The Greenberg Supremacy: An assessment of Clement Greenberg’s relevance and influence in the writing of Lucy Lippard, Rosalind Krauss, and David Joselit.

A dissertation presented by

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To the School of Letters, Art and Media in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Art Curatorship, The University of Sydney

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October 2013
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Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Catriona Moore for her constant encouragement and support throughout the process of writing this dissertation. I am exceptionally grateful for her guidance and assistance, both of which have made researching and writing my dissertation an enjoyable experience.

I would also like to thank Naomi Leibowitz and Domenick Ammirati from the Publishing and Digital Media Department at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Their support towards my original concept as well as their encouragement to explore the topic further has been invaluable to the direction of my research.

Many thanks also to my family and friends, in particular to my parents, for their endless encouragement. Their patience and motivation has been of great support throughout the entirety of the project.
Abstract

The original thought process behind my research was to disregard Greenberg’s influence as a critic. Throughout my undergraduate studies and experience in the industry I found Greenberg to be repeatedly heralded as the exemplary American critic. Knowing that his writing lacked supportive evidence and concrete references to the art itself as well as the fact that his criticism had no application to movements following Modernism, the starting point for my research was to dismantle the Romanticized image of Greenberg.

Upon starting my research I quickly discovered that the foundation of Greenberg’s success was not formed around a simple lack of alternatives, as I had naively believed before undertaking the project. The creation of the Greenbergian canon was formed in alliance with unique social and historical factors and was developed as a continuation from earlier aesthetically driven critics, Roger Fry and Clive Bell.

In assessing the relevance and influence of Greenberg’s writing in the work of Lippard, Krauss, and Joselit, I seek to clarify the impact of his elusive texts, which, if written today, would be considered too subjective for contemporary publications. In comparing Greenberg’s theories and approaches to that of Lippard, Krauss, and Joselit, I intend to question how his writing has influenced subsequent critics in the industry. By tracking Greenberg’s trajectory in this way my argument will consider the relevance of the formalist critic in Lippard, Krauss, and Joselit’s writing.
Introduction

“Just as art has its history, so also does the writing about that art,” David Carrier

The above quote by David Carrier speaks to the fact that cultural criticism that runs parallel to art history is as significant as the art itself. His article Artwriting, 1987 considers the status of Clement Greenberg’s writing and considers the relevance of his approach within a past, present, and future context. When considering Greenberg’s Modernist approach toward assessing art history, Carrier questions the relevance of his theories: although ‘true’ in the early 1930s-50s in which he was writing his claims will perhaps be false in 2050. As outlined in the abstract of this text, the aim of my argument is to critically evaluate the relevance and influence of Clement Greenberg’s writing in the criticism of those who followed him and have made significant contributions to the cultural canon of art history.

Clement Greenberg was a leading supporter of the Modernist movement who began writing cultural criticism in 1937 for publications such as the Partisan Review and Nation. Greenberg is frequently associated with the Abstract Expressionist set in New York as a critic who championed formalist criticism and positivist approaches toward reading art history. A positivist approach to interpreting art is distinguished by its dedication to art’s formal qualities (line, colour, tone, and form) as well as its emphasis on the history of creation and the artist’s biography. Greenberg’s fame followed in the footsteps of critics such as Clive Bell and Roger Fry who also believed in the ‘aesthetic experience.’ Bell once stated “To appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three-dimensional space.” Fry also places an importance of formal qualities in his article ‘An Essay in Aesthetics’ whereby he breaks down images into elements (gesture, space, light, and colour) and describes their role in drawing reactions from viewers.

Greenberg’s positivist trajectory developed as an explanation of arts progression towards a Modernist canon and is a school of thought influenced by a piece’s formal qualities and aesthetic values. Similarly to Bell and Fry, Greenberg’s positivist approach toward Modern art was underlined by his belief of taste influencing one’s appreciation and understanding of fine art as seen in his text, ‘Avant-Garde and Kitsch,’ published in Partisan Review, 1939. As will be discussed in more detail later, this article demonstrates his desire to keep high and low culture segregated in order to maintain a rich cultural canon. In his compulsion towards segregating high and low culture Greenberg was able to establish himself as a critic who was “…intelligent, perceptive, biased, and so influential that everyone concerned

- Carrier, David, Artwriting, The University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1987, p. 48
- ibid.
with contemporary art seems to take some sort of stand in relation to it.”

His fear of high culture diminishing with the statement:

“No culture can develop without a social basis, without a source of stable income. And in the case of the avant-garde, this was provided by an elite among a ruling class of that society from which it assumed itself to be cut off, but to which it has always remained attached by an umbilical cord of gold.”

This extract highlights the motivation behind Greenberg’s criticism to maintain a higher order of Modernist art in the face of changing art in movements like neo-Dadaism and the influence of Duchamp and later, the emergence of Pop Art and Minimalism. Additionally this extract provides insight into Greenberg’s authoritative tone that includes grandiose claims despite little supplementary evidence to support his statements and little consideration of alternative arguments.

The aim of my argument is to consider the impact of the Greenbergian canon in relation to the criticism of Lucy Lippard, Rosalind Krauss, and David Joselit. Each of these critics has made significant contributions to critical art history’s cultural canon. Considering their relationship with formalism and Greenberg’s positivist approach my assessment of each critics writing will support Carrier’s claim stated at the start of my introduction: “Just as art has its history, so also does the writing about that art.” In forming comparisons with Greenberg’s criticism my argument will assess the successful

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4 “By the mid-1950s Greenberg’s critical style was clearly different from that of Harold Rosenberg, his chief rival as an interpreter of Abstract Expressionism”, Reise, Barbara, M., ‘Greenberg and the Group: A Retrospective View,’ Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts, ed. Frascina, Francis and Harris, Jonathon, Phaidon Press, London, 2006, p. 253

5 Ibid. p. 254


qualities of each critic’s writing and ascertain how each has stepped out from under the shadow of Greenberg.

In each chapter I will consider the critics key texts and assess how their critical approach toward art relates to or separates from Greenberg’s positivist and Modernist methods in their engagement with key cultural epochs. In doing so, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of Clement Greenberg’s critical influence within the writing of art history. My argument will focus on Greenberg’s most often cited texts and assess how his framework for creating arguments has translated into subsequent forms of art writing.

Lippard is a pragmatic critic with a lucid writing style that focuses on a diverse range of cultural period. Lippard’s writing demonstrates her renowned ability to unpack complex issues and problems in accessible ways and for championing a politically and ethically driven criticism associated with late Modern and PostModern art practise. Krauss as mentioned earlier is famed for her dedication to Greenberg’s Modernist approach however later in her career Krauss also dismissed Greenberg’s theories and severed her ties with Modernism in order to move forward with PostModernist theory. Joselit is an editor of October magazine and a current professor at Yale University. His writing crosses boundaries between disciplines that signals new changes in the ways in which we read about, write about, and think about art. His writing indicates a move toward visual cultural studies, a huge step away from Greenberg’s narrowly conceived formalist focus on high art.

