew Benjamin) Continuum, New York and London, 2005, pp164-84.

22. Arthur Danto recalls Greenberg making an analogous claim in his own terms in 1992: namely, that for 30 years art had been 'nothing but Pop'. See *After The End Of Art: Contemporary Art And The Pale Of History* Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1997, p105.

23. This is something that I address in greater detail in Part I of my forthcoming monograph, *Aesthetics After Modernism*. Chapters I and II provide a conceptual reconstruction and internal critique of Greenbergian theory.

24. See Greenberg 'Modernist Painting' *The Collected Essays And Criticism Vol. IV* Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1993, p86.

25. Greenberg 'After Abstract Expressionism' *The Collected Essays And Criticism Vol. IV* op cit, p131.

26. For Thierry de Duve this explains the bastard Greenbergianism of Judd's idea of the 'specific object', which is Greenbergian in so far as it claims for itself a kind of specificity, but anti-Greenbergian in so far as its specificity is that of an object, and hence neither distinct from non-art, nor sanctioned by an established modernist medium. See De Duve 'The Monochrome And The Blank Canvas' op cit, pp230-7.

27. See 'My Double Critique Of Greenberg's Theory Of Modernist Painting And Of Minimalism's Greenbergian Advocacy Of Literalism' in Fried's introduction to *Art And Objecthood* op cit, pp33-40.

28. On the difference between 'acknowledging' and 'hypostatizing' the literal properties of the support, which Fried takes to distinguish Stella from minimalism, see 'Shape As Form: Frank Stella's New Paintings'. Originally published in *Artforum* November 1966; reprinted with the amended subtitle 'Frank Stella's Irregular Polygons' in *Art And Objecthood* op cit. The question of how to 'acknowledge' the shape of the support pervades the essay, but see especially p88 and pp92-5.

29. This is where I would want to draw a line between my own critical engagement with Fried, and Caroline Jones's recent exchange with Fried in *Critical Inquiry*. Jones's reconstruction of the significance of Kuhn for modernist theory is a genuinely illuminating and original contribution to understanding the period, but her critique of Fried begins from a bizarre underlying premise. Namely, that by 1966, when Fried was still a graduate student in his mid-late 20s, and had been writing art criticism regularly for all of four years, it was *already* 'manifestly too late' (p495) to mark his differences from Greenberg or to change his mind about how modernism should be theorised. Regardless of whether Jones's reading of Fried circa 1965-6 is correct – and to my mind it appears to conflate Fried's idea of 'perpetual revolution' with Greenberg's idea of 'reduction to essence', with which it is incompatible, since the idea of permanent revolution precludes the possibility of reduction to an essential underlying nature – Jones's motivating assumption raises a prior question. That is, *were* Jones right, and Fried had indeed changed his mind, are we supposed to regard it as intellectually incriminating to finesse one's views over time? This suggests a strange view of intellectual development: were we not generally inclined to hold the contrary, we would have to revise our view of more than a few major thinkers. See Caroline Jones 'The Modernist Paradigm: The Artworld And Thomas Kuhn' *Critical Inquiry* 26 Spring 2000; Fried's 'Response to Caroline A. Jones' *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 27, No. 4, Summer 2001; and Jones's reply 'Anxiety And Elation: Response To Michael Fried' in the same issue.

30. Wittgenstein *Remarks On The Foundations Of Mathematics* (trans. G.E.M. Anscombe) Blackwells, Oxford, 1956, pt1, § 74, p23e. In the introduction to his criticism, Fried uses this remark of Wittgenstein's – taken from a discussion of the kind of conviction elicited by geometrical proofs – to underwrite his claim that Anthony Caro's *Deep Body Blue* (1966) captures the abstract nature or 'essence' of a door, which he goes on to gloss as 'discover[ing] the conventions – corresponding to deep needs – that make something a door'. See *Art And Objecthood* op cit, pp30-1. The previous remark from Wittgenstein reads: 'it is not the property of an object that is ever "essential", but the mark of a concept'.

31. See, for example, Stanley Cavell *The Claim Of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979, pp86-125. Though Fried tends to present this way of thinking as a radical departure from Greenberg, I believe that it is frequently implicit in Greenberg's work. Compare Greenberg's 'the limiting conditions of art are altogether human conditions' ('Modernist Painting' op cit, p92) with Cavell's 'underlying the tyranny of convention is the tyranny of nature', by which he means human nature (*The Claim Of Reason* op cit, p123).

