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GAME OVER AND OVER: ART AND THE AMERICAN TELEVISION GAME SHOW

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ABSTRACT

This document considers how artistic practice may be used to formulate responses to the popular text of the television game show. It primarily examines how the artists John Miller and Ron Terada have employed the late modernist strategies of minimalist sculpture and monochromatic painting alongside explicit references to the game show genre in their exhibitions. I suggest that Miller and Terada alter the apparent immediacy of the game show's components through projects that shift the spatial and temporal conditions for understanding the genre's messages. By doing so, it is argued that both artists' works change the way that spectators may come to know the contents of the television game show.

Keywords: Theodor W. Adorno, Aesthetic of Administration, The Culture Industry, Game Show, Guy Debord, Enigmaticalness, John Fiske, Information, Knowledge, Jeopardy!, Sol LeWitt, Spectacle, John Miller, Minimalism, Monochrome, The Price Is Right, Television, Theatricality, Ron Terada

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INTRODUCTION

> In order for the text to be popular..., it must contain contradictions, gaps, and traces of counter-ideologies.... texts that are popular amongst a wide variety of audiences must hold this balance between the dominant ideology and its multiple oppositions... (Fiske, 321).

This document considers how artistic practice may be used to formulate responses to the popular text of the television game show. In order to consider such responses, I primarily examine how the artists John Miller and Ron Terada have employed the late modernist strategies of minimalism and the monochrome alongside explicit references to the game show genre in their work. I suggest that these artists undertake a critical task in their work, and produce tension within the source material of the game show. To support this claim, I explore characteristics of artworks that they have produced, and take into account the critical writing that circulates around both of their practices. In evaluating the implications of these artists' works, I also draw from written analyses of the game show genre. I will begin my discussion of art and the American television game show with a very brief recounting of some debates surrounding the critical reception of the television game show.

The analysis of television game shows has often been considered to be an unnecessary task for both art and cultural studies, since game shows seem to communicate in a direct manner that requires little practical or theoretical commentary. As Su Holmes has pointed out in her study of the genre, quiz or game shows are "exemplary of how television's 'everydayness' seems to resist analysis" (Holmes, 5) since such programs may be easily and immediately understood. The absence of subtlety in terms of how the television game show conveys its messages may be seen to grant it an

air of self-evidence in terms of its ideological implications. Critical literature discussing the genre is sparse when compared to other historical television genres such as the soap opera or the situation comedy, perhaps because analysis of the game show is seen to have little to unveil in terms of cultural and political meaning. The game show genre appears to blatantly celebrate money, merchandise, fast reflexes and a quick memory at the expense of more nuanced interactions or narratives. I would suggest that game shows resist critical readings precisely through this appearance of obviousness, and this works to their benefit as commodities. As products, game shows have proven their resilience in regular reiterations and repackaging throughout the twentieth century. To some extent, the persistence and stability of the game show formula attests to the genre's relative innocuousness as a mainstay of commercial television following the quiz show scandals of the late 1950s. As this essay will put forward, John Miller and Ron Terada's practices respond to the game show by reflecting the obviousness of the genre's elements by replicating them in their work. However, they also work to alter the apparent immediacy of the game show's components through projects that shift the spatial and temporal conditions for understanding the genre's messages. By doing so, both artists change the way that spectators may come to know the contents of the game show.

Before turning to Miller and Terada's strategies more directly, it is useful to first consider what is at stake in game shows in terms of knowledge and critical spectatorship, so as to later orient their practices in relation to this problem. Among the most influential pieces of writing about the role of knowledge in television game shows is John Fiske's chapter "Quizzical pleasures", contained in his book, *Television Culture*. In his essay,

Fiske holds that television game shows present a variety of knowledges, and provide a means for an audience to engage in a form of play that establishes and questions the social value of these knowledges. Fiske divides these social resources into four categories. Following Fiske's work, Morris Holbrook has conveniently paraphrased these categories in terms of, "1) factual esoteric knowledge (e.g., *Jeopardy!*), (2) factual everyday knowledge (e.g., *Wheel of Fortune*), (3) human knowledge of people in general (e.g., *Family Feud*), and (4) human knowledge of specific individuals (e.g., *The Newlywed Game*)" (Holbrook, 38). The central concern of this essay is an examination of how artists have worked to provide alternative modes of access to the knowledge presented on game shows. As will be seen, factual esoteric knowledge and factual everyday knowledge are both at stake in the works of artists John Miller and Ron Terada, as they engage with the game shows *Jeopardy!* and *The Price Is Right* respectively. In relation to these programs, Holbrook has noted that the majority of *Jeopardy!*'s clues may be considered to depend upon factual esoteric knowledge; whereas, the knowledge involved in *The Price Is Right* can be considered to be factual everyday knowledge as it involves the pricing systems that would be encountered during the everyday experience of consumption.

While critical artistic practice may engage with the varieties of knowledge that make up television game shows, it also engages with historical debates connected to the programs. Kent Anderson has summarized these debates in his study of television quiz shows, specifically their earliest American incarnations in late 1940s programs such as *The $64,000 Question*. This early line of criticism was not centered around the varieties

of popular knowledge that could be usefully disseminated by game shows, but rather the systems of value to which they are tied:

> Was not the knowledge used to answer a question, and thereby earn capital, a crass example of Dewey's instrumentalist knowledge carried to an outrageous extreme? The obvious rejoinder was that the very construct of the quizzes determined what constituted useful knowledge in purely monetary terms... (Anderson, x-xi)

This historical concern with television game shows points to their capacity to instrumentalize and spectacularize these popular knowledges as commodities. This instrumentalization may occur, for instance, in factual everyday knowledge, which may be valorized in order to sustain an ideology of consumption. Guy Debord has described the media spectacle as celebrating "a choice *already made* in the sphere of production, and the consummate result of that choice." which "further ensures the *permanent presence* of that justification, for it governs almost all time spent outside the production process itself." (Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 13) The relationship between leisure time and television broadcasting is thus firmly established: the everyday knowledge that pertains to the use of leisure time is an object for consumption within the media spectacle of television. The separation of temporal vicinities (evident in differences between daytime and primetime programming) is reflected in the logic of game show scheduling and the incentives or potential objects of consumption that they showcase. Morris Holbrook has analyzed *The Price is Right* in the context of Marxian theory, and suggests how the program supports a mode of disseminating knowledge that confirms Debord's characterization of capitalism's spectacle as a 'choice already made.' Holbrook's quotation (Holbrook, 27) of David Tetzlaff's "Divide and Conquer: Popular

Culture and Social Control in Late Capitalism" clarifies the role that he attributes to products of popular culture such as game shows:

> Capitalism's needs in social control are...explicitly material—to make sure that people continue to work, to consume and to refrain from mounting any effective challenge to the system.... The overall systemic function of popular culture within capitalism is to reconcile capital's subordinates to their position within the economy. It...provides enough rewards in the form of pleasure, escape or identification...to keep us coming back to the culture industry for more limited relief. (29-31)

Tetzlaff suggests that the knowledge provided by popular culture supports the material requirements of capitalism at the levels of production, consumption, and revolutionary suppression. According to his schema, game shows may also be considered to instrumentalize everyday knowledge in order to maintain the hegemony of capitalism through the production of pleasure, escape or identification.

The critique of capitalism provided by Tetzlaff does not integrate the possibility for resistant readings proposed by cultural studies practitioners, since it suggests that the products of the culture industry such as game shows work to prescribe behaviors to their recipients in a unilateral manner. In the case of television, resistant readings are based on the empowerment of viewing subjects in their disidentification from, for instance, the forms of everyday knowledge that Fiske associates with consumption and, as has been suggested by Tetzlaff, supports social control in capitalism. The representation of shopping on television game shows does not provide a monolithic structure that necessarily produces consensus across the breadth of an audience, and therefore a space for subjective distance is allowed to remain. That is, the shopping skills and associated knowledge integral to succeeding on a game show are not automatically reproduced

within an audience. In fact, proponents of resistant readings suggest that they produce opposing forms of knowledge. Potentially, resistant readings might lead to the cynical disavowal of game shows, rather than the playful appropriation of their contents. The capacity for a resistant reading, specifically in relationship to television spectatorship, is isolated by Fiske:

> [television is] a text of contestation which contains forces of closure and of openness and which allows viewers to make meanings that are subculturally pertinent to them, but which are made in resistance to the forces of closure in the text, just as their subcultural identity is maintained in resistance to the ideological forces of homogenization.... the power to make meanings...is the thrust of what I have called television's "semiotic democracy," its opening up of its discursive practice to the viewer. Television is a "producerly" medium.... [it] requires the producerly work of the viewers.... (Fiske, 239)

The concept of production presented by Fiske clearly differs from the classical Marxian notion of proletarian subjectivity emerging through a form of production that takes place outside the time of capital. It is unclear how Fiske's formulation of 'producerly reading' serves as socially valuable outside of the potential subcultural contexts within which he locates it. While the prospect of Fiske's 'semiotic democracy' appears plausible, precisely what this democracy generates in terms of discourse seems fragmentary at best. Fiske's notion of resistant readings proposes a counter-knowledge that inheres in subcultural identity but fails to account for an informative or persuasive character within television culture.

Holbrook stresses that the potential for resistant readings stemming from disidentification with popular cultural products such as *The Price Is Right* are highly unlikely, granted the statistical data that he has amassed. In his study of the program,

Holbrook argues against Fiske's point that oppositional readings may be developed from a television game show such as *The Price Is Right*. Given his statistical data, contestants do not appear to be employing any specific cultural knowledge in the victories that they achieve on the program: "...empirical results indicate the absence of any real expertise, skill, or knowledge displayed by participants in *The Price Is Right*." (Holbrook, 2) Granted that game show contestants are, in many cases, avid game show viewers, Holbrook's research does not confirm the empowered form of viewer that Fiske specifically praises. In the resistant mode sanctioned by Fiske, a viewer might tactically appropriate *The Price Is Right*'s knowledges, allowing him or her to calculatedly take advantage of the program. Holbrook disagrees, instead defining the game show *Supermarket Sweep* as a more adequate example of enfranchisement in terms of popular knowledge and consumer savvy. As *Supermarket Sweep* does not employ the elements of chance that Fiske locates in the *The Price Is Right*, it appears to Holbrook to be a more genuine encapsulation of the specific cultural competencies that are related to consumer items (in the case of *Supermarket Sweep*, those specifically available in grocery stores). The program *Supermarket Sweep* blankly reinforces the constant presence of the process of consumption during the period of daytime programming. In the analysis of media culture provided by Debord or Tetztlaff, this implies that its viewership, indulging in leisure time during the regular hours of production, should be procuring supplies for later periods of consumption. The spectacle of *Supermarket Sweep* supports the process of production by presenting both the images and the performance of consumption. While resistant readings may be seen to service subcultural interests in opposition to the game show, they do not reconsider these programs in a productive fashion. The specific form

of resistance that is produced by a television game show may also be difficult to locate. Indeed, a program such as *The Price Is Right*, as Holbrook's study suggests, may not grant the forms of knowledge necessary for a response to its ideology to be coherently formulated. These knowledges may therefore need to be procured outside of the television program. Holbrook's proposed alternative, however, is productive but far from resistant. While he suggests that *Supermarket Sweep* provides valuable everyday knowledge, this knowledge not only corresponds to, but quite specifically supports the spectacle.

Rather than necessarily producing a space for resistant reading, the artists John Miller and Ron Terada engage in a playful appropriation of the contents of game shows. Miller, in discussing the work of artist Richard Artschwager, has specifically suggested that working in a state of complicity functions to "intensify contradictions" because "it debunks the liberal myth of transcendence. Everyone not only contends with the system, but also functions as a term of that system." (Miller, *The Price Club*, 32) Contradiction, here, is a tool for avoiding a resolutely resistant reading. It problematizes the stable form of resistance provided by the subcultural identities that Fiske falls back on, since it suggests that such processes of identification already occur within the system of capital, and might even prove to be mythical constructions on the part of their adherents. Given the foregoing, it should be said that the artists that I consider in this paper use varying strategies to produce resistance relative to the game show form, yet not at the level of subcultural identity formation per se. Firstly, they strategically replicate some of the material structures of historical and contemporary game show forms: their staging, props,

iconography, and phrasing. These elements are reconfigured to play with the values signified by the knowledges, objects, and bodies that the game show apparatus serves to connect. These artists appropriate structures from game shows in order to shift the coordinates of meaning systematized by their televisual referents. So, the projects that I will examine will be seen to alter the possible uses of the game show set. These projects mirror the game show form, but are not directly immersed in a broadcasting system. For instance, John Miller produces game show-based sets (referring most explicitly to *The Price Is Right*) that are not intended to be played—rather, they explicitly parody the possibility of their use in several ways. Ron Terada's paintings draw attention to the phraseology of *Jeopardy!* game boards, citing clues provided in static, monochromatic frames derived from the popular television program. While removing the more spectacular televisual and kinetic components from *Jeopardy!* and *The Price Is Right*, the artists provide a muted space for reflection on the programs' visual, spatial, and temporal components. Since both of the artists that I am considering use the gallery space for the purposes of their projects, that space must therefore be seen as a critical zone before the relevance of these projects as critical work can be confirmed.

In the following analyses, I will argue, and demonstrate, that the artistic devices used by Miller and Terada critically probe aspects of contemporary game shows. My thoughts on this topic are motivated by the writing of Guy Debord, and augmented and complicated by the intersections of Theodor Adorno's critical theory and existing writings on the visual arts. The modes of critical appraisal provided by certain frameworks within cultural studies also provide a limited range of approaches to

analyzing the phenomenon of 20th and 21st century television game shows. Morris Holbrook's work briefly employs a variety of approaches that circulate around key concepts in Frankfurt School critical theory to approach *The Price Is Right.* John Fiske is more directly aligned to a conventional cultural studies standpoint, appropriating aspects of Stuart Hall's work, as well as the theory of hegemony established by Antonio Gramsci. I will also draw on contemporary journalistic accounts that directly respond to the practices of the artists John Miller and Ron Terada. As the writer and artist Liam Gillick has suggested, Miller's art is a mode of criticism that "functions as a separate commentary upon wider territories" (Gillick, 84). The potentially autonomous, adjacent space of artistic production provides its own critical operations.

As mentioned, looking at Miller and Terada's projects requires not only a consideration of the artists' references to game shows, but also their touchstones with respect to late modernist cultural production. This is because the critical space established by their projects emerges through the intersection of mass cultural forms and modernist art practice. Yet these two areas of production are not to be contrasted in terms of a binary opposition. The strategic deployment of forms derived from modernist painting and sculpture, as visible in Pop Art, are not employed as 'other' merely for the purposes of mass cultural criticism per se. I would argue instead that art is not the privileged category that grants critical agency to either Miller or Terada, in contradistinction to mass culture. Rather, the tension between these two spaces highlights the contradictory position of the cultural worker within capitalism. Thomas Crow's *Modern Art in the Common Culture* seeks to negotiate this fine line by locating the late 19th and 20th century avant-garde "as a resistant subculture" (Crow, 28) in relation

to mass cultural production. As Crow suggests, modernist practice, while achieving autonomy, was not generated from autonomous social conditions:

> ...the formal autonomy achieved in early modernist painting should be understood as a mediated synthesis of possibilities derived from both the failures of existing artistic technique and a repertoire of potentially oppositional practices discovered in the world outside. (28-9)

Modernist practice "act[s] out the possibility of critical consciousness in general" (29) and its successes have been "neither to affirm nor refuse its concrete position in the social order, but to represent that position in its contradiction" (29). This essay suggests that both Miller and Terada's works incorporate aspects of mass culture and modernist practice in a contradictory, yet productive, fashion.