Chapter one will centre on Greenberg’s 1961 collection of critical essays, Art and Culture with particular reference to ‘The Avant-Garde and Kitsch’ and ‘American Painters’ in addition to ‘The Necessity of “Formalism”’ (1971) and ‘Modernist Painting’ (1982). With reference to these texts my argument will outline contributing factors to Greenberg’s success and the framework he created from to view and assess art. This is a broad selection of his texts to demonstrate the consistency of his voice and writing style.

The overarching brand of criticism that Greenberg’s name now personifies is labeled as formalist and positivist. Through my analysis of each text, I will consider elements of Greenberg’s writing that shapes his reputation and forms his framework for critically engaging with art. Specifically, his employment of aesthetic and formalist theories as well as his emphasis on high and low culture.

After establishing the precedent Greenberg set for subsequent critics, my argument will then turn towards the work of Lippard, Krauss, and Joselit, making connections and comparisons between their writing and Greenberg’s.

Chapter two will focus on Lucy Lippard’s break away from Greenberg’s Modernist framework. My argument will be supported by Lippard’s writing in The Pink Glass Swan (1995) and Eva Hesse (1976). In The Pink Glass Swan we are able to see Lippard return to the content of art, discussing narratives, personal ties, and political issues of the works at hand. This is a key feature of Lippard’s break away from Greenberg’s positivist approach. In addition to placing an importance on the content of art,

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- ibid. p. 195
Lippard also chose to write about works that Greenberg would have classified as kitsch, again signaling to the trajectory she sought to form as a retaliation against Greenberg’s formalist approach. Finally my argument will consider the layout of Lippard’s writing, specifically, her inclusion of images embedded into her text, as a signpost of her disengagement with Greenberg’s critical canon. By comparing these elements of Lippard’s writing to Greenberg traditional voice the intention of this chapter, is to attain a deeper understanding of art criticism’s postModern development.

Chapter three will focus on Rosalind Krauss. Krauss’s early understanding of art writing was heavily influenced by Greenberg’s authoritative texts and as such, Krauss’s career as an art writer has been heavily dictated by her engagement and disengagement from Clement Greenberg. My argument will examine Greenberg’s influence on Krauss’ writing and assess the ways in which her career has managed to successfully merge prior understandings of Greenberg’s positivist criticism with her own contemporary understanding of PostModernism and Post-minimalist art through her use of Structuralist concepts. Krauss’ ability to merge old and new ideas dominated the early days of her career and although she later rejected Greenberg’s claims as her writing and theories developed this thesis will focus on this earlier moment in her career.

The final chapter of my argument will focus on the writing of David Joselit and the concept of the hybrid critic. The premise of Joselit’s writing is to break away from traditional interpretations of fine art and marks a move toward redefining the ways in which we classify visual culture. Joselit’s approach toward art criticism is to develop an interdisciplinary practise that fits under the broad term ‘Visual Studies.’ In light of the contemporary culture Joselit’s writing sits within my argument will consider his texts ‘The Video Public Sphere’ (2000) and Feedback, Television Against Democracy (2007). Both texts identify Joselit’s construction of new cultural criticism that considers the interdisciplinary nature of art history in addition to reflecting our increased accessibility to recently developed forms of cultural criticism, such as new media projects, online content, and numerous art publications such as magazines, journals, and ‘zines. All of these points will be considered in relation to Clement Greenberg’s definitions of high and low culture and his positivist based approach toward interpreting works of art.

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Which is also to say that I am still stuck with believing that ‘formalism’ is a vulgarity; that I began as a Modernist critic and am still a Modernist critic, but only as part of a larger Modernist sensibility and not the narrower kind,” Krauss, Rosalind, ‘A View of Modernism,’ Perpetual Inventory, An October Book, The MIT Press, Cambridge. 2010, p. 128

Joselit, David, ‘The Video Public Sphere,’ Art Journal, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Summer), College Art Association, 2000, p. 53
Chapter One

The Greenberg Supremacy

“The most influential recent critic is Greenberg,” David Carrier

David Carrier’s quote above is integral to my argument in this chapter. If Greenberg is the most influential critic, I seek to know why. Hence, this chapter will assess the foundations of Greenberg’s criticism and look closely at the critical canon his writing created and consider how it came to provide a platform for art criticism that followed. My research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of Greenberg’s application of formalism considering its function within the social and historical context from which Greenberg’s influence arose and assess his formation of positivist based writing. Greenberg’s fetish with high culture will be central in the following chapters of my argument, whereby I turn towards Lippard, Krauss, and Joselit, and assess how their criticism has broken free from the Greenbergian canon.

The period in which Greenberg’s criticism came to prominence is paramount in understanding his interpretations of art history and where it stands in the Western cultural canon; the birth and development of the American avant-garde. When Paris succumbed to the Nazi’s in June 1940 the world grieved the loss of an artistic centre that had come to define free and independent creative life. Many European artists (Duchamp, Mondrian, Leger) escaped to New York during the war and their influence transferred into work created by New York artists practicing at this time. Greenberg asserts this viewpoint in “‘American Type” Painting’ (1955) by commenting on America’s distance from the Second World War. He claims that their distance from military action and proximity to European expatriates who worked in the industry (dealers, collectors, and critics) in America at that time “gave these new American painters the sense, wholly new in this country, of being in the centre of art in their time.” Barbara Reise claims Greenberg’s reading of history in this way as an “evolutionary concept” which solidified his establishment of New York as the “artistic centre of the future.” Reise’s interpretation of his influence suggests that Greenberg was able to manipulate the events of history in his favour, which is an interesting point to consider in light of his arguments that followed. Should Clement Greenberg have had the capacity to manipulate readings of history it allowed for his own theories (positivist and Modernist approaches) to have a higher standing within the arts community, after being contextualized by the critic.

Regardless, Clement Greenberg established an elitist approach to Modernism by creating distance between high and low culture. Boris Groys claims that Greenberg’s elitist approach to Modernism derived from his eagerness to keep cultivated bourgeois circles interested in new art. Indeed, Greenberg discloses this by claiming that the avant-garde was attached to the bourgeois class by “an

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- ibid. p. 115
- Greenberg, Clement, “‘American Type” Painting,’ Art and Culture, Critical Essays, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961, p. 211
umbilical cord of gold” as mentioned in my arguments introduction. We are able to observe Greenberg’s contextualization of society that lends an emphasis to Greenberg’s elitist concepts and the period he refers to was signposted by an increase in War-induced wealth. The financial flux quickly became reflected in the New York’s new culture hubs such as The Museum of Modern Art and Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of this Century gallery (later to be included in The Solomon R. Guggenheim’s collection) in addition to the emergence of large institutions dedicated to the arts. These developments accentuated the value and accessibility of art whilst simultaneously dissipating prejudice against new expressions. Greenberg peppers his writing with social and historical references of his own: in illustrating the revolutionary nature of the Abstract Expressionists, Greenberg states that they owe their inventiveness (which formed the base of the movements establishment) in relation “to a given time, place and tradition.”