32. That this was not a one-way process may be gleaned from the contrasting treatments of Anthony Caro and Pop art – *in toto* – in 'A Matter Of Meaning It', and what amounts to the philosophical endorsement of Fried's canon in *The World Viewed*. See Cavell 'A Matter Of Meaning It' *Must We Mean What We Say?* op cit, p222; and 'Excursus: Some Modernist Painting' *The World Viewed* op cit.

33. Cavell *The Claim Of Reason* op cit, p111.

34. See Cavell *The Claim Of Reason* op cit, pp120-1. Again, it bears remarking that Cavell's contention that conventions may not be changed by mere fiat – as if they were nothing more than *contracts* mutually consented to, as opposed to practices that have gradually evolved over time in response to human needs and capacities – is consonant with Greenberg's thought that only an artist who is thoroughly immersed in, and so possessed of, existing conventions can truly transform them. That is, *from the inside* – from necessity rather than design – when they find they are unable to say what they have to say within the constraints they have inherited. See Greenberg 'Contemporary Sculpture: Anthony Caro' *The Collected Essays And Criticism* Vol. IV op cit, p208; and 'Convention and Innovation' *Homemade Esthetics: Observations On Art And Taste* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p53. Something like this thought also underpins Fried's recent work on Jeff Wall. See, Fried 'Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein And The Everyday' op cit.

35. Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* op cit, §217. For Cavell's use of this remark in the context of the conventionality of language see 'The Availability Of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy' *Must We Mean What We Say?* op cit, p50.

36. Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* op cit, p226.

37. Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations* op cit, §242: 'If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgements.' For a detailed discussion of 'agreement in judgement' and its relation to 'forms of life' see Stephen Affeldt's 'The Ground Of Mutuality: Criteria, Judgement And Intelligibility In Stephen Mulhall And Stanley Cavell' and Mulhall's 'The Givenness Of Grammar: A Reply To Steven Affeldt', both in *European Journal Of Philosophy* Vol. 6, No. 1, 2000; see also Mulhall's 'Stanley Cavell's Vision Of The Normativity Of Language: Grammar, Criteria And Rules' *Stanley Cavell* (ed. Richard Eldridge) Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

38. See Cavell 'The Availability Of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy' op cit, p52; and 'The Argument From The Ordinary: Scenes Of Instruction In Wittgenstein And In Kripke' *Conditions Handsome And Unhandsome: The Constitution Of Emersonian Perfectionism* University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990, p80ff. For Cavell on 'agreement in judgement' and 'forms of life' more generally see 'Criteria And Judgement' *The Claim Of Reason* op cit, especially pp29-36; and 'Declining Decline: Wittgenstein As A Philosopher Of Culture' *This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures After Emerson After Wittgenstein* Living Batch Press, Albuquerque, 1989, pp40-52.

39. Fried 'Art And Objecthood' op cit, pp168-9, fn6. Fried's presentation of the difference between his own and Greenberg's position here is arguably over-stated. His claim that 'flatness and the delimitation of flatness ought not to be thought of as the "irreducible essence of pictorial art"', but rather as something like the *minimal conditions for something's being seen as a painting*', for example, is reminiscent of Greenberg's claim, in 'Modernist Painting', that 'the essential norms of a discipline are at the same time the limiting conditions with which a picture must comply *in order to be experienced as a picture*' ('Modernist Painting' op cit, p89), though the thought is less philosophically fortified in Greenberg's account. This lack of fortification is apparent in the way Greenberg slides from glossing modernist self-criticism as an attempt 'to determine the irreducible working essence of art and the separate arts', a thought that can be read as consonant with Fried's own (and has been so read by de Duve) to talking about 'irreducible essence' *per se*, which cannot. De Duve maintains that Greenberg's qualification of this as a 'working' (hence necessarily provisional) essence counts against Fried's depiction of his position. See 'After Abstract Expressionism' op cit, p131, and de Duve 'Silences in the Doctrine' *Clement Greenberg: Between The Lines* op cit, pp70-1. Fried replies in 'An Introduction To My Art Criticism' op cit, see pp65-6, fn51.

40. Fried 'Shape As Form' p99, fn11.

41. See Cavell 'A Matter Of Meaning It' *Must We Mean What We Say* op cit, p219. If there are no a priori criteria that guarantee something will count as a painting, then modernism cannot be understood as an attempt to locate the 'unique and irreducible' properties of artistic media; instead, modernist artists are best understood as seeking to discover those criteria capable of securing their work's identity as painting, sculpture, etc, at a given historical moment.