To set up a critical understanding of game shows through art, the first chapter discusses the critical tools provided by some of Theodor Adorno's writing on mass culture. The writings that I examine display Adorno's deep skepticism about mass culture's mode of packaging and dissemination. By identifying the drawbacks of mass culture, and speculating about art's resistance to such production, Adorno engages in critical work that is not dissimilar to John Miller and Ron Terada's game show-related artwork. Rather than dealing with theories of reading in explicit terms, both artists also necessarily identify aspects of how television produces meaning, yet address the medium through alternative processes of production. In the case of Miller and Terada, such production primarily takes the form of minimalist objects and monochromatic paintings that refer to television game shows. These artistic works are used to produce relations of spectatorship that dramatically differ from their highly mediated and spectacular sources, thereby implicitly reflecting on television's conditions of reception. The challenge of the

first chapter, then, is to follow up on Adorno's basic investigations by elaborating on the critical procedures provided by art.

It is significant to note that the examples derived from Sol LeWitt's work in chapter one are intentionally remote from game show-related references. This decision has been made in order to emphasize the parody of rational processes that may be achieved by artistic work, and in the case of LeWitt, in the tension such parody generates with the implications of Conceptual Art. Following Benjamin Buchloh and Rosalind Krauss, I consider how LeWitt's *Structures* question the stable generation of meaning, and also how his *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* systematize the irrational. These projects present static configurations of words and objects that place the spectator in an active position in terms of reading and viewing the work. The situations of spectatorship generated by both of LeWitt's projects are remote from the animated, mediated provision of information inherent to game shows. However, the artist's work and game shows are similar since they both parody rational logic through seriality and constructed systems. In the case of LeWitt, this parody occurs through incongruous linguistic operations and the obsessive, perhaps irrational, production of objects. In the case of game shows, apparently rational systems such as the grids of numbers in a *The Price is Right* 'pricing game' or the categories of clues in *Jeopardy!* are effectively undermined through their governance by chance and competition. To this end, both LeWitt's work and game shows present structural arrangements and spectatorial dilemmas that resemble one another, insofar as both have structures that are not wholly rational, and are difficult to intuit as such. The first chapter uses this way of reading LeWitt's work through the game

show—and vice versa—to set up an understanding of artistic projects and game shows in terms of their rationalizing systems.

I have chosen to focus on the structural aspects of both LeWitt's work and game shows in the first chapter because the second and third chapters focus on the work of John Miller and Ron Terada in terms of their structural homologies and points of divergence from the game show. While Miller and Terada make specific references to the game show genre, their work is considered mainly with regard to the spatial and temporal distance that their projects provide from their origins in game shows. In these chapters, I suggest what their artistic work implies for spectators besides the possible recognition of a reference to television. The central investigation of Chapter Two probes the role of spectatorship in John Miller's work, suggesting that the discourse around minimalism provides a means for understanding his game show-based installations such as *The Lugubrious Game*, *Pillars of Salt*, and *Pilot*. Following Miller's reading of Michael Fried, the temporal peculiarity of minimalist sculpture is suggested as a stage for resistance to the system of the game show on the part of the spectator. Chapter Three considers how Ron Terada's series of *Jeopardy Paintings* pose clues from the program *Jeopardy!*, allowing an alternate reading and understanding of the program's texts. Jeff Wall's theorization of the monochrome is used to suggest that Terada's paintings do not initiate a specific reflection on the part of the spectator. These paintings point to the acquisition of knowledge presumed to occur within the game show by freezing phrases from its sequence of questions and answers. The *Jeopardy Paintings* thereby leave the game show's questions unsolved.

CHAPTER ONE

> Those who succumb to the ideology are precisely those who cover up the contradiction instead of taking it into the consciousness of their own production. (Adorno and Horkheimer, 157)

This chapter will implement a model for analyzing art that incorporates elements of mass culture, particularly elements of game shows. This model will suggest that art projects that work to combine late modernist artistic forms and mass cultural sources may act as an alternative to the resistant readings of game shows proposed by cultural studies. Given Holbrook's refutation of Fiske's reading of *The Price Is Right*, this approach presupposes that theories of resistant readings grant a limited framework for critically considering the game show genre. This section is specifically concerned with an investigation of the experience of art in its relation to commodity culture, and how this experience may fundamentally contrast with an experience of the mass cultural commodity itself. As suggested above, art that engages with game shows explicitly engages with commodity culture, whether through the specific reference to store-bought merchandise (as in *The Price Is Right*) or in the packaging of factual knowledge (as in *Jeopardy!*). The crucial issue in this discussion is whether art can provide an alternative understanding of the game show genre that critically assesses these products' constructions of value systems. As noted, Morris Holbrook has shown that television game shows such as *The Price Is Right* may not directly provide the knowledge necessary for a viewer to coherently formulate of a resistant reading of the program. Given the univocity of the game show text itself, critical resources would have to arrive from other texts. The critical texts of cultural studies supply a rather limited option in terms of presenting supplementary or alternative information about the game show form. Rather

than proposing a resistant way of reading the television program in its initial context, an artistic act of reconfiguring the program's elements would result in a partially new object that would shift the conditions for reading game shows. More specifically, this chapter will propose that modernist art objects, which resemble the mechanisms of the game show set in aesthetic terms, may interfere with the operation of the value systems of the game show as a mass cultural commodity.

A central issue for a discussion of productive intersections between art and the game show pertains to how art may be considered to achieve critical efficacy within the context of mass culture. In "The Schema of Mass Culture", Adorno analyzes the experience of the commodity in contrast to the experience of art. The independence of art relative to "empirical reality" (Adorno, "The Schema of Mass Culture", 53) collapses as commodity culture appropriates the strategies of art for commercial means. The power of the mass cultural product as a particular commodity fetish derives from the fact that it "participates in the infinite nature of production" (54). For Adorno, this power of the commodity as a "particularity [that] becomes ... equivalent to the whole"(54) places the social role of art in a difficult position, insofar as it must compete with the forces of the commodity. The most strikingly suggestive—and perhaps uncharacteristic—move made in "The Schema of Mass Culture" occurs when Adorno considers the role of conflict in artistic production. Adorno provocatively poses the question as to whether the presentation of conflict in artistic production is effectively a "romantic deception" (67) relative to mass culture's processes of standardization and their "liquidation of aesthetic intrication" (67). With this liquidation comes the attendant liquidation "of every last trace of resistance" (67) in the work of art, which he suggests could actually be the basis

for the "secret omnipresence" (67) of resistance. The possibility of a resistant character inherent to artwork without the overt display of social conflict is precisely the strategy that minimalism and monochromatic artworks deploy, since they radically deny aesthetic intricacy and resemble standardized products in this limited sense. These forms of late modernist production would be appropriate to the context of 'the schema of mass culture', then, as they counter-intuitively recognize and quietly oppose the rules of the game determined by mass culture. The homologous relationship that art would then more apparently entertain vis-à-vis the commodity remains to be investigated. That is, if art acquires a 'secretly omnipresent' resistance to mass culture through the forms of minimalist sculpture and the monochrome, it is yet to be discussed how this resistance might occur with reference to the television game show.

Following Walter Benjamin, critic Benjamin Buchloh has suggested that the transformation of the commodity form into an artwork may occur through allegorical artistic practices. By associating a new meaning with an object:

> ...the allegorist subjects the sign to the same division of functions that the object has undergone in its transformation into a commodity. It is this repetition of the original act of depletion [ie, the "devaluation of objects, their split into use value and exchange value and the fact that they would ultimately function exclusively as producers of exchange value" (Buchloh, "Allegorical Procedures", 29)] and the new attribution of meaning that redeems the object. (29)

For Buchloh, such a procedure takes place in Dara Birnbaum's video *Kiss The Girls: Make Them Cry* (1979), which appropriates footage from the game show *Hollywood Squares*. Birnbaum's work alters this broadcast television source by repeatedly shrinking the frames that contain video of the program's celebrity cast. Birnbaum draws attention

to the celebrities' framing with an expanding black border that follows the images' contraction to the point where they are surrounded by a void, and only occupy a small area of the screen. Each time that this contraction occurs, a different celebrity appears to fill the screen, and the process repeats. Buchloh considers this activity on the part of Birnbaum to attribute a new meaning to the game show commodity, insofar as it:

> ...reveal[s] the extent to which even the facial expressions of hyperactive television performers implement ideology. The serial repetition allows for sudden insight into the extent to which the actors' faces, themselves, have become the site of the total instrumentalization of the individual, down to the very last feature of a spectacle of the physiognomic. (48)

For Buchloh, Birnbaum's operation in *Kiss The Girls: Make Them Cry* points to the reified condition of the social interactions performed by *Hollywood Squares* participants through a minimal intervention in the formal packaging of these celebrities' expressions and reactions. A critical perspective on the commodity might be generated through her artistic procedure since the entertainers' actions are removed from the chain of witty banter that sustains interest in the program. By removing the purportedly social exchanges of *Hollywood Squares* from the structure of the program, Birnbaum points to—but does not reproduce—the 'thing' that these exchanges have become: isolated fragments of the actors' individual expressions.

Structures* and *Variations

In this section I would like to suggest that there is a homology between Benjamin Buchloh's reading of Conceptual Art and the characteristics of the television game show. As will be seen, Buchloh suggests that Conceptual Art displays a rationalizing tendency that he deems an "aesthetic of administration" (Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969",

142). Game shows similarly function to rationalize the spaces around them through aesthetic means; while game shows are often visibly spectacular, their game systems are tied to administering the distribution of money and commodities. This is supported by Su Holmes' observation that, in game shows, "...the game space [offers] an escape from the routines and the relations of the world, while its imaginary still remains deeply structured within the everyday" (Holmes, 84). By looking to art that apparently engages with the conditions of an administered world, it will be possible to better consider work engaging with the game show. I will proceed to make the comparison between the rationalizing space of the administered world and the game show through an examination of two critical essays that touch on the work of the artist Sol LeWitt: Benjamin Buchloh's "Conceptual Art 1962-1969" and Rosalind Krauss' "Sol LeWitt in Progress". This argument will be developed by considering how Buchloh links Conceptual Art to a bureaucratic or administrative aesthetic, and examining how both Buchloh and Krauss deny that LeWitt is a conceptual artist in the strict sense. Due to the purported qualification of his work as non-conceptual, LeWitt's quasi-minimal and monochromatic forms resist the construction of an administered world alluded to by Conceptual Art. Such an understanding of these aspects of his work will then be transposed onto separate strategic uses of minimalism and the monochrome relative to game shows.

For Buchloh, the prominence of Conceptual Art—as "the most significant paradigmatic change of postwar artistic production" (Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969", 142)—suggests a shift from the "aesthetic of production and consumption" (119) presented within Pop and minimalism to "an aesthetic of administrative and legal

organization..." (119). In his terms, Conceptual Art appears to possibly share in the conditions of "a totally administered world, as Adorno's notorious term identified it" (129). As a critical tool, Conceptual Art might be considered to risk rehearsing the positivist tendencies in the culture that it reflects without establishing the distance necessary for that critique to be experienced (though the spectator may *cognitively* recognize such critique). Since LeWitt's practice productively drifts away from conceptualism in its adherence to more minimalist strategies, it will become apparent that it creates tension with the schema established by the former. For Buchloh, early conceptual artists "went beyond such mapping of the linguistic model onto the perceptual model, outdistancing as they did the spatialization of language and the temporalization of visual structure". (Buchloh, 107) Conceptualism's radicality in a strict sense, for Buchloh, is based on the work's sole existence as a linguistic definition. According to Buchloh, LeWitt's early work does not fit this model because it is still rooted in "a visual structure" (107), which then exists in tension with the assignation of "a new "idea" or meaning to an object randomly ... as though the object were an empty (linguistic) signifier" (107). To continue this discussion, I will now draw upon Buchloh's more specific examination of LeWitt.

A productive tension between support, text, and participant interaction is identified in Buchloh's discussion of Sol LeWitt's *Structures* of 1961 and 1962. In one of the *Structures*, entitled *Untitled (Red Square, White Letters)* (1962), painted surfaces are the ground for inscribed words, integrating "both language and visual sign in a structural model" (113). For Buchloh, the tension in this work exists not only between the act of viewing and the act of reading the work, but rather the "reliability of the given

information and the sequence of that information" (113). In the case of *Untitled (Red Square, White Letters)*, this is a result of the oscillation between separate systems of meaning apparent in the work, and the possible contradictions or logical incompatibilities

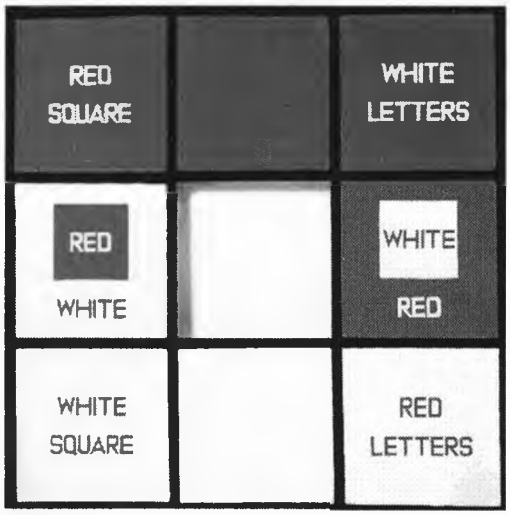

Figure 1. Sol LeWitt, *Untitled (Red Square, White Letters)*, 1962.

that arise relative to the surface onto which the words have been inscribed, and the colour which has been used in their inscription. LeWitt's *Structures*, then, were not Conceptualist in the strict sense identified earlier by Buchloh: the linguistic primacy of the work was questioned by a spectator's perceptual experience of the material object.

Rosalind Krauss' "Sol LeWitt in Progress" similarly investigates the difference between LeWitt's practice and a conceptual disposition. Krauss argues against a reading of LeWitt's oeuvre that situates it in terms of the purely rationalistic operations of "deductive, inferential, axiomatic" thought (Krauss, 46). The topic of Krauss' discussion is more specifically LeWitt's *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* (1974). Krauss holds