Although formulated in his social context Greenberg applied the emergence of new wealth into the understanding and promotion of high and low culture. Greenberg explicates the relationship between high and low culture in ‘The Necessity of “Formalism.”’ He forges a gap between high and low culture by devaluing artworks that reference popular cultural such as neo-Dadaist works and Duchamp inspired ready-mades. Greenberg claimed that Dada: “…was the first outright assault on “formalism,” that came from within the avant-garde, or what was nominally the avant-garde, and it stated itself immediately in a lowering of aspirations.” In diminishing the value of the Dada movement Greenberg creates a space for him to promote divisions between high and low art and champion his formalist driven interpretations of art in the process. In this way Greenberg’s criticism sought to re-map a Modernist return to the ivory tower from which other socially radical artistic movements from the 1960s onwards were attempting to eradicate.

Greenberg’s emphasis on positivist criticism permeates through his writing and in particular when discussing the American Abstract Expressionists and later artists such as Jackson Pollock who formed a crowning moment within the Modernist ethos. Greenberg’s enthusiasm for reading art in a positivist manner (referencing colour’s, tones, lines, forms) became well renowned in the industry and academics. Boris Groys describes Greenberg as a connoisseur who focused on techniques rather than subjects.

Greenberg’s positivist approach and emphasis on aesthetic qualities is personified in his article ‘Modernist Painting’ which was first published in 1960. Greenberg surmises his interest in aesthetics by stating the aesthetic consistency in the way of visual quality and results is all that matters in art. He describes the evolution of Modern art and promotes its ‘flatness’ that so distinguishes it from its predecessors. The article became known for shaking the canvas free of narratives and personal content as Greenberg describes so no value in anything but arts aesthetics. Critics who followed Greenberg frequently praised his approach towards criticism as has been mentioned in my introduction. The influence of Greenberg as the iconic formalist critic was so great at this time that it was also felt in art

* Greenberg, Clement, ‘“American-Type” Painting,’ *Art and Culture, critical essays*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961, pp. 209 & 210
* Schor, Mira, *A Decade of Negative Thinking: essays on art, politics, and daily life*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2009, p. 95
schools. A former art student Mira Schor recalls that it wasn’t until the late 1970’s an expansion of formal means and content provided alternatives to “the dogma of Greenbergian formalism.” Clearly the impact of Greenberg’s promotion of purely formalist readings was felt not only in the realm of art criticism, demonstrating just how powerful his authoritative texts were.

Greenberg’s focus on aesthetic value disseminated throughout his critical career. When discussing artists regardless of their supposed successes or failures Greenberg’s main focus centres on the visual. Writing at a point in time when Modernists and the avant-garde were the focal point of the art scene and then defending their relevance as new cultural epochs emerged, Greenberg was firm in his belief that formalism was the most valuable method of interpreting art history’s canon. The value of formalism procured from Modernists reinterpreting limited factors of painting (flat surfaces, canvas shapes and prepackaged pigments) into positive factors whereby the same factors became a celebration, not a hindrance. Greenberg claims then that the Modernists detachment from these preoccupations became the focal point for their art. For example, Manet embraces the use of flat planes of colour, Cezanne finds freedom in ignoring the rules of perception to fit forms within the frame and the Impressionists had no use for under painting glazes to their canvases, which would have only hindered the vibrancy of their pigments. This, Greenberg believes, marks the great success of the Modernists as they are able to create works of art, which speak purely through their visual forms, wherein Greenberg claims lies, the value of aesthetics and formalism. The Old Masters that came before them had been unable to alter their perceptions in such a way and were ultimately defined by their limitations and hindered by traditional interpretations and readings of art.

A clear mergence of Greenberg’s ability to socially contextualise in an application of positivist interpretations of art is visible in “American-Type” Painting. This article demonstrates Greenberg’s criteria and theory of formalism as a way of promoting American artists and defining their work in a way that was entirely removed (although still influenced by) European standards. In the piece, Greenberg follows the development of American painting in New York City and begins by highlighting socio-factors referenced earlier: the diminishment of class systems and the influx of consumerist/low culture.

Following this, one or two works by selected artists are analyzed with mentioned to their Modernist influence, formalist qualities success and failures as an artist. By creating a pattern of analysis in this manner, Greenberg is able to cover a significant amount of artists within a limited amount of words. In doing so he is able to convey his message succinctly and deliver his points in slick fashion. Gottlieb and Motherwell are by-products of Late-Cubism, therefore the designs they deliver are reminiscent of those established by Matisse and Picasso. Pollock’s style is discussed in a similar manner, inspired by Late Cubists, with “hints” of Picasso and Miró. Elements Orozco and Hofmann came together to form “an allusive and altogether original vocabulary of Baroque shapes with which he twisted Cubist space to make it speak with his own vehemence.” The fact that Greenberg is placing an emphasis on European

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*Schor, Mira, A Decade of Negative Thinking: essays on art, politics, and daily life, Duke University Press, Durham, 2009, p. 222
*ibid.
*ibid.
*Greenberg, Clement, ‘“American-Type” Painting,’ Art and Culture, critical essays, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961, pp. 215, 216
*ibid. p. 216
artists that influenced American Abstract-Expressionists has its place within this particular article, given that the social and historical context of American art development was discussed in the introduction. However, simply describing an artist's influence alongside the formalist qualities of their work would be considered insufficient for most contemporary reviewers and critics today.

By focusing the central themes of his arguments on an artwork's aesthetic value, Greenberg's arguments are often presented in a broad and non-committal manner, despite their lofty undertones. For example, in describing the artistic career of Clyfford Still, Greenberg rarely mentions specific titles, instead speaks broadly of the galleries where the works were displayed. His disinterest in specifics is personified in the following extract:

“Still’s … shows, at Betty Parsons’…struck me as being utterly uncontrolled. The few large and vertically arranged area-shapes which made up the typical Still of that time … were too arbitrary in contour, and too hot and dry in colour as well as in paint quality…”

In mentioning Still’s exhibition at Betty Parsons’ gallery Greenberg makes no mention of the titles of the works displayed, nor does he discuss any specific dates for the pieces on display. Early in the piece he equates Still’s emergence in the industry with Monet’s late paintings, and soon after making the claims above, we are informed that Greenberg did not see a 1948 Still painting until 1953. However, these are the only time frames that we are given to further our understanding of the social and historical context of this specific Betty Parson exhibition. More importantly, the lack of dates does not help readers today, and perhaps even Greenberg’s contemporaries, in understanding Still’s artistic development and the turning points of his career, namely, when his works were “too hot and dry in colour”.

Greenberg’s tendency to write in rather broad terms is also apparent here, making it increasingly difficult to cement his claims; “utterly uncontrolled”, “few,” “area-shapes” and “the typical Still of that time” – none of these fragments contribute to the clarity of his argument or shape a clearer understanding of Still’s significance at the time of Greenberg’s writing the article.

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Greenberg, Clement, ““American-Type” Painting,’ Art and Culture, critical essays, Beacon Press, Boston, 1961, p. 222
Interestingly, Fried who was hugely influenced by Greenberg extends his definition of the role of the formalist critic by claiming: “it is the burden of the formal critic both to objectify his intuitions with all the intellectual rigor at his command, and to be on his guard against enlisting a formalist rhetoric in defense of what he fears may be merely private enthusiasms.” Clearly Fried seeks to support his claims in a manner in which Greenberg did not at any point in his career. As we have seen Greenberg often situated artists within a vague social context and although this is useful it is not a sufficient source without solid examples. He uses words such as “hints” and “allusive” to describe the art which is intended to draw on his claim that one should ‘experience’ art however within a contemporary context this is not enough.