42. Cavell *The Claim Of Reason* op cit, p123.

43. Wall is a highly strategic artist, and it is notable how this aspect of Wall's self-presentation, which saw him aligned in certain respects with T.J. Clark and the social history of art, has receded as he has more recently emphasised the 'near documentary' goals of his work. This is the move that Fried has picked up on, though it has taken a virtuoso critical reading on Fried's part to show the consonance of this ambition with the anti-theatrical tradition, which would otherwise have been far from apparent.

44. Jeff Wall, cited from 'Representation, Suspicions And Critical Transparency: Interview With T.J. Clark, Serge Guilbaut and Anne Wagner' (1990) *Jeff Wall* Second Edition, Phaidon, London, 2002, p112.

45. *Jeff Wall* op cit, p124.

46. I have in mind Wall's recent autobiographical piece 'Frames Of Reference' in which he claims, to my mind unpersuasively: 'People who write about art often think my work always derives in some direct way from nineteenth century painting. That's partly true, but it has been isolated and exaggerated in much of the critical response to what I'm doing. *I'm totally uninterested in making reference to the genres of earlier pictorial art*' (my italics). Wall goes on to say that what he derives from painting is chiefly 'a love of pictures' and 'an idea of the size and scale appropriate to pictorial art'. If the latter seems convincing, the former is surely overstated, perhaps as a result of trying to offset an equally overstated claim in the opposite direction (say, that he is *only* interested in referring to the genres of past painting). But to deny any such interest flies in the face of both his practice and his previous claims for it. See Jeff Wall 'Frames Of Reference' *Artforum* September 2003, p191; reprinted in *Jeff Wall Catalogue Raisonné 1978-2004* Steidl, London, 2005.

47. 'Frames Of Reference' p190.

48. See Michael Fried 'Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein And The Everyday' op cit. Fried discusses *Adrian Walker, Artist, Drawing From A Specimen In A Laboratory In The Dept. Of Anatomy At The University Of British Columbia, Vancouver* (1992) and *Morning Cleaning, Mies Van Der Rohe Foundation, Barcelona* (1999); he also quotes from 'Restoration', Wall's 1994 interview with Martin Schwander, in which Wall cites Fried himself. One could also cite *Volunteer* (1996), *After Invisible Man By Ralph Ellison, The Preface* (1999-2001), *A Woman With A Covered Tray* (2003), even *Untitled (Overpass)* (2001). Though it is also fair to say that this dimension of Wall's practice has become more dominant over the clearly staged, theatrical dimension of Wall's earlier work.

49. Gerhard Richter 'Interview With Rolf Shön' (1972) *The Daily Practice of Painting: Writings 1962-1993*, Thames and Hudson, London, p73. Though this interview dates from 1972, the sentiment it expresses about photo-painting is as common as Wall's professions to a painting modern life, and runs like a leitmotif throughout Richter's interviews and notes on painting.

50. Theorists who have held this view, or versions of it, include Rudolf Arnheim, André Bazin, Walter Benjamin and Roger Scruton, among others. The notable exception to this way of approaching photography is, of course, Joel Snyder, who has made it something of a mission to defeat this approach to the medium. Of the many relevant papers, see the classic 'Photography, Vision And Representation' (with Neil Walsh Allen) *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 1, No. 2, 1975; 'Photography And Ontology' *The Worlds Of Art And The World* (ed. Joseph Margolis) Rodolphi, Amsterdam, 1984; and most germane to Cavell himself, 'What Happens By Itself In Photography' *Pursuits Of Reason: Essays In Honour Of Stanley Cavell* (eds. Ted Cohen, Paul Guyer and Hilary Putnam) Texas Tech University Press, Lubbock, 1993.

51. All the terms in quotation marks are terms Cavell regularly uses to describe photography. The latter fact, that Richter chooses what images to transcribe, is not a bar to the analogy, given that the photographer has to select what to capture (has to point the camera, at the very least) just as Richter has to choose an image to transcribe. For Cavell on the camera's sterility, see *The World Viewed* op cit, pp184-5.

52. 'Photography overcame subjectivity in a way undreamed of by painting, a way that could not satisfy painting, one which does not so much defeat the act of painting as escape it altogether; by *automatism*, by removing the human agent from the task of reproduction.' *The World Viewed* op cit, p23.

53. See *The World Viewed* op cit, p21: 'It is essential to get to the right depth of this fact of automatism ... photography satisfied a wish ... to escape subjectivity and metaphysical isolation – a wish for the power to reach this world, having for so long tried, at last hopelessly, to manifest fidelity to another.'

54. I owe this way of formulating the relation between photography and skepticism for Cavell to Stephen Mulhall's discussion in *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting Of The Ordinary* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1994, pp228-30. See Cavell *The World Viewed* op cit, Chapter 2, especially pp20-3.