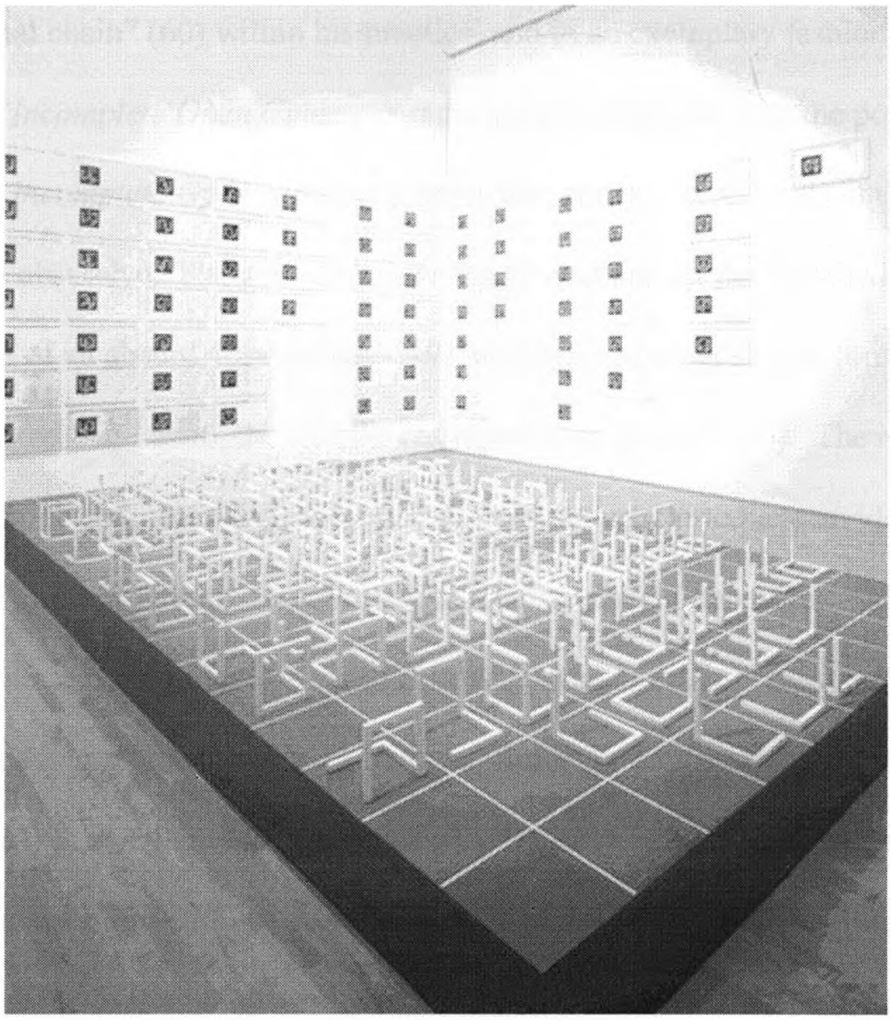

Figure 2. Sol LeWitt, *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes*, 1974

that LeWitt's repetitious construction of objects opposes "the economy of the mathematician's language" (Krauss, 55) because it attempts to solve a problem (to generate the possible structures that imply cubes using a minimum of three vertices and no more than 11 vertices) in an inelegant and laborious fashion, whereas a logical mathematical solution would take the form of a simple, abbreviated formula. Krauss' argument could be reduced to a basic point: LeWitt's *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* suggests the production ethos of minimalism (58) more closely than the physical manifestation of mathematical ideals. This is because, like the work of Lewitt's contemporaries Judd, Morris, and Smithson, "objects proliferated in a seemingly endless

and obsessional chain" (60) within his practice, and in an exemplary fashion in *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes*. Krauss clearly disagrees with the possibility that *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* is a rationalist endeavour since its logic is repetitive and obsessive. She instead locates the project amidst the "aesthetic manipulations of an absurd nominalism" (58) analogous to modes of performance such as "the deadpan, the fixed stare, the uninflected repetitious speech" (60). The minimalist logic of simply placing one thing after another does not appear to have an ideal correlate, and this is precisely where its strength lies for Krauss, since it denies the "false and pious rationality" (60) that might be confirmed if LeWitt were to actually presume that his project physically actualized reason or thought. Since for Krauss "nothing was referential" (60) in the chain of objects that minimalist artists produced, their production denied the linguistic in a fashion that was more pronounced than the playful questioning of language visible in Buchloh's analysis of LeWitt's *Structures*. Rather than creating tension between a linguistic attribution and a "visual structure" (Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969", 107), *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* signifies only within a closed, self-referential chain.

As was apparent in Buchloh's reading of Dara Birnbaum's video work, a denial of past signifying potential in the commodity may open a space for new, allegorical attributions of meaning through art. In Birnbaum's *Kiss The Girls: Make Them Cry*, this occurred through formal means, through serial repetition and the dramatic shift in meaning that such a process imposed on video appropriated from *Hollywood Squares*. In the examples examined, LeWitt's serial approach to constructing artwork also produces formal tension, but such a procedure does not act as a direct intervention into a specific

commodity that is used as a source. Rather, his repetitive logic produces tension in terms of spectatorship, insofar as *Untitled (Red Square, White Letters)* uses words and colours according to different, conflicting logics simultaneously, and *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* illustrates an insistent, inefficient process in an expansive manner. In both respects, LeWitt's projects use repetition to rationalize in seemingly irrational ways.

For Buchloh, the clerk-like role of the artist suggested by LeWitt's systematizing practice is still potentially troubling because it apparently reproduces the logic of an administered world. Buchloh quotes LeWitt as stating that:

> The aim of the artist would be to give viewers information. . .. He would follow his predetermined premise to its conclusion avoiding subjectivity. Chance, taste or unconsciously remembered forms would play no part in the outcome. The serial artist does not attempt to produce a beautiful or mysterious object but functions merely as a clerk cataloguing the results of his premise..." (Buchloh, "Conceptual Art 1962-1969", 140)

The strict, empiricist obligation that LeWitt has to the provision of information would seem to contradict and compromise the possible phenomenal experience of, as reviewed, his *Structures* or his *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes*. Yet by turning an analysis from the language, quite literally, of an administered world, toward the language of the game show, a critique of its instrumentalization of knowledge may be readily available in the wake of Conceptual Art. To avoid the total administration that Conceptual Art threatens, however, a resistant, phenomenal remainder would be sought beyond the linguistic, and sometimes mathematical, procedures that structure the game show's apparatus. As a particular element of experience, the phenomenal irreducibility of the art object would operate critically to question "reliability of the given information and the

sequence of that information" (113), as we have seen in Buchloh's analysis of LeWitt's *Structures*.

The game show's rationalizing procedures might be considered outside of the restricted context of their reception on television in order to permit contradiction and logic incompatibilities, instead of a veiled form of administered exchange. For instance, the objects that make up the stages of game shows—most evident in the spectacular architectures of 1970s programs such as *Pyramid*—undergo a similar series of transpositions of meaning and value as LeWitt's *Untitled (Red Square, White Letters)*. However, in the system of the game show these inscriptions have a fixed, rather than a variable, function relative to the structure of the program. That is, while a category played during the final round of the program *Pyramid* may result in a variety of diverging deductions on the part of contestants, the process of play ultimately only leads to rewards in the event that its fixed meaning is met relative to the logic of the game. Though *Pyramid* presents the appearance of playful signification on the part of the contestant prompting a finalist, the finalist is wholly constrained by the rationale of the show's rules. By placing the content of a game show such as *Pyramid* outside of the context of such rules, its process of administering and regulating meaning would cease.

Information or Enigma

The total administration suggested by Conceptual Art in Buchloh's analysis might be considered to catalogue reality, effectively turning the world's information, through administration, into a commodity. For Adorno, "[i]nformation emphatically promotes the decay of the aesthetic image" (Adorno, "The Schema of Mass Culture", 71). When art

has become a cultural product within the culture industry, it gets conflated with packaging and promotion, just as, "the entertainment film becomes ... an extension of its own publicity" (71). A product of the proliferation of information, then, is information's fetishization at the expense of art:

> The curiosity which transforms the world into objects is not objective: it is not concerned with what is known but with the fact of knowing it, with having, with knowledge as a possession. This is precisely how the objects of information are organized today. Their indifferent character predestines their being and they are incapable of transcending the abstract fact of possession through any immanent quality of their own. As fact they are arranged in such a way that they can be grasped as quickly and easily as possible. Wrenched from all context, detached from thought, they are made instantly accessible to an infantile grasp. (74)

That this curiosity for, and possible commodification of, information pertains to the emerging format of the game show on radio is evident in Adorno's suggestion that among its effects are "the quiz kids and their ilk" (72). On the topic of cultural information, an important distinction has been made by Miriam Hansen to complicate the breadth of Adorno's writing. She suggests that two forms of 'hieroglyphics' exist in the context of Adorno's writing on culture (Hansen, 93): those that pertain to mass culture, and those that are incorporated into his thinking on art.

Following up on Hansen's references to Adorno, it becomes highly apparent that these two diverging methods for understanding cultural production might be productively combined for the production of art. According to Hansen, in instances of culture industry-related analyses, Adorno considers mass culture to be hieroglyphic in the sense that it exists as a series of prescriptions (87). In "The Schema of Mass Culture" this assertion is formulated by Adorno's equation of the film to a text, wherein:

> ...the dreams of those in charge of mummifying the world mass culture represents a priestly hieroglyphic script which addresses its images to those who have been subjugated not in order that they might be enjoyed but only that they be read. (Adorno, "The Schema of Mass Culture", 80)

In this sense, the "message of capital" (81) can be transmitted in a total sense—the meanings of this hieroglyphic script are limited by a series of readymade plot formulae which displace a viewer's attention to "the outcome, the solution, the structure" and "the rebus-like details"(81) that compose the work. The motif of the hieroglyph recurs in radically different terms within Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory,* however, in the context of art. Adorno suggests that "all artworks are writing, not just those that are obviously such; they are hieroglyphs for which the code has been lost, a loss that plays into their content" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 124). Art's "enigmaticalness outlives the interpretation that arrives at the answer" (125). By elaborating on the sense in which artworks are enigmas, Adorno suggests what it might mean to transplant a puzzle from a game show into an art context. By removing a puzzle from its formulaic resolution in its original context, its content would exceed the determined outcome prescribed by its initial location in mass culture. Indeed, in examining the enigmaticalness of artworks, he suggests that a "...newspaper picture puzzle recapitulates playfully what artworks carry out in earnest" (121). The artwork appears as a "puzzle to be solved" (121) but, unlike the possible solubility of the newspaper puzzle, art "remains a vexation" (121) in the sense that it maintains a remainder, some component that eludes comprehension.

In order to gauge the resistance of the art object to the reductive forms of reading provided by television in Adorno's essays on the topic, it is significant to further examine the section of his *Aesthetic Theory* entitled "Enigmaticalness, Truth Content,

Metaphysics". For Adorno, the task of aesthetics is "not to comprehend artworks as hermeneutical objects"(118), instead "it is their incomprehensibility that needs to be comprehended" (118). According to Adorno's reasoning, art's 'ridiculousness' is "a condemnation of empirical rationality" (119) since it "accuses the rationality of social praxis of having become an end in itself" (119). In this sense, even an artwork that is rationally organized and "assimilates itself to a logical order by virtue of its inner exactitude" (119) can work to parody empirical rationality, since the work's logic holds it to be ridiculous "according to the standard of empirical reason" (119). The rational planning of LeWitt's *Structures* and *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* would, then, effectively parody an empiricist, administered world insofar as they are not means to any particular rational end: the solutions that they pose in formal terms do not appear to 'solve' problems in a productive fashion. They have purposive purposelessness in the traditional aesthetic sense, or, as Adorno would have it, they are "purposeful in themselves, without having any positive purpose beyond their own arrangement" (124). Adorno holds that the more rationally constructed an artwork is, the more what has been translated as its "enigmaticalness" (120) becomes apparent. This occurs because the methodical form of the artwork grants it a "resemblance to language, seeming at every point to say just this and only this, and at the same time whatever it is slips away" (120). This point in Adorno's theory may account for the enigmatic character of LeWitt's *Structures*, since, while the work also involves language specifically, its form causes meaning to slip away. The relationship between the words, their colours, and the surfaces onto which they have been inscribed oscillate in terms of meaning. While the seemingly empiricist intent of their arrangement resembles empirical rationality, the

irrationality of the entire construction ridicules this possibility. It should come as no surprise, then, that the 5th sentence of LeWitt's "Sentences on Conceptual Art" is that "Irrational thoughts should be followed absolutely and logically", as Krauss notes (Krauss, 58). The enigma that LeWitt poses in *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* exhausts its own logical deployment as the irrationality of its formulation by the spectator.

To further consider the critical implications of LeWitt's approach, a brief examination of minimalism will consider the minimalist object's theoretical relationship to temporality. By transposing a formal approach resembling LeWitt's *Untitled (Red Square, White Letters)* onto the minimalist object, I would suggest that the time of information might be upset. In Michael Fried's discussion of minimalism, "Art and Objecthood", the temporality of the minimalist object is demonstrated with reference to a quotation from Tony Smith. Fried quotes Smith as stating that a "Bennington earthenware jar" "continues to nourish us time and time again. We can't see it in a second, we continue to read it. There is something absurd in the fact that you can go back to a cube in the same way" (Fried, 166). For Fried, the blunt materiality of the minimalist object does "not represent, signify, or allude to anything" (165) and merely implies "the "obdurate identity" of a specific material" (165). To employ LeWitt's use of language, here, would suggest the inscription of words in order to create tension between the visual surface and material presence of the object. If, for instance, Tony Smith's *Die* (1962) were to have the word "Die" inscribed upon it, a vertiginous play between the linguistic signifier and the cubic object would be brought into motion. The

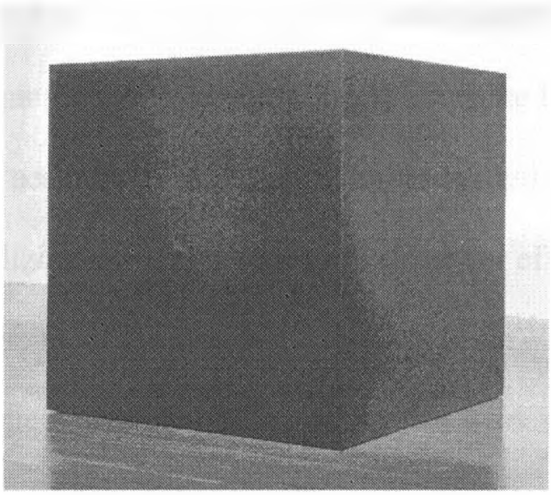

Figure 3. Tony Smith, *Die*, 1962.

endlessness of the minimalist object could place the possible meanings of the word "Die" in temporal suspension, rather than placing it in an instrumentalized signifying chain, as information might be considered to function. "Die" could both refer to death, corresponding to the object's memorial dimensions, or to the singular form of the word "Dice," and the object's corresponding form, interchangeably. Returning to Fried, the dialectic between object and information is apparent in his use of Robert Morris' suggestion that the spectator in relationship to the minimalist object is "[f]ree or released because of the exhaustion of information about [the object], as shape, and bound to it because it remains constant and indivisible" (Fried, 165). The endless, literal character of the hypothetical, inscribed *Die* would not just be highlighted by the exhaustible information load of its shape. The word would also participate in this exhaustion by virtue of being connected to the static, concrete presence of the minimalist object. By engaging with both the temporality of minimalism and language, LeWitt stages the product of information in its possible exhaustion.

Where Fiske sees a possible freedom from forms of capitalist control in the moment of the game show itself, the work of John Miller and Ron Terada, which will

soon be examined, locates a possible task for art objects in shifting the conditions for reading and viewing the game show. As considered above, the LeWitt's work might be considered to parody the 'aesthetic of administration' identified by Benjamin Buchloh, since it presents a rationalizing system but does not clearly or efficiently rationalize the world. A deployment of some of the strategies apparent in LeWitt's work, such as excessive seriality and logical incompatibility, might also work to emphasize and disrupt the regulations apparent in a television game show. Such a procedure is evident in Dara Birnbaum's *Kiss The Girls: Make Them Cry*, where seriality breaks down the program's rules and exaggerates the framing devices used by the program *Hollywood Squares*. The enigmatic character of artworks could both resist an 'aesthetic of administration' and also examine the traces of social control embedded in the entertainment objects that make up the game show set. An 'aesthetic of administration' might even be critiqued by overt, empty references to commodification—such as Birnbaum's use of *Hollywood Squares*—in order to draw out the ideological implications that permeate the structure of the game show. While the mediation of elements from the game show set as they are packaged on television prescribes a way of reading and receiving information, Miriam Hansen suggests that the culture industry proves to be a form of script, and it can be extrapolated that such a script can be reconfigured by artists in the direction of the enigmas of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*. If the enigmatic object is accompanied by a generous space for thought, the prescriptive properties of its source material may be partially short-circuited or questioned.

CHAPTER TWO

> ...the corporation works more deeply to impose a modulation of each salary, in states of perpetual metastability that operate through challenges, contests, and highly comic group sessions. If the most idiotic television game shows are so successful, it's because they express the corporate situation with great precision. (Deleuze, 3)

Gilles Deleuze's "Postscript on the Societies of Control" refers in passing to the precise expression of corporate control within television game shows. The isolated use of game shows as an example suggests that they may also be expressive of the broader societal conditions discussed throughout his article. This example is not expanded upon, however, and Deleuze proceeds to elaborate on the mutations that occur between societies of discipline and control. Game shows might be considered, then, to precisely articulate a consequence of the 'control society,' since they are television formats that involve rapidly fluctuating values.