As a key formalist critic who championed Modernist approaches towards the interpretation and critical evaluation of art history, Greenberg developed a canon that hugely impacted subsequent critics. Essentially, the canon that Clement Greenberg established has come to define the path of art criticism that followed. In light of the issues raised in this chapter, my argument will now turn towards the criticism of Lucy Lippard and consider the ways in which she created a break from Greenberg’s positivist based interpretations of art.
Chapter Two

Lucy Lippard: A break from the past

“Criticism has little to do with consistency; for consistency has to do with logical systems, whereas criticism is or should be dialectical and thrive on contradiction and change.” Lucy Lippard

My argument in this chapter will focus on how Lucy Lippard’s writing has represents a break away from Greenberg’s positivist canon. With reference to works in The Pink Glass Swan (1995) and Eva Hesse (1976) I will assess how Lucy Lippard’s writing symbolizes a return to the content, which as we have seen had no relevance to the formalist critic, Clement Greenberg.

Greenberg’s focus on interpreting art for their formalist qualities, artist backgrounds, and aesthetic value essentially shook the canvas free from any kind of meaning other than that which derived from the ‘experience’ one assumed when viewing it. These qualities defined Modernist readings and as far as Greenberg was concerned this marked the highest point in art history’s canon: “Modernism remains a necessary condition of the best art of our time…” His consistent promotion of formalism pushed personal, narrative, and literary content to the margins of interpretations and criticism. Undoubtedly his desire to keep formalist qualities at the forefront of all analysis was influenced by his own continuation and development of Clive Bell and Roger Fry’s criticism. Both Bell and Fry reacted badly to any contextualization of an artwork even at times insisting on turning the frame so as to acquire greater access to a work’s subjective subject matter. Regardless, Greenberg was the critic who sparked a reaction in Lippard as she describes her reaction against the established positivist based framework in the comment:

“…my revolt against Clement Greenberg’s patronization of artists, against the notion that if you don’t like so-and-so’s work for the ‘right’ reasons, you can’t like it at all, as well as against the ‘masterpiece’ syndrome…”

Clearly Greenberg’s dedication to describing the success, failures and developments of art in relationship to only their visual qualities forms the foundation of Lippard’s rebellion. The premises of Greenberg’s discussions in ‘Necessity of “Formalism”’ and ‘Modernist Painting’ both demonstrate the necessity of aesthetic qualities in his Modernist trajectory. Although he uses social context to situate the evolution of his methods, this is not the case for aesthetic developments where risks are taken to find new forms of expression and risks again are taken to display such developments as normality’s within the field.

As a result of her break away from the Greenbergian canon Lippard came to realise that instead of following his positivist trajectory she could focus on creating her own instead. Hence, she forged a path

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* Schor, Mira, A Decade of Negative Thinking: Essays on art, politics, and daily life, Duke University Press, Durham, 2009, p. 95
of criticism that consciously rejected formalist readings: “We just left it behind … or put it to the side, or relegated it to the bottom layer. Which did not mean form was ignored, only formalism.” Perhaps Lippard’s rejection of his canon was fuelled by a reaction against his authoritative tone, as Mira Schor describes his texts as “aggressive in the masculinity, indeed, the misogyny of its rhetoric.”

Ultimately Lippard’s critical writing see’s value in the content and meaning of art. Being dissatisfied by talking only of arts visual qualities she shaped her own trajectory to include political readings and considers the representation of painting itself. We are able to see her break with the concept of the formalist critic not only in her criticism but also in the work she chooses to write about.

Lippard’s rejection of Greenberg’s definitions is illustrated through a return to arts content in her text ‘The Pains and Pleasures of Rebirth: European and American Women’s Body Art,’ 1976. Lippard begins her text by loosely describing bodyworks as a varied genre, crossing between mediums: video, performance, and photography. All mediums use the body as an extension of the artists self or another’s. Following this she immediately outlines her desire to focus on the content of body art with the claim: “I am less interested in categorizing it than in the issues it raises and its relationship to feminism.” This At this point in her text we see her disinterest in bodywork’s aesthetic qualities over content that hugely contrasts Greenberg’s positivist judgments which frequently reference the form, colours, and the visual experience of fine art.

Lippard’s overall argument in the article is to discuss sexual and gender-orientated uses of the body in the work of Conceptual female artists in Europe and the United States. After outlining her arguments the text continues to develop with strong feminist overtones and references to the reactions caused by ‘controversial’ representations of the female figure and their reception in the mainstream market. Here we see Lippard embracing the inclusion of political references and discussing socially taboo topics with ease. Despite Marxist remarks vaguely interspersed with his texts Greenberg was a staunch formalist critic and there are no prominent instances where he sought to include loaded subject matter into the manner in which he read works of art.

Ultimately, by illustrating the broader context of bodyworks and stating her intention to focus on the meaning of the works, Lippard’s overall discussion demonstrates her return to the importance of content and revolt against the Greenbergian canon. Although Lippard references formal qualities in her description of bodyworks and their reception it is obvious that the content of the works are of greater importance to her. We are able to see this as she highlights the impact of bodyworks within their context as a way of further emphasizing their intrinsic meaning:

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- Ibid. p. 93
- Ibid.
- Ibid. p. 100
“Bodyworks by women, and art dealing with specifically female and feminist issues, materials, images, and experience, no matter what style they were couched in, became publicly visible with more difficulty than mainstream art…”

Lippard directly references the content of their work whilst describing their broader context without diminishing their aesthetic value or preeminence as works of art. Strung together, these examples highlight the disparities between Lippard and Greenberg’s approaches towards criticism. Lippard considers her writing as part of a larger dialogue hence her writing prioritizes creative content and political references that Greenberg discusses vaguely at times but does not seriously consider in his texts.

Later in the article, Lippard’s ability to return to the importance of content in an artwork is present in her case study of Carolee Schneemann’s work, Interior Scroll (1975), a mixed-media performance where Schneemann removed a scroll from her vagina and read from the paper. Without discussing formal qualities of the performance Lippard’s introduction of the work immediately comments on Schneemann’s artistic statement and her creative intentions for the piece. In this, we see two examples of Lippard’s break away from Greenberg’s canon. The first being that she chooses to discuss a performance piece which Greenberg would have defined as kitsch. Secondly, Lippard’s immediate discussion of the works premise signals her desire to find theory and meaning in the ways in which we engage with art that Greenberg saw no need to discuss.

The political content of Schneemann’s performance is perhaps the strongest break away from Greenberg’s positivism that we have seen in Lippard’s writing. In Greenberg’s text ‘The Avant-Garde and Kitsch’ his analyses of the emergence of a new social class, derived from a boom in the middle-class. He claims the increase in a middle-class urban population shook the foundation of “formal culture” creating a gap in urban culture that could no longer be filled by the provincial folk culture from their provincial pasts. The concepts are articulated in the following extract:

“The peasants who settled in the cities as proletariat and petty bourgeois learned to read and write for the sake of efficiency, but they did not win the leisure and comfort necessary for the enjoyment of the city’s traditional culture. Losing, nevertheless, their taste for the folk culture whose background was the countryside…the new urban masses set up a pressure on society to provide them with a kind of culture fit for their own consumption.”