55. I say 'if' because, for all the allure of the 'automatic' reading of Richter pursued here, I remain reluctant to assert (in my own voice, so to speak) that Richter is a sceptic: not least because it flies in the face of his well-documented hopes for painting.

56. Barthes famously dubbed the conviction elicited by photographs, the 'that has been', the *noema* of photography. See Roland Barthes *Camera Lucida* Fontana, London, 1981, pp76-7. Analogously, Cavell speaks of the photograph presenting a 'world past.' See Cavell *The World Viewed* op cit, p23.

57. Wall's use of the medium in its digital form is – with a couple of notable exceptions – the very antithesis of surrealism: not for Wall the striking juxtaposition. For this reason one cannot be sure of even the most naturalistic images, which may consist of fragments shot over a number of months or years and in various locations, such that they neither document a place nor a time. This has been well documented in interviews: see, for example, Wall's discussion of *A Sudden Gust Of Wind (After Hokusai)* (1993), in 'Wall Pieces' *Art Monthly* September 1994. This work turns out to consist of some 50 digitally montaged fragments, shot over several seasons so that each component could be photographed under similar lighting conditions. More recently, interviews have been accompanied by 'production stills' that reveal the artifice behind Wall's constructed images: see, for example, Jan Tumlir's interview with Jeff Wall concerning *Flooded Grave* (1998-2000) 'The Hole Truth' *Artforum* March 2001.

58. For arguments to the effect that this distinction, as it stands in the full complexity of Peirce's own work, never really did this work see James Elkins, 'What Does Peirce's Sign System Have To Say To Art History?' *Culture, Theory And Critique* Vol. 44, No. 1, 2003; and Joel Snyder 'Pointless' *Photography Theory* (ed. James Elkins) Routledge, London, 2007. In Peirce see, for example, 'Logic As Semiotic: The Theory Of Signs' *The Philosophy Of Peirce: Selected Writings* (ed. Justus Buchler) Routledge, London, 2000, and 'The Icon, Index And Symbol' *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce: Volume II: Elements Of Logic* (eds. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss) Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1932.

59. I am grateful to the audience of the 2006 British Society of Aesthetics annual conference, notably Carolyn Wilde, Aaron Meskin and John Hyman, for pressing me on the relation between Richter's photo-paintings and the negation of previous conventions of *painting*. One of the most interesting treatments of this issue I have come across is Rosemary Hawker's work on the 'idiomatic' in Richter's negotiation of photography and painting. In 'The Idiom In Photography As the Truth in Painting' *South Atlantic Quarterly* Vol. 101, No. 3, Summer 2002, pp541-54, Hawker argues that it is by *failing* to translate photography into painting without remainder that Richter's work reveals what is idiomatic (or irreducible) to photography. For an Adornian account of Richter's practice in terms of the negation or double-negation of painting see Peter Osborne's

'Painting Negation: Gerhard Richter's Negatives' *October* 62 Autumn 1992.

60. This lies behind Wall's 2002 coinage of '*near* documentary' to describe his recent work. Fried has paid close attention to this coinage, finding in Wall's claim that such works purport to show what the events depicted were like when they passed *without* being photographed an anti-theatrical intention. See Fried 'Being There' *Artforum* September 2004, p53; and Fried's discussion of Wall's *Adrian Walker* in 'Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein And The Everyday' op cit. Wall addresses the issue of his relation, past and present, to what he calls a 'classical aesthetic of photography as rooted in the idea of fact' in his 1998 interview with Boris Groys in *Jeff Wall* op cit. There are many aspects of that interview that are relevant here, not least Wall's claim that he tried to put this claim in suspension 'by emphasizing the relations between photography and the other picture-making arts, mainly painting and the cinema. In those the factual claim has always been played out in a subtle and more sophisticated way. This was what I thought of as a mimesis of the other arts...' (pp151-4). The idea that photography might be employed *mimetically*, in relation to the other arts, is as *non-modernist* a proposal as one can imagine. See also 'Three Thoughts On Photography' (1999) *Jeff Wall Catalogue Raisonné* op cit.

61. Hence, giving up medium-specific categories as a pre-condition of aesthetic judgements does not, in itself, entail backsliding into 'theatre', in the pejorative sense that of that term for Fried, nor embracing the 'theatrical' in the sense that Crimp champions against him. Assuming that it does is to run together the meaning of the terms 'theatre' (what lies between the arts) and 'theatrical' (art that plays to the beholder) in Fried's account.