> Individuals have become "dividuals," and masses, samples, data, markets, or "banks." Perhaps it is money that expresses the distinction between the two societies best, since discipline always referred back to minted money that locks gold in as numerical standard, while control relates to floating rates of exchange, modulated according to a rate established by a set of standard currencies. (Deleuze, 5)

Deleuze's observations about the 'control society' highlight two specific transitions: the movement from the individual to the "dividual," and the shift from a gold standard to floating rates of exchange. Both of these shifts can be connected to the artist John Miller's game show-based installations, as well as other areas of his practice. These aspects of his work can be understood through references to the numerous art historical precedents that inform the artistic strategies that he uses to examine the game show form. As Cay Sophie Rabinowitz has stated, while it "may resemble Duchampian traditions,

Miller's work is significantly more informed by traditions of Minimalist sculpture and Marxism." (Rabinowitz, 12) Miller's work is not simply Duchampian. That is, it is not based on decontextualization; a game show set is not removed from a television studio to be exhibited in a gallery. Rather, elements resembling game show sets are constructed for the gallery space. The function of resemblance is crucial here. While Miller's projects do not displace game show sets, neither do they simulate the characteristics of these sets within the gallery. Instead, Miller's work borrows strategies from minimalist sculpture in order to draw attention to the spatial and temporal differences between his installations and the experience of television spectatorship. Additionally, the Marxist influence in Miller's work, as pinpointed by Rabinowitz, can be investigated through the consideration of his dialogue with the work of Piero Manzoni, and its interrogation of value. It is evident that the minimalist and Marxist strains of Miller's work correspond to both Deleuze's 'dividual' and floating rates of exchange, respectively. By examining Miller's essay "The Phantom Audience", which explicitly connects minimalist sculpture and game shows, it becomes apparent that he uses minimalism to refer to the divided conditions of spectatorship that permeate mediated society.

John Fiske suggests that the economy of game shows potentially overturns the general capitalist economy, allowing the consumer to be "momentarily liberated from economic subjection" since "her knowledge of prices and value is no longer the product of her economic subjection to the system" but these knowledges instead "become the means of beating the economic system" (Fiske, 277). Similarly, 20th century art involved with the critique of economic value systems has presumed to provide knowledge and

reflective space for momentary autonomy, or liberation, from these capitalist systems. John Miller's work combines these modes of resistance derived from both game shows and art history, particularly through the use of abjection. Much as game shows can operate to overturn a capitalist economy temporarily in Fiske's terms, abjection occasionally functions to destabilize the value systems inherent in the structure of the game show set in Miller's practice. Regarding this topic, Hal Foster's discussion of abjection in art focuses on the specific capacity for abjection to disrupt both the "image-screen and symbolic order" (Foster, "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic", 115). However, this capacity is always at risk of becoming a "spectacle" whereby abjection in the public sphere is rendered obscene, and "may inadvertently support the normativity of image-screen and symbolic order alike." (116) Miller, by explicitly quoting television culture in his work, does not position himself as wholly autonomous from its values, nor does he affirm them in the mode of pop art. Rather, his work enacts what Foster describes as "a fracture traced by a strategic avant-garde positioned ambivalently within this [symbolic] order" (115), and therefore does not presume a heroic exteriority to this order. Thus, the ambivalence of Miller's work can be observed in its differences from both conventional minimalism and commodity sculpture.

Shit Show

In 1970s game shows, such as *The Price is Right*, there is the sense "in which the prizes become the stars" (Fiske, 271-272). Similarly, 1980s commodity sculpture situates the mass-produced object as star, or fetish. An example of this correspondence between

the prize-as-star and commodity sculpture might be illustrated through a consideration of Jeff Koons' *Rabbit* (1986). As commodity sculpture, *Rabbit* collapses the gap between

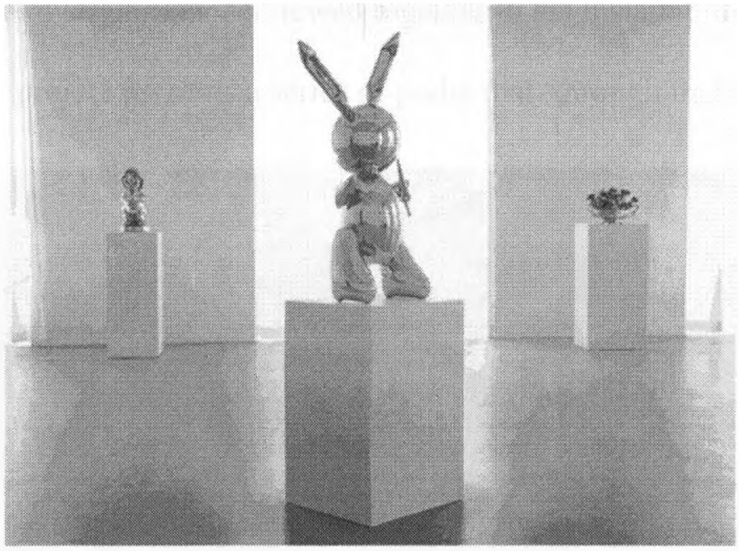

Figure 4. Jeff Koons, installation view of *Rabbit*, 1986.

minimalism and Pop as described in Hal Foster's "The Crux of Minimalism". For Foster, this gap exists between minimalism's resistance to "the spectacular image and the disembodied subject of advanced capitalism" (Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism", 62) and pop's embrace of these conditions. Koons' *Rabbit* troubles the resistance offered by the aloof, reflective surfaces of minimalist sculpture by encoding it as a commodity through its figural similarity to rabbit-shaped toy. This process of encoding firmly locates the object within a capitalist image economy. While Miller's game show installations refer to programs such as *The Price is Right*, they rarely feature neo-pop rehearsals of commodities as their sculptural focal point. As a consequence, his installations do not place the spectator in the position of the consumer. Drawing on Foster, Miller sees work encompassed by "the Pop/Minimal dialectic" as maintaining "the commodity's perfection through the exclusion of the subject, just as the products of labor are matter-of-factly appropriated from those who made them." (Miller, *The Price*

Club, 27) Miller's strategy for interrogating game shows visibly combines two strains of work: the minimalist, and one that moves toward the "scatterological" (Foster et al., 3) and abject. These two strains can be viewed together in his installation *The Lugubrious Game* (1999). The project presents a series of podia that, through their blank surfaces

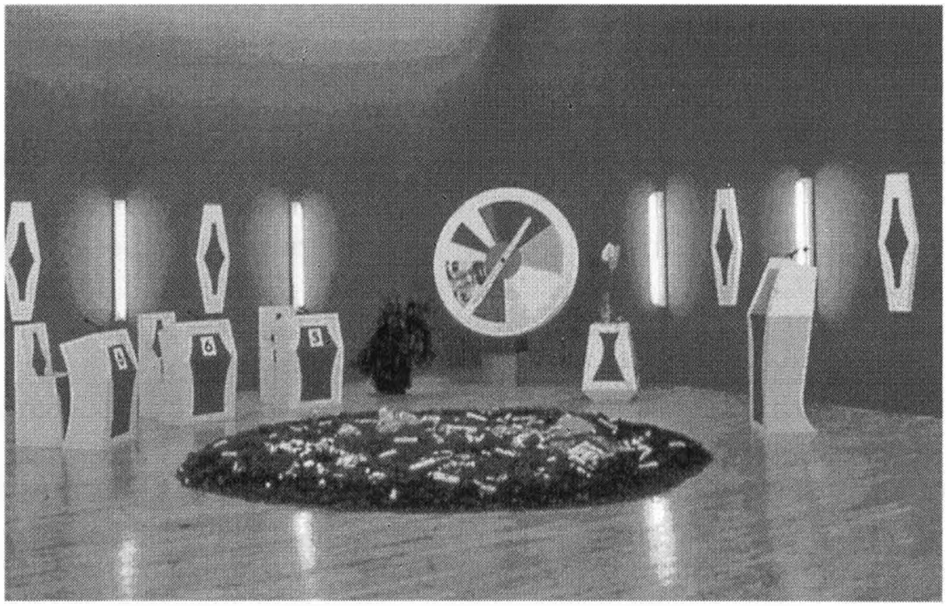

Figure 5. John Miller, *The Lugubrious Game*, 1999.

and geometric forms, recall Richard Artschwager's quasi-minimalist objects. In addition to these elements, *The Lugubrious Game* also contains an area of floor demarcated to resemble a mud-wrestling pit. This circular area composed of money, dildos, newspaper, and gravel evokes floor-bound minimalist sculpture of the 1960s, notably process-oriented work by Barry LeVa, Richard Long, and Robert Morris. As opposed to these artists' often uncontaminated accumulations of simple materials, however, Miller litters the pit with fetish objects suggesting value and exchange. To complicate Miller's position within *The Lugubrious Game*, I would suggest that the key conceptual distinction between the minimal objects and the gravel pit rests in the coding and visibility of labour. Rather than implying free play on the part of the artist, process art

draws attention to the work done to alter and arrange a material. Miller compromises a reading of process art as pure work by associating its initially unprocessed raw materials with objects that are more fetishistic, and perform an explicit role in the libidinal economy. His use of process-related forms of display also differs from the more concrete, minimalist elements of the set described above. Miller's simultaneous quotation of both the factory-produced sheen of minimalism and the basic material engagement of process art activates the installation through art historical references. The pop cultural knowledge necessary for reading the installation as a game show set intersects with Miller's references to minimalism and process art. This intersection functions to recode the space of the set, since it allows forms of artistic production that have been historically associated with factory production and manual labour to exist in relationship to the terms of instant acquisition provided by the game show. Miller's strategic transposition of possible references and readings recodes the game show set insofar as it presents two distinct systems of cultural value. These references thus use the context of a game show set to expand an investigation of 20th century art and television culture.

It is important to recall, in this context, that the modes of autonomy employed by Miller, through his quotation of minimalism, are necessarily embedded in the broader cultural order, and do not attempt to produce a radical space of formal purism. For Foster, Miller's approach to abjection questions value through proximities: "this symbolic interchange toward aformal indistinction-push the baby and the penis, as it were, toward the lump of shit. ...to trouble symbolic difference." (119) Miller's use of

abjection, specifically in *The Lugubrious Game*'s mud pit, can be seen to represent the "comparative anal retentiveness of capital, which seeks to waste nothing and to recuperate every expenditure", and thereby uses Freud's theories to:

> ...volatiliz[e] a *historically relative* network of meanings, latent and overt. These in part comprise the not-always-rational a priori of valuation and evaluation processes, economic *or* aesthetic... (Miller, "The Fig Leaf Was Brown", 78)

Figure 6. John Miller, detail of *The Lugubrious Game*, 1999.

The Lugubrious Game suggests an arena for these meanings to play out, pitting the rationalist aesthetic of minimalism against the pit's abject, 'scatterology' of money, dildos, newspaper, and gravel.

In order to further investigate the role of abjection in Miller's work, it is worth considering how his brown paintings engage with questions of cultural value. Artist and writer Lenore Malen has quoted a statement accompanying Miller's brown paintings, in which the latter frames them as suggesting "an analogy to the infantile urge to handle feces," and represents "cultural knowledge overtaken by nature's entropic impasto" (Malen, 79). Knowledge, then, is quite significantly problematized in Miller's work.

These paintings are coated by thick, brown acrylic paint that suggests a culturally abjected substance: shit. Such a gesture questions the validity of a given representational space, and the picture of the world that it may suggest. Critic Jerry Saltz observes that Miller's more recent works, which resemble the brown paintings, but have been coated with gold leaf rather than brown paint:

> can be seen as modern equivalents to Warhol's dollar-sign paintings and Daniel Buren's stripes–fetishes that have no inherent value in themselves but that externalize unconsciousness, destabilize our relationship to art and are vivid symbols for their own status as placeholders for the rich. (Saltz)

In suggesting the potency of Miller's gold paintings, Saltz also explicitly dismisses the artist's parallel concern with game shows as evidenced through his use of painting, sculpture, and installation. According to Saltz, Miller's game show work is narrated as a temporary detour from his more significant monochrome work, and consisted simply of "over-ironic installations and paintings involving game shows" (Saltz). By omitting the significance of this work in the chronology of Miller's practice, Saltz ignores the fact that the game show installations operate in a similar fashion to the brown paintings: through their disruption of a system of value. In fact, Saltz misses the point by suggesting that the inherently valueless fetishes created by Miller are intended as paintings that may be securely appropriated by the rich. I would suggest that Miller's use of game shows actually demonstrates his interrogation of value in art as a decidedly more carnivalesque production, one that is visibly ambivalent about the spectacular valorization of class. Writing about Manzoni's work, Miller makes the uneasy temporality of capital apparent, and juxtaposes this with the cultural values associated with art. According to Miller, Manzoni's work makes explicit the tension between:

> ...those with a vast store of cultural capital and those in the business of acquiring as much as they can in the shortest time possible. For the patrician, the acquisitive efficiency of the nouveau riche is odious because the very prospect of ready exchangeability jeopardises long-standing traditions of cultural inheritance. This efficiency, as such, produces a relative indifference to deeply ingrained aesthetic experience. (Miller, "Excremental Value", par. 1)

To upset Saltz's use of the term 'rich,' I would suggest that such a denomination is not fixed, but is relative, and what both the inflating prices of Manzoni's *Merda d'artista* and many game shows share is rapidly shifting states of value, and thus wealth and the accumulation of 'richness.' As Miller states, the value of *Merda d'artista*–which left behind the gold standard and, as art, "outperformed gold in price by more than 70 times" at auction—lies in its anticipation of the fact "that criticality will become a recursive guarantor of value" (Miller, "Excremental Value", par. 7). *Merda d'artista* may accumulate value as a critical gesture, and represent cultural value for the institutions that exhibit one of Manzoni's cans of shit. By contrast, the instant acquisition of wealth represented and implied by Miller's game show sets, inversely, does not also automatically lead to the instant acquisition of either wealth or cultural prestige. This work is not therefore codified as a fetish invested with high cultural value—as Saltz reads the paintings—nor is it codified art historically as critically potent. While Miller displays, through the replication of game show sets, the tools for instantly acquiring money, the project does not signify the cultural values commonly associated with the acquisition of value through the system of art. These circumstances may explain Saltz's avoidance of the game show work: it does not engage literally with the economy of 'high' art—an economy that has been historically involved to a great degree with painting. By displacing the discourses of value associated with television game shows

into the gallery, Miller poses a series of problems that are separate from the immediate economies of commercial exchange associated with traditional art.

In the essay "Entropy and Real Estate", John Miller writes about the influence that Jackson Pollock's work had upon his practice in terms of materials, which supports the uneasy relationship that his brown paintings have to the value of artistic craft within the economy of the art world. After observing a Pollock retrospective, Miller states that "a sense of handmade spectacle immediately struck me. (Vis-à-vis Debord, "handmade spectacle" may be an oxymoron.)" (Miller, "Entropy and Real Estate", 1) Granted that Miller's shit paintings were informed by, but also acted as a self-conscious attempt to deny the influences of both Pop and of abstract expressionism (Miller, "The Fig Leaf Was Brown", 76) his paintings might be read as 'unspectacularly handmade'. The brown paintings are fetishistic, but in a perverse fashion for a visual medium, since they are highly tactile reliefs. In their unspectacular visual character the reliefs recall a manual urge to model feces. This is a psychoanalytic scene that Miller explicitly uses to question the "comparative anal retentiveness" (Miller, "The Fig Leaf Was Brown", 78) of a capitalist economy, rather than as a literal Freudian equation of the artist's desire and the general desire to play with fecal matter. The visual pleasures of baroque curlicues in Pollock, or the Renaissance perspective utilized in historical painting are both basically opposed by the uniform muddiness of Miller's brown paintings. Miller locates a "redundant anti-chronology" (repetitive seriality) and "conflation of production and waste" in Manzoni's project that is comparable to "the commodity fetish" (Miller, "Excremental Value", par. 4). These characteristics operate within the brown paintings, and beyond Saltz's one-dimensional attribution of fetishism.