Kitsch culture by Greenberg’s definition was dictated by social class and is a brand of culture accessible to those who wouldn’t understand a higher canon and the history behind the prominence of the avant-garde. By this definition Schneemann’s piece would not have fit into Greenberg’s concept of “traditional culture” and as a performance piece it is therefore defined as kitsch, a kind of culture fit for the consumption of a tasteless urban society. Therefore Lippard’s choice to discuss Schneemann’s performance is a conscious rebellion against a Greenbergian establishment. Again, Lippard directly references the political nature of the works content, using politically driven vocabulary to describe it as

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* Ibid., p. 103

a defiant act of narcissism whereby the artist seeks to prove acceptance of the body in a sex-negative society.

As a continuation from the strength of Lippard’s direct references to political, social, and creative content in her writing as retaliation against Greenbergian traditions, my argument will now focus attention on Eva Hesse (1976), an exposition of the artists work and an example of Lippard’s support of women artists working abstractly during the post-minimalist movement.

One of the key features of Eva Hesse is Lippard’s interweave ment of images amongst her words. Throughout the text examples of images and supplementary visual material is included to support and run alongside Lippard’s claims. This includes brochure details, notebook pages, photographs of the artist, and installation views. This is a successful technique as it encourages readers to take charge of their own engagement with the Hesse’s works. Additionally, it provides a range of supportive information that may not otherwise have been exposed. For example, using brochure details and notebook pages to support Lippard’s claims successfully promotes further engagement as well as reiterating Lippard’s intention to return to the content of art. In this way Lippard highlights the fact that Hesse’s creative work is not defined only by the visual qualities of the work but also by the breadth of her creative practice.

By including visual references that are positioned directly against her own points, Lippard successfully forms a new kind of criticism that stems directly away from the canon which Greenberg created and promoted. In doing so, she is presenting a kind of criticism that is not solely dependent on her interpretations; including images interjected with text, situating Hesse’s professional development in a broad context and presenting a considerate framework from which to view Hesse’s career within are all techniques to entrust her readership with intellectual independence.

Image placement and size is dictated by Lippard’s arguments and narrative. For example, Expanded Expansion (1969) is displayed across the top of two pages with blocks of text running beneath the image. The significance of the image correlates with the text underneath, whereby Lippard presents Martha Sheive’s (a colleague of Hesse) comments on Hesse’s developments creating the piece. Sheive’s comment: “She didn’t manipulate it, didn’t try to keep the irregularities in the actual texture and at the same time didn’t try not to have them happen.”

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66 Schor, Mira, A Decade of Negative Thinking: essays on art, politics, and daily life, Duke University Press, Durham, 2009, p. 96
68 Ibid. p. 151
Pictures are presented in a variety of ways: across double page spreads, blocked next to others on a single page, several dotted above or below Lippard’s writing. Lippard’s utilization of the image, the very core of art history itself, is further realized in the chapter ‘Some Critical Issues.’ In this chapter Hesse’s work is exhausted in analysis against her contemporaries: Jasper Johns, Claes Oldenburg and Arshile Gorky, just to name a few.

Richard Serra and Lucas Samara are considered extensively in this chapter against examples of Hesse’s work. Serra’s Untitled (1968) sits quietly above the following quote: “Serra has used gravity and weight as pure aggressive physicality, but not without an urge, similar to Hesse’s, toward dramatic internal self-expression.” By placing an image of the work next to this comment, readers are able to grasp Lippard’s concepts better with a visual aid. Furthermore, in placing her arguments by the images she refers to, Lippard enables readers to independently observe similarities and find freedom in forming connections independently from Lippard’s claims.

To conclude, the trajectory that Lippard shaped for her own brand of criticism significantly breaks away from the canon Clement Greenberg formed. By reinserting the importance of content into her critical dialogue Lippard successfully rejects the concept of the formalist critic whilst still retaining the value of formal analysis in portions of her texts. The fact that Lippard places a high value on narrative, political, and social issues in her writing segregates her critical canon from the history of Greenberg’s positivist approach. Finally, Lippard’s inclusion of supplementary evidence and images reiterates the fact that she believes in the importance of content and critical accountability.

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As highlighted in the quote above, Rosalind Krauss is well known for her early embrace and later rejection of Greenberg’s Modernist framework. Although her academic career began within a Modernist and positivist framework she discovered a new critical identity in translated works of Structuralism, which then resonated through her subsequent texts.

With reference to texts ‘Notes on the Index: Part 1,’ and ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field,’ as part of her anthology The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths (1985) I seek to analyze the manner in which Krauss’s criticism balances the border between the formalist critic inspired by Greenberg and her exposure to Structuralist theories. In Perpetual Inventory (2010) she reflects on the time when her ideas of Modernism began to shift. She states in the publication’s introduction that her exposure to Georges Bataille and Jean-François Lyotard greatly shaped her experience as well as her ‘inventory.’ Their influence, paired with Clement Greenberg’s, altered Krauss’s understanding of the relationship between mediums, images, and text. This was later marked by the founding of October journal, where she was inspired by the need to find new commitment in the aesthetic concerns needed to create the basis of a formal coherence. In particular Krauss was influenced by Lyotard’s text The Post-Modern Condition (1984) as its concepts challenged the history of Greenberg’s Modernist trajectory: the ‘flatness’ referred to in chapter one which Greenberg claimed was a positive element of Modernist painting and a medium specific to the Modernist movement, hit the wall of Lyotard’s claims as he states that certain elements of artistic practice abandon specific mediums in order to juxtapose image and text within the same work. To surmise, the central disparity between Krauss’s and Greenberg’s critical intentions derived from Krauss’ later belief that art’s critical value rests in the method, not in the judgment of art criticism. As we have observed in Greenberg’s articles ‘Avant-Garde and Kitsch,’ ‘Modernist Painting,’ and ‘Necessity of “Formalism,”’ judgment and subjective interpretations shaped the majority of Greenberg’s reputation as a critic.

My argument will focus on Krauss’s adaption of positivist approaches in interpreting works through their use of colour, line, and tones. In a similar fashion to Lippard, Krauss chose to reject Greenberg’s preference toward a higher canon and critically evaluated PostModern and Post-minimalist works that he considered kitsch. For example, Krauss applied a positivist approach in reading the works of Donald Judd, an artist Greenberg openly disliked. During the early days of her career Krauss managed to retain formalist readings and included positivist-based criticism in her trajectory.

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- ibid. p. xiii
- ibid.
When discussing the work of Marcel Duchamp in ‘Notes on the Index: Part 1,’ we are able to observe the influence of Lyotard’s text as she begins the section by describing the emergence of ‘pluralism’ – essentially the notion that art became diversified, factionalized, and split after the Modernist period. After noting a break away from a purely formalist approach Krauss goes on to discuss Duchamp’s Tu M’ (1918). The manner in which Krauss discusses the piece begins by mentioning only the formal qualities of the work, as Greenberg would have described a Modernist painting. She describes the work in detail: “the bicycle wheel, the hatrack, and a corkscrew, are projected onto the surface of the canvas through the fixing of cast shadows, signifying these objects by means of indexical traces.” It is interesting that whilst this is a more detailed description than Greenberg would have supplied Krauss’s description of the pieces aesthetics, although not necessarily formal qualities, Greenberg’s influence over Krauss is certainly visible. However, the fact that this work is a pluralist piece, indeed, a work that Greenberg would have considered kitsch, signals more toward Lyotard’s influence.