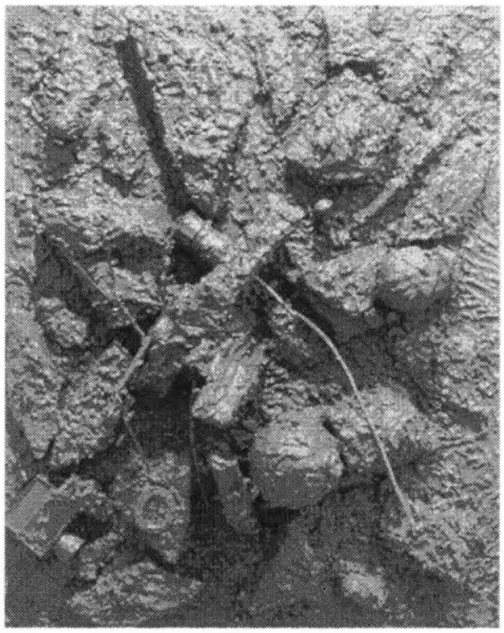

Figure 7. John Miller, *Untitled*, 1990.

As Saltz suggests, the shit paintings are fetishes because they remove objects from practical use; this is an obvious characteristic of work that decontextualizes mass-produced objects within a gallery. Miller extends this strategy further, however, by miring the objects in papier-mâché and brown acrylic, effectively arresting their possible recuperation within their economies of origin. Yet in contrast to "reductivist literalism" that may appear to be inherent in Manzoni's project, Miller expands on the metaphorical capacity of his work, as:

> In the infantile imagination, faeces, the first thing a child produces, also counts as a primordial gift. The obverse of this may be Karl Marx's declaration that under capitalism even the greatest artwork is worth only so many tons of manure. (Miller, "Excremental Value", par. 5)

Through a relationship to the symbolic setting of the game show and the gallery, it is apparent that Miller's work follows along these metaphorical avenues, in contrast to the literalism that might be associated with a reading of abjection through a specifically Bataillean lens. As Hal Foster has pointed out, metaphorical content suggests substitution, and thus "*le jeu de transpositions*" (Foster, "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic",

117). Bataille decried metaphorical content as sublimatory rather than abject. In this regard, Miller's most poignant observation about Manzoni's work locates it as a precedent to developments in "what would become a connection between conceptual art and [sic] capitalist information economy." (Miller, "Excremental Value", par. 7) This declaration demarcates the space where Miller enters Manzoni's game.

Ritual and Play

It is unsurprising that Miller would follow and regularly punctuate his work related to fecal matter with sporadic explorations of the game show medium; indeed, many recognize the programs as deficient in cultural value. As Holbrook observes, "the direct descendents of the corrupt quiz programs, game shows bear a stigma that renders them suspect from the start as "the lowest form of television"" (Holbrook, 31). He also grants the personal perspective that he "can imagine no artifacts of popular culture more apparently worthless and more seemingly unredeemed by any vestige of intellectual, esthetic, or moral value." (11). Miller's early paintings of game shows emphasize this aspect of cultural abjection, specifically through their depictions of emotional excess on

Figure 8. John Miller, Oedipus, 1998.

Figure 9. John Miller, *Ritual Dissociation*, 1998.

the part of contestants, as well as via the kitschy *mise en scène* provided by depictions of studio sets from the 1970s and 80s.

While elements of ritual are visible in Miller's paintings, it is worth considering how his work might be considered to operate as a game itself. In a discussion of television game shows, John Fiske states that "Lévi-Strauss distinguishes between games and rituals by defining games as cultural forms in which participants start out equal and finish differentiated into winners and losers..." (Fiske, 265). As Fiske outlines, *The Price is Right*, from which Miller borrows, draws on its viewers' 'factual everyday knowledge':

> ...the prices of domestic and consumer goods is on trial: the winner is the one who best knows the values of a wide range of commodities. ... Knowledge of this type is not gained through school or reading, but rather through common social experience and interaction: it is thus available to a wider range of people, it is democratic rather than elitist in temper. (267)

While game shows potentially present a democratic form of knowledge, they also employ luck toward hegemonic ends, providing "an ideologically acceptable explanation of success or failure" (270) under capitalism. The resemblance to structures of gambling such as the casino, in *The Price is Right* and *Wheel of Fortune*, support a "society that celebrates both the material rewards of wealth and the right of everyone to them, but limits the opportunities to acquire them to the minority..." (270). According to Fiske, the game show:

> ...collapses the time gap – the rewards are instant – and in so doing squeezes the job out of the equation. Hall and Bennett have both noted how rarely productive labor is represented in capitalist popular culture... The effacing of work from our screens, of course, effaces the fact that industrialized work benefits one class rather than another, and that its rewards are not necessarily related to the effort or time devoted to it. (275)

This problematic can be connected to both the instant rewards of the game show, but also the industrial objects of minimalism, wherein traces of labour are generally absent. While the object apparently referred to the industrial context, the presence of the physical traces of work was marginalized. The crafting of Miller's objects sustains a degree of tension seen in other post-minimalist artworks, and his more recent game show set employs faux-finished plywood that is available at home building centers. Beginning

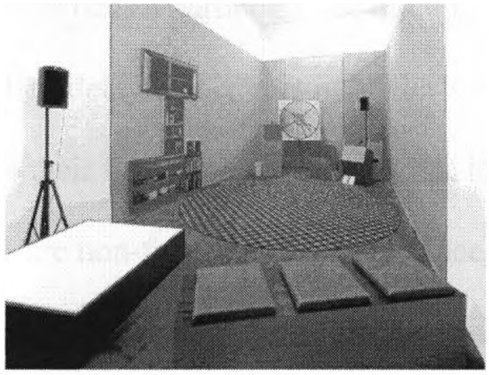

Figure 10. John Miller, *Pilot*, 2000.

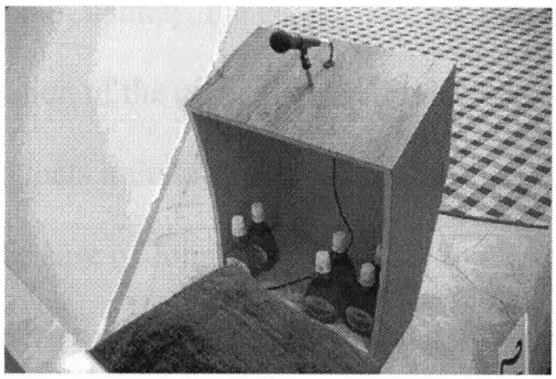

Figure 11. John Miller, detail of *Pilot*, 2000.

with his shit paintings, John Miller's questioning of economic value was "meant to avoid Pop's authoritarian slickness, its machine-made look" (Miller, "The Fig Leaf Was Brown", 76). This fact extends further to his quotations of minimalism, employing the low production values of many game show pilots where budgetary constraints do not permit factory-assisted set construction.

To consider Miller's quasi-minimalist replication of the game show set further, John Roberts' account of a labour theory of value will briefly be considered in the context of art. Roberts recounts that the "imposition of aesthetic labour onto heteronomous, productive labour. ...is a form of art-led idealism which leads to many kinds of aestheticized politics, on both the left and right" (Roberts, 4). Such an operation would merely aestheticize other spheres of work. According to Roberts, autonomy in

terms of labour arrives "only when productive and non-productive labourers refuse to labour – and, as a result, the value-form is dissolved, thereby opening up a self-reflective space for 'aesthetic thinking'"; and therefore "artistic labour will truly be able to enter productive relations and be able to transform the heteronomous conditions of labour and everyday praxis" (4). This suggests that the autonomization of artistic labour may be seen to occur through John Miller's game show-related installations, since it decontextualizes a particular site of cultural labour, namely, the game show set. Through the explicit delay that occurs in Miller's replication of the game show set's elements, he removes their functionality, since while his products imitate the purposes of the original set, they are non-functional. For instance, in the case of John Miller's *Pilot* (2000), there is barely space between the podia that make up his mock-game show sets and the gallery walls, suggesting that there is no space for a contestant to occupy. Not only are the props and mechanisms of Miller's stage not operational, but they are not presented for use. As Rabinowitz has observed about Miller's *The Lugubrious Game*, "details indicate that there is a game to be played, but no human is present to start the wheel spinning" (Rabinowitz, 13).

Endless Stand-Ins

It can be argued that game shows do actualize Debords's logic, that "[a]ll that once was directly lived has become mere representation", (Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 12) by flattening the real conditions of wage labour into a theatrical space. In many cases, it is highly significant that individuals on such programs identify their current occupation. This contributes to the amazement of the audience, given that their

real conditions of wage labouring are contrasted with the fantastic earning power supplied by the program. As Miller has noted, the "gambler echoes the disinterred figure of the assembly line worker." (Miller, "The Phantom Audience", 3) In many game shows, tasks based on either supposedly innate, knowledge-based abilities or chance play support the conditions of earning within this constructed context. As has been seen in the writing of John Fiske, these characteristics mirror the unequal benefits of capitalism in their conditions of dissimulation. That is, game shows imply that knowledge is perhaps granted by good fortune rather than material means. Additionally, the use of chance as an equalizing measure preserves an illusion of opportunity for contestants and viewers alike. In Miller's game show-related installations, a spectacular economy is upset by minimalism, since the audience is addressed in an open-ended fashion. For Miller, minimalism works to reconstitute an audience:

> ...because minimalism's mode of address unfolds over time, it begs the question as to who or what will be the ultimate recipient. Any kind of theater, minimal or not, discursively concerns a social body through residual classical expectations such as catharsis and identification with the antagonist. Minimalism brings the social body as a determinant absence into play: How is the audience, then, constituted demographically? Ideologically? How is it predisposed to even consider an artwork at the outset? (2)

It might be usefully argued here that the absent body of spectatorship could be linked to the possible 'bodies' pointed to in Miller's *Pillars of Salt* at Galerie Barbara Weiss in 1999.

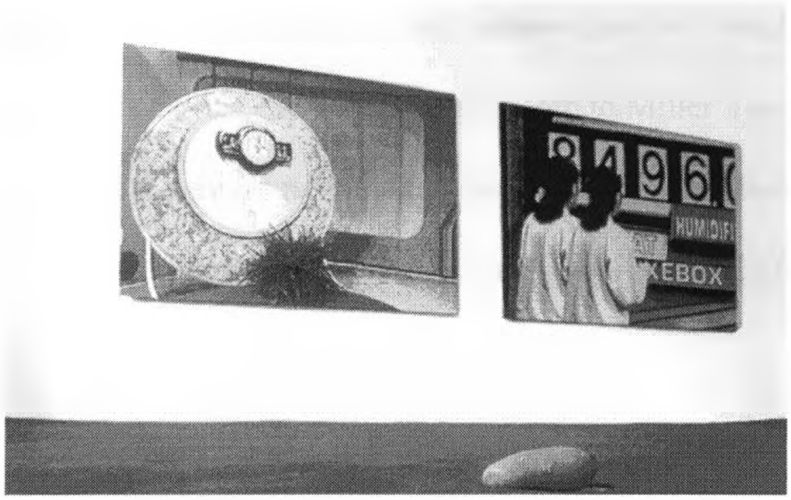

Figure 12. John Miller, installation view of *Pillars of Salt*, 1999.

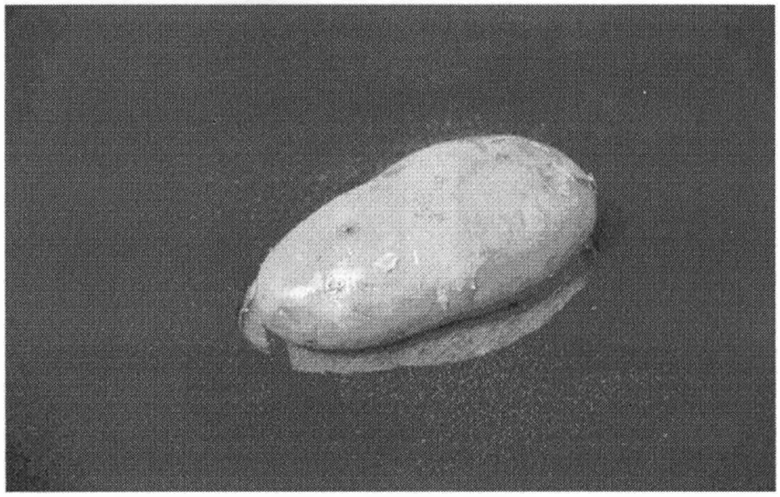

Figure 13. John Miller, detail of *Pillars of Salt*, 1999.

On the one hand, the potato that has been placed on the gallery floor stands in as a spectator, potentially answering the question as to "who or what will be the ultimate recipient" of minimalism as it "unfolds over time." Miller seems to propose that only an ideal, mindless spectator (a 'vegetable') could occupy this subject position without succumbing to boredom. Read in the context of television game shows, and also connoting the common attribution of 'couch potato' to television spectators, Miller's assertion points to the similarities between the ideal viewers of minimalist sculpture and the viewers of the television game show as abstractly constituted by Nielsen ratings. An ideal spectator for minimalist sculpture would structurally resemble Miller's potato,

observing the gallery endlessly, just as the 'couch potato' passively watches a television broadcast. The spectator's critical capacity in relationship to Miller's game show-related work hinges on the fact that they are neither the potato in the gallery nor the 'couch potato.' The audience may exercise a negative gesture by exiting the gallery, and consequently refute minimalism's claim to endless duration.

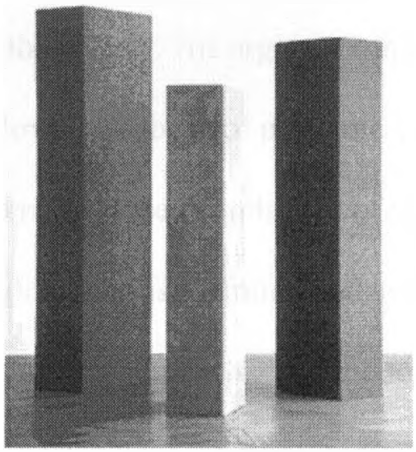

Figure 14. John Miller, *Demographic Group*, 1999.

While Miller does initiate an activated viewership through his employment of minimalism, he is aware of the pitfalls that might arise from minimalist theatricality, since "...replacing contemplation with interaction, like it or not, opens the door to behaviorism. Physical manipulation of or by the audience seemingly ratifies the esthetic wager." (2) In arguing his position, he suggests that while "interactivity and functionality" are potentially emancipatory, they also produce the risk that the spectator may be replaced by a "hamster" (2). Deleuze's theoretical move in the "Postscript on the Societies of Control" can be seen as corresponding with Miller's observations about

minimalist theatricality, which offers an expanded view of the society of control (beyond Debord's spectacle):

> The dissolution of the discrete exhibition space precipitated the steady internalization of theatricality. The audience learned to carry the stage in its head. In mass culture, this corresponds both to capital's ongoing abstraction and to the proliferation of tv, video and web technologies. The panopticon and the classical Debordian spectacle gave way to an all-pervasive optical infrastructure wherein the camera no longer *surveys* everyday life but instead *produces* it as a kind of game or ritual. (3)

This observation recalls Michael Fried's apprehension that minimalism worked to corrupt both the space and the time of the gallery. His argument in terms of space is well-worn, and may be paraphrased as follows: the focus of art in the context of an experience of theatricality shifts attention from the closed conditions of viewing encouraged by the discrete formal elements of high modernist painting and sculpture. Pamela Lee has critiqued the necessarily instantaneous temporality of modernist practice, isolated by Fried as minimalism's central shortcoming, as being somewhat senseless:

> His anxiety about this endlessness is so deeply felt—so inimical to what he regarded as modernism's project of radical self-criticism… [b]ut presentness is grace not just because the work of art is grasped as the instant or now. (Lee, 45)

In fact, it is minimalism's characteristic possession of duration and theatricality that allow it to participate in a critique of the temporality of media objects through a stubborn endlessness. The minimalist object is authorized to carry on forever in its dumbness. This allows it to theoretically resemble a component of the game show set, since its elements appear to persist in an unaltered state, between episodes and through syndicated re-runs. By contrast, as Miller suggests, the gallery context disturbs this serialized repetition through a differently constituted audience.

To further consider the nature of Miller's intervention in the context of minimalism, it is useful to consider a spatially-inflected—rather than resolutely formalist—reading of minimalism. Liam Gillick has provided this framework in relationship to the general examination of Donald Judd's oeuvre:

> The work functions best when it is allowed to hover between its connection to its given location and the rest of the relative experience we bring to the room. ... A notched sequence of differences that suggest a nuanced egalitarianism rather than a romantic fixation on the elemental form of anything; people, relationships, power or objects. (Gillick, 64)

Gillick proposes that minimalism establishes a reference to experience in the present. While Miller's installations apparently refer to the television studio, as discussed, they do not propose a relationship strictly based on a process of decontextualization or simulation. Rather, they engage with the viewer through a deadpan variety of minimalism that is similar to the work of Richard Artschwager. Like Artschwager's *Counter II* (1964) and *Step 'n' See I* (1966), Miller's podia propose a bodily interaction

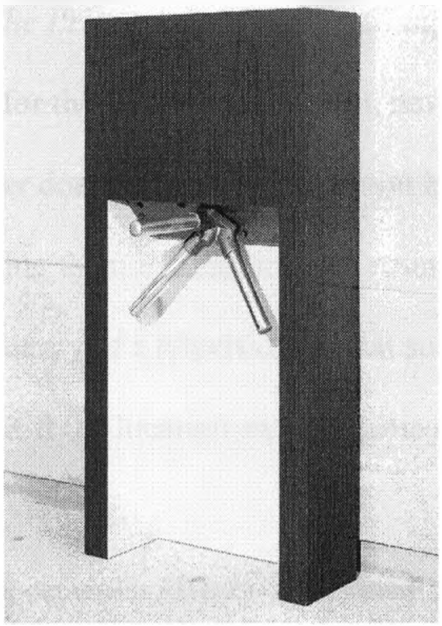

Figure 15. Richard Artschwager, *Counter II*, 1964.

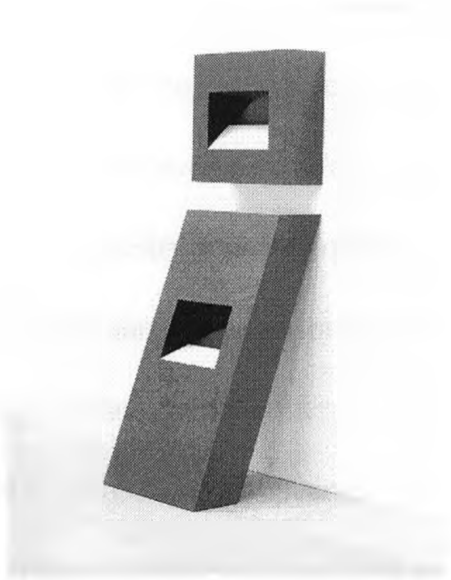

Figure 16. Richard Artschwager, *Step 'n' See I* , 1966

that is comically minimal and ineffective. Miller's game show podia suggest a position of play that is ultimately unrewarding—no contest takes place within the work. Miller's objects, while resembling Artschwager's in terms of surface and irregular form, do not function toward the same ends. According to Miller, Artschwager applies "minimalist stylings to prosaic household furniture" resting on "the tendency for the familiar to be already estranged." (Miller, *The Price Club*, 21). According to Artschwager, "I like to think of my objects as things for the home that are, well, not at home," (Heiser, 53). By contrast to Artschwager, Miller does not estrange common household objects such as chairs and tables by constructing them in a fashion that resembles minimalist objects. Instead, Miller takes the familiarity of a television format such as *The Price Is Right* and uses minimalist sculpture to shift the location and the game show's reception from the conventional setting of home viewing.

To summarize the unspectacular effects of minimalism in Miller's work, it is worth considering the artist's response to Bruce Nauman's *Learned Helplessness in Rats*

(Rock and Roll Drummer) (1988), which Miller sees as contrasting with the experience of both minimalist installation and the spectacle, and potentially leading to new possibilities for thought. Situationist theories of resistance were centered on Johan Huizinga's notion of play, which framed it as "a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly" (Huizinga, 13). While a theory of play visibly coheres with Debord's ideas of the derive, the distracted, theatrical space of minimalism appears to defuse play's potential for active engagement. The minimalist space of contemplation does not require intense absorption, in fact it flirts with its opposite: sheer boredom. Miller presents the critical consciousness raised by Nauman's minimalist-influenced experiments on viewers to be more about:

> ...the way social structures transform people than the other way around. ... insight into these may be key to understanding any of the historical forms of consciousness engendered by mass culture, past, present, or future. (Miller, "Dada by the Numbers", 128)

In Nauman's *Learned Helplessness...*, videos of rock and roll drumming, a rat in a maze, and closed-circuit footage from the Plexiglas maze that is present in the gallery are interspersed with one another on three channels. While this combination of light and sound sources might be considered to provide an overstimulating environment for the spectator, Miller suggests that Nauman's work is relatively unspectacular, since when "compared to a trip to the amusement park, a night out in a techno club, or even a routine morning's subway commute, the level of excitation is mild" (125). For Miller, conflicting stimuli do not hinder the opportunity for critical consciousness developed by Nauman's work. Rather, a work such as *Learned Helplessness...* activates spectatorship through a "Minimalist rhetorical framework" (124) and functions to convert "the detached

contemplation of visual imagery into an immediate, tactile encounter" (124). Miller's game show-related installations clearly borrow such a strategy, since he converts visual imagery derived from game shows into an immediate encounter within his constructed environments. By doing so, John Miller's installations draw attention to the staging of game shows, and initiate a process of contemplation rooted in the immediate, unspectacular experience of the minimalist objects that he displays.

CHAPTER THREE

The "internalization of theatricality" (Miller, "The Phantom Audience", 3) observed by John Miller theoretically leads to a "dissolution of the discrete exhibition space" (3). In these terms, the audience for art becomes accustomed to perceiving the "stage" (3) for art outside of the special circumstances of the gallery. Following the minimalist object's theatrical relationship to the exhibition space, the conditions of spectatorship for art become further dispersed, and Miller views this process as resembling the increased ubiquity of media technologies (3), insofar as these tools continue to expand the terrain of cultural perception. Jeff Wall has identified a similar type of shift in spectatorship, though it may be argued that this shift occurs on a more restricted scale than Miller's "all-pervasive optical infrastructure" (3):

> ...the aesthetic categories created or revolutionized by the avant-garde have become objectivities for us, inescapable and necessary structures, transcendental conditions for the experience of works of art. (Wall, 125)

In Wall's model, then, a category such as the monochrome has become all-pervasive for the perception of artworks consisting of a flat, uniform surface of colour or tone. Wall more specifically suggests that, by adding something to a monochrome, the histories of painting may be taken up once more, as "...the act of resuming the development of the traditional generic structure of modern painting. What is specifically resumed in any individual case depends on what is added to the monochrome" (Wall, 126). This allows Wall to analyze On Kawara's work as a monochrome, but a form of monochrome that operates in a particular fashion that he proceeds to examine. Since one of Kawara's *Today* paintings registers "the fact of its occurrence in measured time", it resumes the

practice of history because "the subject of a history painting is distinguished from the subject of any other genre by the necessity of its bearing a date." (Wall, 127). Numerous critics have read Ron Terada's work through Wall's analysis of On Kawara. That is, Terada's paintings are considered to add to the monochrome in a fashion that is similar to Kawara's work. Terada's intervention into the monochrome can also be understood with reference to Christopher Brayshaw's reading of his work:

> By physically superimposing social history on the surface of his monochromes, Terada reintroduces a temporal, or narrative, dimension into the atemporal genre of monochrome painting. (Brayshaw, 36)

A spectator theoretically disturbs the endlessness of monochromatic painting by reading along with the narratives provided by Terada's text-based interventions. Much as Michael Fried decried the external references imposed upon art by the theatricality of minimalist sculpture, Terada's monochromes displace their 'instantaneous' value as ostensibly modernist paintings by referencing the social field. Terada's work achieves this displacement through the citation of sources from a variety of print and television media. In the case of his *Jeopardy Paintings*, textual clues taken from the television game show *Jeopardy!* have been added to monochromatic paintings. If the relationship between the viewer and history painting was that of a socially-embedded subject and a recognizable contemporary narrative, the relationship between the viewer and Terada's monochromes exists between the spectator and a set of references to the language of mass media culture. The initial position of the viewer relative to a monochrome is unyoked from a supposedly firm set of social meanings. Consciousness of the space that painting exists within—a theatrical direction, in Fried's terms—provides a vacuum that is to be

occupied by the viewer in the present, potentially using his or her knowledge of media culture to decode the work. Granted these terms of engagement, Terada provides a series of clues or leads for the viewer wishing to complete the work in the present.

High and Mass Culture

To complicate an understanding of Terada's work, it is worth examining where critical readings of his work specifically intersect and diverge. These commonalities and differences will help to establish the possible implications of his additions to the monochrome. More specifically, by considering responses to the breadth of his interventions, it will be possible to come to terms with his game show-based paintings.

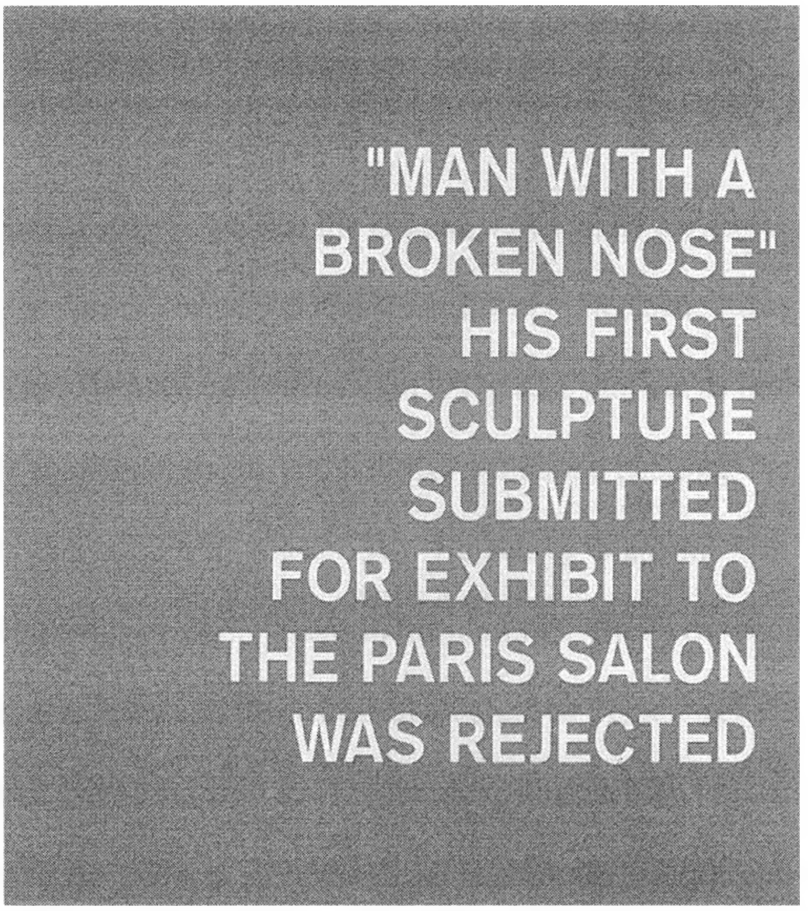

Figure 17. Ron Terada, *Untitled (Jeopardy Painting)*, 1997.

Jeff Derksen, in one of the more deft responses to Terada's *Jeopardy Paintings*, states that other critics generally recuperate Terada's work as painting through art historical readings. These recuperations resemble Wall's reading of Kawara, in that a historical genre of painting is evoked to account for the meaning generated by an addition to the monochrome. In support of Derksen's claims, quotations from other writers have been appended to the section of his text, below:

> The Jeopardy Paintings, by relying on the content of the text, are reconfigured into landscape, history and genre paintings [cf. Christopher Brayshaw's comment that "their texts gain conceptual intelligibility through their affinities with older pictorial genres like history painting, portraiture and still life."(Brayshaw, 36)]. The next step in this critical movement figures Terada's project as a negotiation of the possibilities of monochromes, and even of painting itself in current art practices. [cf. Barbara Fischer's observation that "...playing on the tradition of history painting – staged within the modernist monochrome as the site of a convergence of identity, seriality and dissemination" (Fischer)]" (Derksen, 20)

I agree with Derksen's suggestion that the cultural valences of the *Jeopardy Paintings* engage with "the economic, the social and the political" (Derksen, 20) as much as the art historical. However, Derksen takes exception to the art historical as limiting the importance of the economic, social, and political within the paintings "at the expense of their engagement with culture" (Derksen, 20). Rather, by engaging with the monochrome, the work necessarily exists in the *tension* between the economic, social, and political factors at stake and the historical medium of Terada's choice, along with the physical limitations that come with this medium. I disagree with his claim that "Terada's work is not flogging the dialectic of high art and commodity culture, a dialectic long run over by globalism's folding of the economic into the cultural (and vice versa)" (20).

Derksen is correct in asserting that "Terada deals with the modes of consumption of social meaning in pop and mass culture" (20). However, his assertion that Terada deals with pop culture's "modes of production and modes of consumption of social meaning" (Derksen, 20) and I would add, the implication that he employs its modes of dissemination exclusively, is unfounded. The specific, tactile qualities of his paintings are invested in a mode of production that resembles popular culture, but is still work on canvas. In terms of the work's mode of consumption, it could not be experienced without the privileged space of art galleries, which are arguably only minimally interfaced with popular consumption at large. Indeed, Terada's *Ad Paintings* specifically cite the fact that galleries are part of the system that provides the experience of painting to a public. As monochromes, the paintings might even suggest the radical austerity of galleries' relatively low-circulation advertising, in contrast to advertising that necessarily represents a commodity that is for sale through photographic means. The advertisements that Terada appropriates in this series are derived from the mass cultural form of the magazine advertisement, which has the capacity for widespread dissemination. However, the *Ad Paintings* necessarily operate as objects that are viewed within a gallery, and the fact that they resemble the print media does not grant them the physical mobility of mass cultural advertisements. The *Ad Painting* series explicitly recognizes the times and places where Terada's paintings are not, as in *Untitled (Ad Painting)* (1994) which places an exhibition of On Kawara's work in Stuart Regen Gallery at 619 N. Almont Drive in Los Angeles,

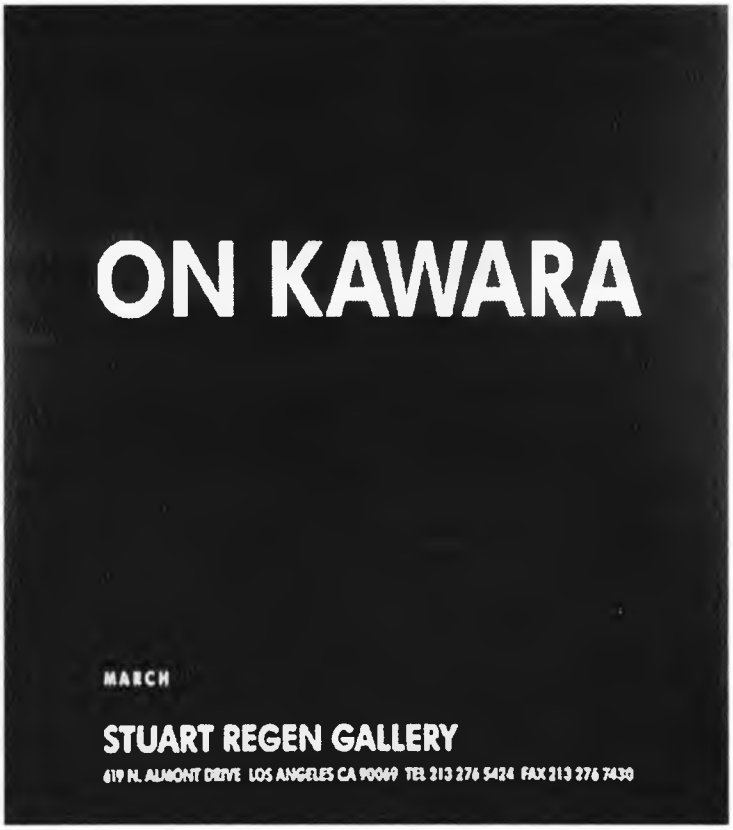

Figure 18. Ron Terada, *Untitled (Ad Painting)*, 1994.