Anna Lovatt discusses Greenberg’s influence over Krauss and her contemporaries such as Michael Fried, who were defined by their alliance to the “systematic ‘formalist’ criticism” of Greenberg. Lovatt believes Art and Culture provided a formal model for The Originality of the Avant-Garde, despite the fact that the content and rigour of Krauss’s publication is significantly alternative to that of Greenberg’s. Although the conceptual framework of Krauss’s writing during the October years remained indebted to the precedent Greenberg formed in Art and Culture, the collation of articles in The Originality of the Avant-Garde moves away from prior examples and instead, applies conceptual theories to artists that Greenberg had once dismissed as just mentioned, such as Donald Judd and Duchamp.

I am inclined to agree with Lovatt’s statement that Art and Culture provided a formal model for The Originality. The overall layout of Krauss’s Originality is certainly reminiscent of Greenberg’s Art and Culture. Both critics collate their articles in a similar manner and track a positivist reading of art history that includes early influences first and most current and or relevant material towards the publication conclusion. For example, Greenberg’s texts begin with articles focused on ‘Art in Paris’ and concludes with a section of ‘Art in the United States’ and then ‘Literature,’ as a way of tracking what he believed was the natural trajectory of the Modernist movement from Europe to America as we have seen in earlier chapters. Krauss’s layout follows this pattern with first a section on ‘Modernist Myths’ and then

Marcel Duchamp, Tu M’ (1918) Oil and pencil on canvas with bottle brush, three safety pins, and a bolt. 69.8 x 303cm © Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven

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- Ibid. p. 198
Towards PostModern, which not only follows Greenberg’s formula it also signals to the syntax of her relationship with the past and her amendment of positivist approaches with newly translated Structuralist theories and Postminimalist art. David Carrier comments the manner that Krauss’s historicises her narrative in The Originality, and he describes Krauss’s movement from Rodin to Smithson as being “elegant,” and further makes the point that ending her history at this time is ‘appropriate.’

Throughout the publication, images and texts are merged together to support Krauss’s written content. Reminiscent of Lucy Lippard’s practise, the inclusion of images is a tool to increase accessibility of ideas and arguments that run alongside diagrams and images. In The Originality depicted images are typically works of art or installation views of pieces, however, at various points in the publication, alongside some of Krauss’s more complex arguments she has chosen to formulate diagrams as a way of clarifying her points.

Diagrams are included in the article ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field,’ published in 1978 and placed in the second half of the anthology, thus forming a portion of the anthology’s move towards the postModern. In describing the development of sculpture since the 1960s, Krauss discusses the difficulty in critically cataloguing sculpture as it moved away from a Modern emphasis on formalist and aesthetic qualities such as line, colour, material and composition (the ‘positive’) and became increasingly postModern (‘negative’). Following her segregation of positive and negative sculpture Krauss claims that sculpture had drifted into a limbo of definition: “it was what was on or in front of a building that was not the building, or what was in the landscape that was not the landscape.”

As a way of furthering this point, Krauss discusses Robert Morris’s Green Gallery installation of 1964, an outdoor exhibition of his iconic-mirrored boxes. Although visually the works were continuous with the landscape in their reflection of the setting they were placed within they were intrinsically distinct from the setting because they did not form the landscape. Thus, the visually inclusive and exclusive elements of Morris’s sculptures were defined by their distance from the landscape, despite their ability to inverse the landscape. This ultimately represents, “the landscape that was not the landscape.” It is at this point in Krauss’s highly conceptual argument that she introduces the inclusion of diagrams to clearly illustrate the relationships and theories she is discussing. In this particular instance, Krauss elucidates the cataloguing of Morris’ Green Gallery installation by drawing lines towards ‘Sculpture’ from ‘Not-Landscape’ and ‘Not-Architecture’. The simple clarification of her points through a visual technique enables a new point of access for readers by offering a simple and concise illustration to explicate the concepts.

This example rests at the beginning of Krauss’s argument. As the discussion develops and moves away from Morris’ installation to discuss the concept of the ‘expanded field’ with greater intensity, Krauss includes more complex diagrams alongside images of Robert Smithson’s Spiral Jetty (1969-70) and Morris’ Observatory (1970). Krauss believes the expanded field is generated through “problematising the set of oppositions between which the Modernist category sculpture is suspended.” In order to articulate
this idea, relational diagrams follow her arguments to act as a visual aid and point of accessibility for readers. Although more complex than the initial diagram, Krauss’s illustration of how the expanded field sits in relation to the landscape, not-landscape, architecture and not-architecture serves a similar function as the former illustration.

By including images of the works she is discussing alongside her own writing and illustrations of the arguments she is making, Krauss is signaling a break away from the traditional format and presentation that Greenberg’s *Art and Culture* once set. *Art and Culture* does not include diagrams at any point, nor does Greenberg include any mechanisms to assist readers with comprehending his arguments. Although the inclusion of images and illustrations may seem arbitrary to some, such techniques can have the power to hugely alter one’s reception of criticism. In recognizing the need to provide additional support material to her claims, Krauss is breaking away from the traditional canon Greenberg formed and moving forward into a critical world whereby one must be able to provide additional evidence to reinforce arguments. Providing alternative access and adding greater intellectual weight to her conceptual arguments Krauss demonstrates, in a similar nature to Lippard, her ability to work fluidly within the role of the critic, changing and adapting to the times in which she is writing.

Krauss’s attempt to provide a contemporary account of art history with a combination of positivist and negative theories confirms her desire to carry old interpretations forward into the next era. Her support and avocation of Donald Judd’s work, is an example of this, as she combines her own understanding of Modernist theory with traditional interpretations, in relation to what Greenberg believed to be ‘low’ art. Not only is Krauss promoting these concepts in her writing but as we have just seen, her visual choices in representation of these ideas challenges the Greenbergian tradition her criticism was born out of. All evidence of Krauss moving traditionally Modern art criticism forward to a postModernist orientation style of writing is illuminated by the fact that Greenberg was incredibly resistant in embracing new technologies, working methods and theories.

The final lines of Greenberg’s 1971 article, ‘Necessity of “Formalism”’ exemplify Krauss’s decision to include visual sources to support her argument. Rather than surmising his points with supplementary evidence, Greenberg concludes his argument with the proclamation:

“It embarrasses me to have to repeat this, but I feel I can count here on the illiteracy of enough of my readers in the matter of what can and what can’t be legitimately put in words about works of art.”