California during March. By suggesting that a reading of Terada's paintings "…within an art historical field comes at the expense of their engagement with culture" (Derksen, 20) Derksen reinforces the very dialectic between "high art and commodity culture" (Derksen, 20) that he dismisses as "long run over by globalism…" (Derksen, 20). This occurs because his first statement confirms that a 'high' art historical reading separates an understanding of Terada's work from the culture at large. This separation that would have already collapsed if globalism could be considered to have successfully overrun the distinction between the spheres of art and mass culture. My point here is not to argue that globalism has not exploited the relationship between high art and mass culture. Rather, an interpretation of Terada's work in terms of art history should not be seen to inhibit its cultural significance, or an investigation of the work's specific meaning within a tradition of exhibiting art. Just as John Miller's brown paintings more garishly imply the

economic supports required by painting as cultural capital, so too do Terada's surfaces exist in a necessary dialectic with the conditions of painting. If not, his *Grey Paintings* would be better suited within the high school yearbooks that they originated from, and the *Personal Paintings* would similarly be best left alone in newspapers. The *Jeopardy Paintings* possess a resistant materiality that has associative links to sources other than—and fundamentally, experientially different than—the televisual ("flocked and sprayed surfaces, suggestive of AstroTurf, and perhaps the colour fields of late modernists such as Jules Olitski" (Brayshaw, 36)), and this tension is a precondition of the questions that they pose to culture at large.

Negative *Jeopardy!*

Following an uncited observation borrowed from Scott Watson, Barbara Fischer suggests that "the [*Jeopardy!*-based] paintings draw attention to the peculiar equivalence between cultural and historical knowledge, the equivalence between so-called trivia (i.e. the name of a TV star), and the faces of a war – that make up the collective memory of what is 'history' in the age of mass culture." (Fischer) This is a reductive reading of what the paintings actually achieve, since it suggests that cultural and historical knowledges necessarily become equivalent in the format of the monochrome "as the site of a convergence of identity, seriality and dissemination" (Fischer). While the works explicitly critique painting's potential for historical referents, they do not seem to suggest likeness between the separate historical narratives to which they refer. Rather, Terada's paintings suggest that the anecdotal model of history appropriated from the program *Jeopardy!* might be modified by a practice of painting. Rather than granting equivalence

to the variety of factual knowledges presented on *Jeopardy!*, Terada's paintings remove *Jeopardy!*'s clues from the program's system of scoring, and thus disconnect knowledge from monetary values. The monochromatic format serves to engage with a tension perceived by Jeff Wall in Andy Warhol's *Five Deaths Seventeen Times in Black and White* (1963). For Wall, Warhol's project does not place a monochrome panel adjacent

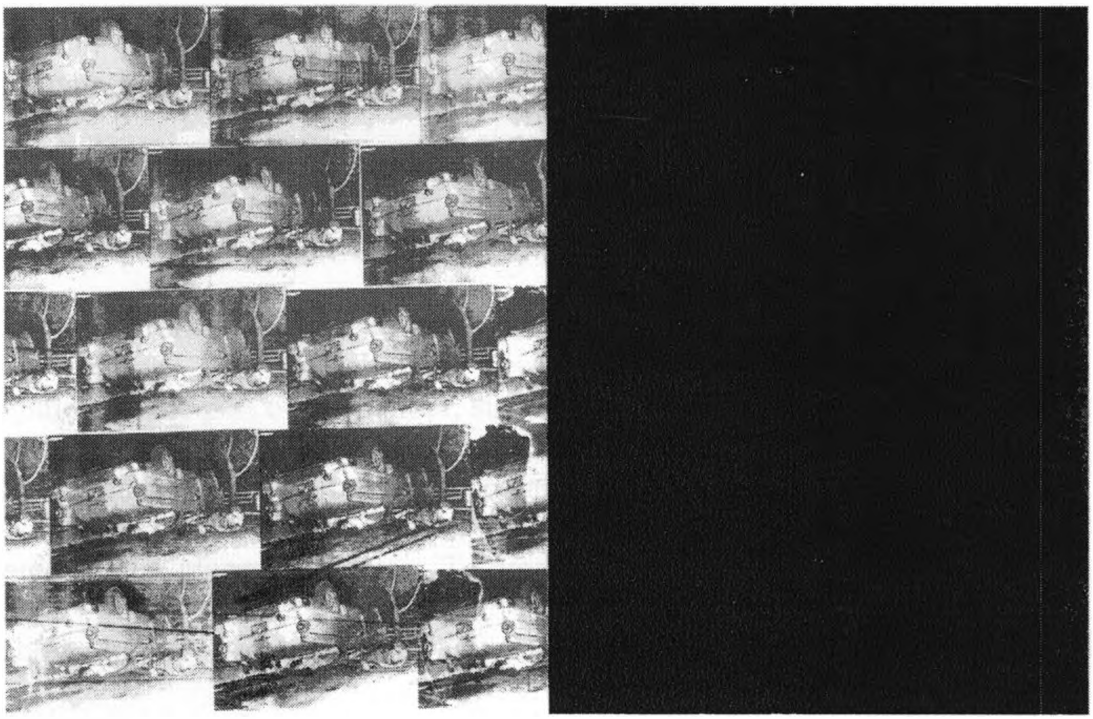

Figure 19. Andy Warhol, *Five Deaths Seventeen Times in Black and White*, 1963.

to reproduced photographs from the news media in order to present a specific evaluation of the information provided by the images. Rather, Walls states that "this surface is one in which a *specific* reflection does not take place" (Wall, 135). Terada's *Jeopardy Paintings* series similarly uses the monochrome to initiate a non-specific reflection for the spectator. Though the spectator's reflections on the paintings may not be specific, this does not simply mean that the areas of knowledge that they refer to are equivalent.

For Wall, the absence of events is a condition of the blank surface of the monochrome: "In a monochrome, by definition, no event can make an appearance. The appearance of events in art is what is negated by the monochrome, and this negation is its aim." (Wall, 136). Similarly, analyzing the function of the *Jeopardy Paintings*, Derksen suggests that they "both expand and reduce knowledge: it's always outside the painting." (Derksen, 20) Interestingly, this evacuation of knowledge from the coloured surface of Terada's paintings appears, through the addition of textual *Jeopardy!* clue, to correspond to the potential for the assertion of knowledge on the part of either the spectator, the painter, or an unidentified third party. The appropriation of *Jeopardy!*'s distinctive 'question in the form of an answer' does not grammatically imply an authoritative interrogation on the part of the painter, since the form of *Jeopardy!*'s clues resembles an extended anecdote that often provides a means for deducing its solution based on associated names, places, and dates. To present an analogy in Fiske's analysis of the game show, the very construction of quiz shows implies a structure that is not strictly authoritative:

> the resolution is as much a mystery to the characters as to the viewer, so the text has less authority to impose itself. In the "unwritten" narrative occurring "now" suspense appears to be real, not manufactured and authorially controlled… (Fiske, 272-273)

If these works are inherently empty, effectively unwritten, it may also be asked: where

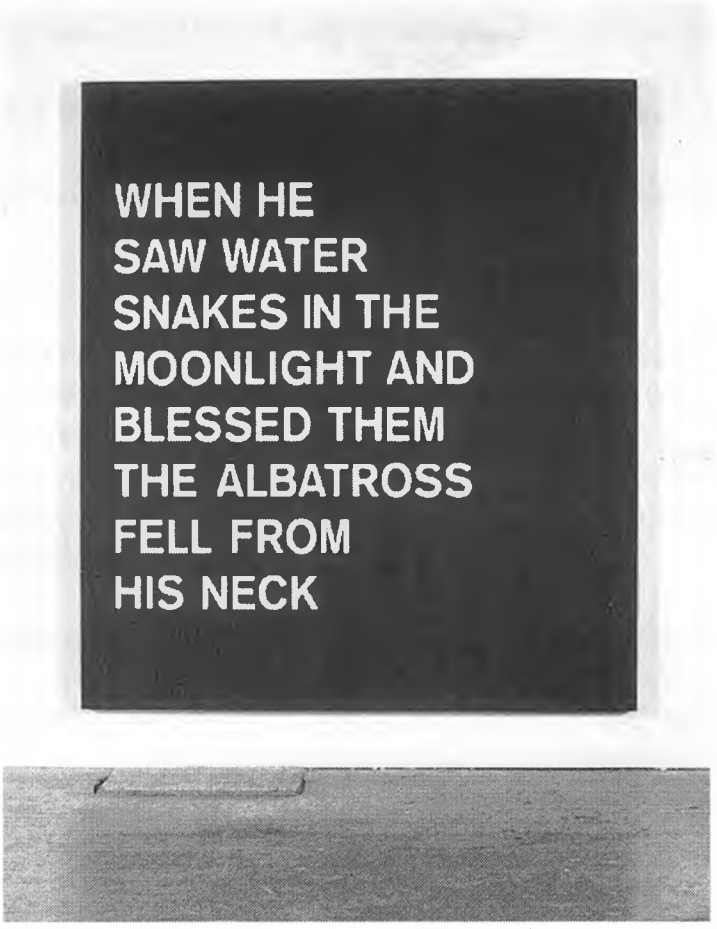

Figure 20. Ron Terada, installation view of *Untitled (Jeopardy Painting)*, 1999.

else can knowledge arise in connection to an installation of the *Jeopardy Paintings*? I would contest, for this reason, Michael Darling's assertion that the *Jeopardy Paintings* "require the viewer to supply a question-as-answer to the trivial clues stenciled on color fields as if in a one-on-one with Alex Trebek." (Darling, 40) Firstly, the paintings require nothing of the viewer. In fact, the awkward phrasing revealed by the formula used to write *Jeopardy!* questions reveals a poetic—and entertaining—aspect to the work beyond the necessity of a response to its textual puzzle. Additionally, the work's absenting of Alex Trebek, the television program's North American host, provides questions about the work's perceived source of enunciation that differ from its broadcasted source.

Similarly, the "amazing feats of recall, hair-trigger reflexes, and sophisticated gamesmanship needed for success in playing *Jeopardy*!" (Holbrook, 39) are all explicitly absent from the process of viewing Ron Terada's paintings. Holbrook, drawing on Fiske, suggests that:

> "The television text is therefore…polysemic…a text that can be read differently by the discursive practices of different readers (66)…. Television's…popularity among its diversity of audiences depends upon its ability to be easily and differently incorporated into a variety of subcultures: popularity, audience activity, and polysemy are mutually entailed and interpendent concepts" (107)." (Holbrook, 22)

Jeopardy! could be considered to be one of the more potentially intimidating American television game shows because of its representation of contestants as potentially more knowledgeable, and hence successful, than its audience. Terada's paintings increase "the discursive practices of different readers" (Holbrook, 22) of the television text by removing the rules, procedures, and response times that regulate the activities of *Jeopardy!*'s 'readership.' Read in Fiske's terms, *Jeopardy!* poses an "equality of opportunity but not of ability" (Fiske, 265) which is followed by "gradually revealed inequality [which] produces the winner who is then accorded a ritual of equality with the bearer of social power – the question-master" (Fiske, 265). By contrast, an installation of the *Jeopardy Paintings* reflects on the use of this knowledge in cultural terms—interrogating its valorization within the system of game shows, and absenting the process of ritual ascendancy.

It is evident that Terada's *Jeopardy Paintings* negate a number of the relationships posed by the structure of the television game show set that they are derived from, potentially shifting the rules of the game for a spectator (if they were even aware of

them in the first place). Beyond this conclusion, however, the question of what Terada's monochromes achieve in terms of art discourse stands unanswered. In a subtle and sustained discussion of the artist's *Grey Paintings*, Christina Ritchie has situated the works in terms of homeopathic methods, so that "life-threatening painting-about-painting syndrome" (Ritchie) is cured by "a rarefied dose of external reference" (Ritchie) through the addition of text. Her writing places the work in a postmodern narrative where the reflexivity of the modernist art object—as dead, or threatening with death—must be overcome through procedures derived from a space external to art. In the case of the

Figure 21. Ron Terada, *Untitled (Grey Painting)*, 1996.

Grey Paintings, this overcoming occurs through reference to "a group of individuals in the process of becoming" (Ritchie) represented by "quotations from the artist's high school yearbook" (Ritchie). Since Terada works to "assimilate the monochrome's

historical determinants and to suspend them" (Ritchie)—two obvious metaphors of containment—he is free to cure painting with the "trajectory of intent" (Ritchie) implied by the students' quotations. While the narrative of the dead tradition of painting's resurrection is somewhat overwrought, Ritchie makes a highly useful contribution to the discussion around Terada's work by posing the *Grey Paintings* as 'thresholds,' or works that have "pushed beyond the debased social and aesthetic norms to a point where meaning is not fixed or ideal but is, instead, in a constant process of negotiation with these norms" (Ritchie). This observation supports the destabilizing tendencies that are internal to monochromes that have undergone the process of 'addition.' Rather than considering Terada's process as strictly reestablishing a generic mode of historical painting—in the case of the *Grey Paintings*, Ritchie suggests portraiture—a more complicated investigation of meaning is undergone. To understand the importance of the aesthetic radicality of Terada's project as being sincerely pursued rather than being cited in purely parodic terms, the social reference made by the work cannot be restricted to the simple attribution of any readymade external reference. Indeed, Lucy Hogg neatly sums up this position vis-à-vis derivations from the history of painting in her discussion of Ron Terada's *Personal Paintings* which venture to convey the personal in "the form of acronyms, clichés, meta- clichés, and other reductions of self-description and sexual preference" (Hogg):

> The cliché is turned in on itself; and the viewer, when looking for some kind of confirmation, must find themselves in the interstices. …the art object's permeable and mutable nature lies in the inevitable impact of context and discussion. (Hogg)

Terada's citations, then, are not just readymade signifiers of personal ads, nor are his monochromes readymade signifiers of paintings. For Hogg, the works' "painstakingly

Figure 22. Ron Terada, *Untitled (Personal Painting)*, 1994.

produced surfaces" (Hogg) betray the latter. These artworks have a capacity to index the social world around them, particularly through personal references in the case of the *Grey Paintings* and *Personal Paintings*. These external references, however, are heightened by the reflective possibilities of the monochrome, in addition to a definition of this mode of painting as necessarily hermetic.