This comment stands in stark comparison to Krauss’s use of visuals to aid in the articulation of her ideas. His refusal to modify his methods of application and exposition have been recorded in print by colleagues and supporters, Michael Fried and Thierry de Duve. Fried claims that Greenberg was never comfortable utilizing technology and in fact refused to use slides in any of his lectures, leaving the audience unable to visualize what it was exactly that he was talking about. Having observed the benefits of visual prompts in Lippard and Krauss, Greenberg’s choice to retain a traditional brand of criticism with no imagery in order to retain a supposed higher level of writing, speaks to his elitist attitude and promotion of pure high culture.

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Krauss’s inclusions of diagrams to clarify and cement her arguments is overarched by her application of conceptual theories. As mentioned in the introductory paragraphs of this chapter, Krauss’s tendency to present her ideas conceptually is a mark of her alliance with Modernist tendencies. The fact that ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’ has been published with the extended title ‘Toward PostModernism’ is the first signal to readers who are familiar with her past œuvre, that her writing will branch out to assimilate a postModern reading.

The premise of ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’ was to rupture the relationship between past and postModern cultural practise relevant to 1978 pieces. In the introductory paragraphs of this article, Krauss demonstrates her ability to merge conceptual frameworks in cataloguing key works that define the constitution of sculpture. The narrative she forms is conceptual as she speaks lucidly about the development of sculpture in the hands of art criticism. In reference to who we can presume is Greenberg, Krauss states: “The critical operations that have accompanied postwar American art have largely worked in the service of this manipulation.” To begin with, a return to the value of high art as heralded by Greenberg is evident in the articles introductory paragraphs. Krauss provides a short narrative on the recent history of sculpture from the time in which she was writing. In doing so she signals the need to historicize creative epochs, even those that were shifting at the time of her writing.

In conclusion Clement Greenberg has hugely influenced the development of Krauss’s critical career. Her relationship with Greenberg is somewhat tumultuous as her publication The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths symbolises her desire to maintain a hold on her formalist roots however still attempting to move forward and apply the same theories to works of art built from mixed mediums and conceptual theories.

David Joselit’s writing symbolizes a new chapter in contemporary art criticism that directly reflects the social and historical context his work sits within. The industry for visual art writing has developed rapidly since the time in which Greenberg was practising and it is now being practised more widely and frequently than ever before. Not only has the number of art publications increased (journals, magazines, and zines) we have also seen the emergence of new media projects and online platforms.

Blurred boundaries between forms of art criticism (film, popular culture, academic criticism, and arts reviewing) have merged under the broad umbrella of critical content and in David Joselit we now see the result of hybrid criticism: the hybrid critic. Clement Greenberg was known to ignore technical developments and according to Michael Fried, quite often refused to use projectors in his presentations, as they did not faithfully represent works, as he wanted to present them. Greenberg’s attitude toward social and technical developments has no relevance within contemporary society. As has just been ascertained the ways in which the art criticism industry is growing is emerging through new media projects and online platforms. Boris Groys maintains, “Technology and fashion generate the important differences of our day.” The differences in social and historical contexts between Greenberg and Joselit may not be as insurmountable as it may appear. As a critic Greenberg chose to disengage with technology, despite the fact that it was available to him. Joselit, not only has the technology available to use in his developments as a critic (ensuring workflow, presenting arguments, and broadcasting his work to a wider audience) the need for technology has in fact solidified itself within the canon of art history. Indeed, it was already in the canon at the time in which Greenberg was writing, however he chose to ignore it because it didn’t comply with his definition of a high cultured work of art. Therefore the fact that Joselit embraces technology in both his criticism and in art practise signals a significant break away from Greenbergian tradition.

Joselit’s critical direction is similar to that of Marshall McLuhan, an earlier critic who was famed for his appreciation of the form of the medium found in his article ’The Medium is the Message.’ The premise of McLuhan’s text looks at the concept that the ‘content’ of any specific medium (be it written, visual, or even electrical) is always another medium. McLuhan’s concept essentially narrates the consequences of social and technological designs and patterns, looking towards the intrinsic ‘message’ of mediums and their scale when intertwined with human affairs. In relation to Abstract painting, McLuhan claims that the work represents “direct manifestation of creative thought processes as they might appear in
computer designs.” Although Greenberg would have agreed with McLuhan’s claim that Abstract Expressionism was a direct reflection of the initial creative content he would have undoubtedly challenged their being likened to computer designs. McLuhan’s argument surmises that the social implications of the medium become more pronounced as society itself develops. Although a rather convoluted concept, the notion that content and the medium are intrinsically aligned with social values is paramount within David Joselit’s texts.

Joselit’s 2000 article, ‘The Video Public Sphere’ exemplifies these issues. The initial premise of this text is that television fosters a particular kind of spectatorship. In later day McLuhan mode Joselit claims that spectatorship in a televisial sphere splits spectator-identification, creating a reflection of the viewer’s experience. Following along this trajectory Joselit discusses the impact of consumer television. He claims that commercial videos redirect subversive characteristics and activities into social and culturally acceptable forms. He arrives at this point in his argument after discussing Herman Gray’s study that explored cultural shifts in television, specifically, the expansion of dramas and sitcoms featuring black characters. Gray claimed that networks made these shifts in order to engage African American viewers and to not alienate white audiences. In articulating Gray’s arguments Joselit is able to highlight consumer culture and signal to the fact that identities are affected by mass-media strategies. Some might define Gray’s claims as a social study and it is therefore interesting that Joselit has chosen to incorporate his findings into his own text. Again, this demonstrates a break away from Greenberg’s canon as he has chosen to include social issues into his interpretation and critical engagement with art.

At this point in his argument he leads in particular towards the inclusion of video artist Peter Campus. After establishing spectator effects in commercial video Joselit turns his attention to video works within an art context. Joselit is particularly interested in Campus’s rejection of formalist qualities: instead of creating quick, fast-paced montages, Campus’s early works consisted of closed-circuit videos that sat within the gallery and projected images of viewers back to themselves as a modified image.

The aim of Joselit’s argument in this article is to challenge the stability of the medium as the basis of formal analysis. He states: “…rather than assuming the stability of artistic media as objects of study, that we undertake a genealogy of particular image technologies, without artificially dividing them into a prior categories such as “television” and “video” art.” This quote is indicative of Joselit’s major break from Greenberg’s influence. Joselit is practicing art criticism at a time when boundaries between practical and critical disciplines are merging. Essentially, Joselit’s writing demonstrates the value in creating interdisciplinary art criticism, just as we have seen art itself being merged, so too now does its criticism. The interdisciplinary nature of Joselit’s arguments further reflects the hybrid nature of his writing. A similar merge of disciplines, fine art and video work is apparent in his 2007 publication Feedback, Television Against Democracy. In the preface he states:

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- Joselit, David, ‘The Video Public Sphere,’ Art Journal, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Summer), College Art Association, 2000, p. 48
- ibid.
- ibid. p. 49
- ibid. p. 53
“Feedback is an art-historical study whose archive is not an artist’s oeuvre, a style, a theme, or even a medium. Instead, it recounts certain events in the video ecology of midcentury America that disrupted or reconfigured television’s closed circuit.”

This extract clarifies the role of cultural studies in Joselit’s criticism. By continuing to revise the divisions between mediums, themes, and styles Joselit contributes to art history’s critical canon in a way that is refreshing and far broader than the concepts Greenberg promoted. For example, in ‘The Video Public Sphere’ Joselit refers to the discrepancies between high and low culture claiming that visual hierarchies should be replaced by new critical analysis that has the capacity to consider interdisciplinary modalities. With a staunch belief in what constitutes high and low culture, Clement Greenberg would not have advocated the mergence of art history with other mediums.