Art and Publicity

An element of the conflict that is present in Terada's work stems from the particular forms of reference that his paintings make to the public sphere around art, and the relationship that he, as an artist, might be trying to negotiate with these apparently

separate areas. In the context of Terada's broader practice, Gregory Elgstrand has suggested that "perhaps the role of the artist is that of an entrepreneur who endeavours to eke out a market position that maximizes an accumulation of intellectual *and* financial capital" (Elgstrand, 84). This attempt at maximizing intellectual and financial capital might be viewed in the appropriation strategy used in Terada's *Ad Paintings*, for instance. Such a standpoint would suggest that by painting an artist's name and gallery name onto a monochrome, Terada might be capable of acquiring notoriety by knowledge and association of these lauded art practitioners. This would be an oversimplified understanding of what is being added to the monochrome in the *Ad Paintings*. However, a critical model that assumes Terada is displaying cultural knowledge of the art business, and hence acquiring some form of intellectual capital through his perspective on this business, is not an unfair assumption. In fact, this view of the *Ad Paintings* provides a useful way of starting to understand what kind of knowledge might be on display in the rhetorical format of the *Jeopardy Paintings*. The *Jeopardy Paintings* feature texts that have been appropriated in a less direct manner than the *Ad Paintings*, and so suggest a degree of distance from their sources. In conceptual terms, the premise of reproducing *Jeopardy!* clues as paintings might be seen as a specifically kitschy endeavour, potentially indulging in a process of replicating the potent sign value of *Jeopardy!* as art. Unlike Terada's previous monochromatic works, however, the *Jeopardy Paintings* do not directly reproduce the image of the text that they are quoting. That is, the paintings do not replicate the blue monochromatic background that frames clues given on the program *Jeopardy!*, nor do they follow the television screen's aspect ratio, or the clues' typesetting and typeface. In this respect, the *Jeopardy Paintings* differ from the more

direct, Warholian copies of the *Ad Paintings*, which feature explicit appropriations from the print media. Based on their direct, even confrontational, use of language and few additional cues for reaching their meaning, the *Ad Paintings* could appear to flaunt cultural knowledge of the possibly unfamiliar artist names that they present. The *Jeopardy Paintings*, however, are more open-ended in terms of their accessibility, since their form initiates a game with its audience. If Terada is displaying any particular cultural knowledge through the *Jeopardy Paintings*, it is dispensed from the position of the television game show enthusiast, and one who does not necessarily possess any answers.

By referring to a mass cultural text, the *Jeopardy Paintings* tend to expose the cultural positions of their critics in terms of the culture value of game shows, and the role of an artist associated with citing these programs as sources. It may appear to be the case that by appropriating phrases from *Jeopardy!*, Terada invokes a popular form for the purposes of a purely Pop gesture. That is, the use of a popular form might be considered as an attempt to be popular with an audience through the establishment of common points of reference. By considering Terada's references to a game show to be mere 'nods', Ken Lum appears to dismiss the importance of popular knowledges (the scientific, historical, and pop cultural) as "trivial":

> Terada's conversion of the format of a hugely popular television show into an inquiry of the philosophical framework of art is a recurrent theme in this exhibition. …the works in this exhibition for the most part refuse to nod to a social arena beyond that of the television room. (Lum, 46)

The debate around Terada's work, as framed by Ken Lum's disagreement with his strategies as effectively cynical, might also be seen to follow a similar logic as that isolated by Thomas Crow with reference to critical discourses on Warhol. For Crow:

> The debate over Warhol centers around the three rival verdicts on his art: (1) it fosters critical or subversive apprehension of mass culture and the power of the image as commodity; (2) it succumbs in an innocent but telling way to that numbing power; (3) it cynically and meretriciously exploits an endemic confusion between art and marketing. (Crow, 49)

As is evident, Ron Terada's *Ad Paintings* clearly exploit "an endemic confusion between art and marketing" (49). However, such a move cannot be seen as devoid of meaning through a reading of the work as 'cynical'. This would propose a relatively undeveloped division between art and advertising, and also suggest that the paintings cannot effectively be about advertising without being at once also cynical. The *Jeopardy Painting*s, though, do seem to foster a "critical … apprehension of mass culture", in some senses, since, as suggested, their style of appropriation does not directly borrow images taken directly from the television program. In this sense, since Terada does not visually index the game show, his work does not operate as direct publicity for *Jeopardy!* (as, say, Warhol's could be seen to have done with Campbell's Soup, among other products). As suggested earlier, the non-specific responses elicited by the monochrome are in tension with the texts that are added to its surface. The particular experience of his *Jeopardy Paintings* should not be viewed as only advertising and pointing back to the social space of the television room, as Lum would propose, but as engaging with viewers present in the gallery.

Terada appears to create his own game with the *Jeopardy Paintings*, one that varies so drastically from its source that it would be difficult to construe it as wholly affirming or reinforcing a desire for the televised experience of watching *Jeopardy!*. John Fiske has considered the forms of spectatorship associated with television quiz shows such as *Jeopardy!* at length:

> ...quiz shows produce particularly active, participatory viewers. Their mini-narratives are structured around the hermeneutic code which poses and then resolves enigmas. But unlike typical narratives, quiz shows are not presented as enacted fiction, but as live events. ... Their "liveness" or "nowness" is crucial to their appeal for it positions the viewer as the equal of the characters in the narrative. (Fiske, 272)

This activated spectatorship pointed to by Fiske is similar to that pointed to in John Miller's "The Phantom Audience", insofar as it transplants the participatory logic of game shows to a theatrical engagement with the gallery space. The partitioning of time, as well as the fulfillment or resolution of the hermeneutic code vary from their *Jeopardy!* model in the *Jeopardy Paintings*. The rapid succession of rounds in *Jeopardy!* (for instance, the Jeopardy!, Double Jeopardy!, and Final Jeopardy! rounds) is replaced by the structural endlessness of monochromatic painting. The hermeneutic code is not fulfilled. In fact, it is intentionally scrambled: a painting with the implicit response of 'Who is Edvard Munch?' is painted sunflower yellow (apparently connoting Van Gogh); a painting that is almost entirely off-white presents a question that would correctly be solved by the response, 'What is red?' These works resemble the parodic red herrings of a John Baldessari painting, or the dry words of Ed Ruscha rather than the well-resolved, rationalist gestures of classical conceptualism. John Fiske has suggested that the active spectatorship that tends toward toward the meaningful resolution of the hermeneutic code

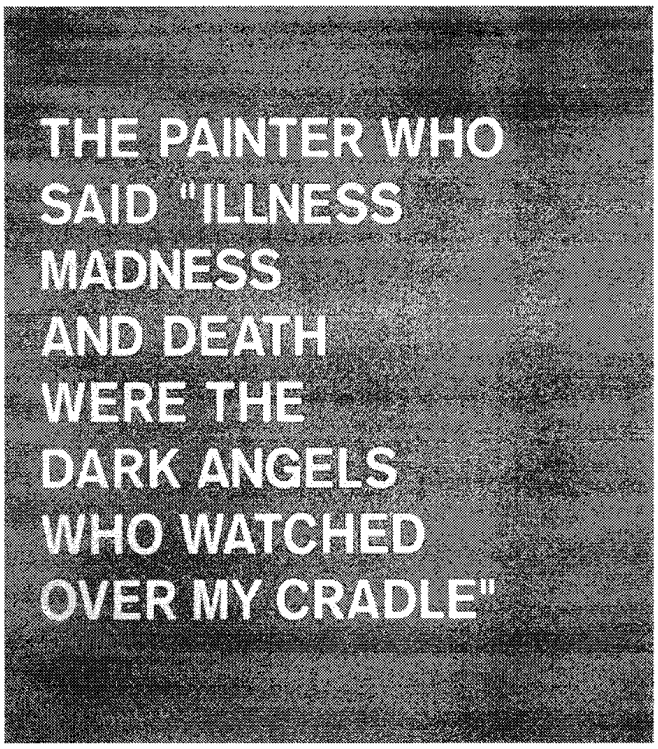

Figure 23. Ron Terada, *Untitled (Jeopardy Painting)*, 1997.

Figure 24. Ron Terada, installation view of *Untitled (Jeopardy Painting)*, 1999.

in game shows is also the type of spectatorship desired by the systems of marketing:

> After all, advertisers too want an active audience because that is the audience which will most effectively incorporate the image of their product into its imagination. Williamson (1978), for example, has shown that many advertisements contain puns or puzzles for the reader to solve and in so doing to engage actively with the creation of meaning for the product. (Fiske, 273)

Interestingly, when Terada's work intersects with marketing, it only nominally presents access to what is being advertised. It is effectively more surface-oriented than advertising itself, in that it displaces a gallery advertisement, personal ad, or the ephemera of a television quiz show from their processes of publicity and exchange. Terada's surfaces point elsewhere: the texts that have been added to his paintings index exhibitions, people, and media sources that are absent. The fixed presence of Terada's paintings does not fulfill the promise of their hermeneutic codes, since their references to such absent places, individuals, and programs are at an additional level of removal than their sources.

Knowledge in the Present

Much of the discourse surrounding contemporary quiz shows is based on how such programs present verifiable knowledge. Fiske describes this form of knowledge as factual, esoteric knowledge. The route to prize winning on quiz shows is predicated on demonstrable evidence of true facts about the contents of the world, which may be represented through responses to trivia, or questions revolving around more or less general knowledge. This would appear to conflict with the logic of the spectacle as described by Debord. The truth in this instance is not apparently an instance of the false.

That is, the data corresponding to the questions appearing on quiz shows is concretely verifiable or falsifiable. Derksen attempts to popularize the *Jeopardy! Paintings* by bracketing the significance of their references to art historical knowledge. Through this operation, he suggests the mass cultural currency that the paintings possess, since they play with areas of knowledge that are popularly accessible to a spectator. A reading of game shows that insists that they are always already populist texts, however, can fall into the very ideological trap posed by quiz shows, and connected by Fiske to "the education system in western societies":

> ...in this, all students (supposedly) start equal: those with natural ability pass successively more discriminating tests (examinations) and emerge as the highly qualified few who are fitted ... with high degrees of social power and influence. Such an ideology and its ritual/game performances grounds social or class differences in individual natural differences and thus naturalizes the class system. (Fiske, 266)

Indeed, the trials or ordeals that may occur in the attainment of knowledge and fame are very consciously allegorized by Terada's texts. For instance, paintings with the presumed responses of 'Who is Wayne Gretzky?', 'Who is General Montgomery?' or 'Who is The Ancient Mariner?', all present tales of success and failure. Following Bourdieu, Fiske states that it is necessary to recognize that quiz shows make evident the stratifications in taste and discrimination that allow "culture, and the knowledge that is integral to it" to replace "economics as a means of differentiating classes. ...money loses its ability to mask class difference and culture moves in to fill the gap." (Fiske, 266) By instating "knowledge that is most closely connected with the notion of power and cultural capital" – "the "factual," "academic" type ... whose "facticity" masks its origin in, and maintenance of, a system of social power" (Fiske, 267), *Jeopardy!* necessarily

systematizes the cultural hierarchies of culture, and does not achieve a total leveling of available knowledges. The same can be said, contrary to the critical observations cited, for Terada's paintings. They take a step in the direction of popular accessibility, but by engaging with a quiz show such as *Jeopardy!* rather than game shows that employ common, everyday knowledge (such as *The Price is Right*), they stop short of equating different areas of specialization and subject matter.

Suggesting a leveling process, especially in terms of historical knowledge, can be dangerous according to Debord's account of history's dissolution in spectacular society. If, traditionally, "[h]istory's domain was the memorable, the totality of events whose consequences would be lastingly apparent. And thus, inseparably, history has knowledge that should endure and aid in understanding… In this way history was the measure of genuine novelty", then:

> It is in the interests of those who sell novelty at any price to eradicate the means of measuring it. When social significance is attributed only to what is immediate, and to what will be immediate immediately afterwards, always replacing another, identical, immediacy, it can be seen that the uses of the media guarantee a kind of eternity of noisy insignificance. (Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*, 15)

There is no doubt that Debord here wishes for a specific mode of historical ideology to prevail, and this is where Terada's critical look at the historical relevance of both the game show and history painting become significant. His paintings should not be read as a traditionally historical procedure. The *Jeopardy Paintings*' system of exchange and valuation is not 'dead painting' in view of its historical irrelevance, but rather painting that follows a democratization of knowledge that takes cues from—but does not replicate—the general knowledge provided by quiz shows. John Frow glosses Debord's

work, stating that it points to "the dependence of [historical] accounts upon an operation of division which opposes representation as such to the immediacy and unity of life, and which sets the latter pole within a lost past." (Frow, 7) A melancholic, postmodern view of history might frame it as a dustbin of 'noisy insignificance'. However, both *Jeopardy!* and Terada's work do a great deal to engage the categories of history as popularly accessible, and potentially contest them by fostering responses in the present.

CONCLUSION

This document proposed that artistic practice might be a more potent critical means for investigating the game show than the resistant readings posed within the field of cultural studies. More specifically, it suggested that the modernist strategies of minimalism and the monochrome are used by the artists John Miller and Ron Terada to critique the game show. Miller and Terada strategically replicate some of the material structures of historical and contemporary game shows: their staging, props, iconography, and phrasing. These elements are reconfigured to play with the values signified by the knowledges, objects, and bodies that the game show apparatus serves to connect. If game shows provide a template for visualizing and performing consumption, minimalism and the monochrome can point to the blank spaces in this template: the places occupied by performers and spectators in resistance to the television program's code.

Su Holmes has observed that within the game show genre, "liveness functions as a code of authenticity, assuring us that events in the programme are not planned or controlled" (Holmes, 62). Holmes suggests that the ideological appearance of game shows' occurrence in 'real time' is reinforced through devices such as "a huge ticking clock" (62), and "on-screen graphics or sound effects which track the movement of time..." (63). Miller and Terada deny such a tendency to control or plan spectatorship through a strict partitioning of time, since the media that they use do not prescribe specific durations for viewing the game show. In Miller's installations, the spectator may engage in a critical act by disengaging with the theatrical endlessness of the minimalist object, and hence disengage with the material of game shows. By quizzing the viewer outside of the prescribed sequence of the game show *Jeopardy!*, Terada's monochromatic

Jeopardy Paintings elicit responses to the program's clues without qualifying such responses as monetarily valuable knowledge. Terada hints at knowledges that are associated with cultural capital, yet unfixes them from an exchange for economic capital on the program. Terada expands the strict utopianism of modernist production through reference to a television genre that signifies the popular accessibility of knowledge. This critical operation questions the necessity of high cultural capital for the purposes of engaging with artistic production as a spectator. Additionally, the space of reading supplied by the contemporary art gallery grants a reflective space prohibited by the temporally relentless spectacle of the game show. In this setting, Miller and Terada's work allows for alternative perspectives on the game show's role in a capitalist economy.

Morris Holbrook's narrow reading of game shows places them as hegemonic texts, which are "clear, unambiguous, closed, univocal, and monosemic in their capitalist-serving ideological role as valorizations of money..." (Holbrook, 41). If, as Fiske states, the value of factual, academic knowledge is predicated on its potential for verifiability, then the possible 'reading positions' established by Miller and Terada establish intentional structural and epistemological displacements. Both Miller and Terada construct enigmas that resist the cultural dominance and ideological monosemy that Holbrook proposes. That is, the networks of meaning that are presented in their work are not closed. John Miller uses abjection to trouble the commodity-oriented game show as a staging of a more controlled capitalist ethic. Considering Holmes' observation that contemporary game shows portray "the fact that the 'unsociable aspects of competition' can no longer be disguised" (Holmes, 68), the 'mud pit' of Miller's *The Lugubrious Game* presents an allegory of competition that overtly recalls money's fetishistic

character. Ron Terada leaves the *Jeopardy Paintings*' answers-as-questions unanswered, preventing their closure and creating tension between the polysemic qualities of colour and surface in relationship to the more narrow propositions of language. By opening up multiple ways of reading the game show, Miller and Terada contest the regulation of meaning by the 'rules' of the game shows to which they make reference. While references to the game show work to exaggerate the content of capitalism in the context of art, art may also be used to analyze and re-read the game show. It is within this open context that my work hazards an inquiry.

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APPENDIX

Copyright Release

Copyright Act, Section 29: Fair Dealings

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R.S., 1985, c. C-42, s.29; R.S., 1985, c.10 (4th Supp.), s. 7; 1994, c. 47, s. 61; 1997, c. 24, s. 18.

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1997, c. 24, s. 18.

The full act can be found online at:
http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/ShowFullDoc/cs/C-42///en