As has been noted in relation to Lippard and Krauss’s writing, Greenberg’s definition of kitsch consists of cultural forms influenced by contrasting cultures in the shape of themes, rules of thumb, stratagems, and creative devices, all of which are accessible to those whose understanding of culture cannot be found within a higher canon. After extracting all desirable cultural fragments, kitsch art then “converts them into a system, and discards the rest.” Therefore, Peter Campus’s closed circuit videos would most certainly be defined as kitsch. Part of the success of Joselit’s writing is that he embraces these qualities and discusses them with the intelligent rigour of a highly academic critic. In being able to observe changes in artist developments and produce art criticism that syncs with mixed mediums being discussed, Joselit is able to create a new brand of art criticism that projects longevity into the future. Just how highly evolved the premise of Joselit’s writing is can be better understood in comparison to a comment Roger Fry made in his 1909 ‘An Essay in Aesthetics.’ When discussing the power of fine art he makes the claim “…it will be surprising that they have any recognizable affinity with other arts, such as music or architecture, in which the imitation of actual objects is a negligible quantity.”

In David Joselit’s writing we see the death of the formalist critic. At no point in his argument does Joselit place an emphasis on positivist theories or Modernist motions toward reading art history. However he still includes formal analysis as part of his critical writing and finds value in describing a work of art. For example when describing Campus’s video he states: “through the camera, as well in mirrors and by shadows” when describing his non-identical images. For key reasons, by including a formal analysis in this way Joselit is better able to describe the works and explicate his arguments further. However in comparison to the descriptions Greenberg gave in his Modernist driven critiques, although blurred and vague, his recollections of the aesthetic qualities are far more detailed.

In conclusion the writing of David Joselit marks a severe break away from the traditional canon Greenberg established. In Joselit’s writing we see a new brand of art criticism coming to the foreground that supports interdisciplinary cultural products and produce. By diminishing the reputation of the formalist critic, Joselit is able to critically engage with his social context and create art criticism that is
adaptable to all forms of access, as mentioned, via new media projects, online platforms and numerous types of art publications.
Conclusion

At the end of my research and analysis of Greenberg’s influence and relevance in the writing of Lippard, Krauss, and Joselit, I conclude that the formalist critic no longer has a place within contemporary art criticism. As at the beginning of my argument I will refer again to David Carrier’s statement: “Just as art has its history, so also does the writing about that art.” The development of critical art history since Clement Greenberg’s early fame and recognition has been redefined to include a broader scope of an art historical canon that can no longer be defined by a single formalist approach toward reading art. Whilst the relevance and need for formalism remains within critical art history, there is no longer any value behind the concept of the formalist critic.

Boris Groys makes the interesting assertion in ‘Critical Reflections,’ that if Greenberg had not used the emergence of the avant-garde to define new lines of demarcation in art history and theory it would have significantly altered the formation of art history. Despite the fact that Groys makes no mention of Greenberg as a formalist critic in this instance, I am certainly inclined to agree with his assertions. The graph that Greenberg created through his engagement and critical dialogue surrounding the avant-garde movement and Modernist period in New York shaped the formation of criticism that followed. Through his authoritative voice and formal relevance at the time in which he began writing, his aesthetically driven arguments formed a continuation from Clive Bell and Roger Fry’s criticism. In this way Greenberg was able to influence everyday interpretations of the movement and in turn shape the path of art history to his own tastes.

In the writing of each critic considered in my argument the formalist presence of Greenberg has been worked around and reshaped in alternative ways. Eradicating particular elements of Greenberg’s positivist canon of art history has enabled each critic to reject the concept of the formalist critic whilst retaining the application of formalism itself. In Chapter two looking at Lucy Lippard we saw her defiantly react against the formalist critics definition of art history through her choice of artworks to critique and the style in which she chose to discuss their importance. In the work of Rosalind Krauss we saw how her writing sought to hold onto the ties she maintained with her early days as a Modernist critic, only to later severe associations and admit her own disenchantment with the approach after having discovered new freedom in Structuralist pluralist theories. David Joselit demonstrates the movement toward new brands of criticism that account for visual studies as an entity and encourages an interdisciplinary approach towards studying cultural theory.

As Lucy Lippard vigorously broke away from the oppressive and elitist attitude Greenberg established she was able to redefine the role of the critic in her own manner. The foundation of Lippard’s arguments is propelled by Greenberg’s oppression in her choice of works to critique and the manner in which she discusses their content, specifically, including references to political and social issues surrounding the pieces. In this way her writing challenges Greenberg’s influence and her disengagement with Greenberg’s notion of high and low culture is disregarded in her promotion of and

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instead of promoting a high and low canon Lippard forms her own trajectory in her return to the importance of content. As an addition to this my argument also demonstrated how Lippard’s inclusion of imagery juxtaposed against blocks of her text emphasised her ability to break away from Greenberg and form her own standard of art criticism. By including visual sources of the artworks being discussed, Lippard’s criticism encourages deeper engagement with her readership. Additionally, the images help to add relevance to the work she is writing about: Lippard’s texts directly reference the content of the work and provide supplementary visual sources to support her claims and in this way she creates art criticism that is useful and informative.

Rosalind Krauss’s journey towards rejecting Greenberg’s positivist method undoubtedly shaped her contributions to art criticisms canon. Krauss’s ability to recognize Modernist restrictions in turn promoted her desire to champion Structuralist theories and employ these to interpret cultural production. Krauss’s dedication to a Greenbergian tradition of reading art provided the basis from which she was able to change the direction of her role as a critic and maintain a level of rigour within her critical content. Krauss came to define her new approach toward interpreting art within the critical canon as the “post-medium condition,” influenced by the writings of Jean-François Lyotard and Georges Bataille. Krauss’s influence on the ways in which Modernist criticism and positivist based interpretations of art history has marked a step forward toward building a diverse range of critical responses that more aptly reflects the diverse nature of art history within a contemporary context.

In this way David Joselit’s move toward redefining the very role of art history itself marks another contribution toward rejecting the concept of the formalist critic whilst retaining the underlying value of formalism. In Joselit’s writing we see his desire to redefine the ways in which we classify visual culture. Essentially he seeks to develop an interdisciplinary approach toward art criticism that aids in the dissemination of high and low culture, ultimately merging concepts behind art history to better suit the contemporary context that art sits within. Joselit’s writing is also competing with the contemporary society his readership sits within. Therefore the cultural criticism he produces must reflect in turn the various points of access we now have to types of cultural criticism via online platforms and alternative publications, be they academic, popular culture, video, or audio content. Joselit’s writing creatively considers new boundaries for cultural criticism and he embraces the diversity of visual art, suggesting, as we have seen, that the relationship between criticism designed for complex visual modalities be termed ‘Visual Studies.’

The development of new cultural epochs has essentially changed the ways in which critics engage with and critically evaluate art history. Although the relevance of the formalist critic, Clement Greenberg may no longer remain, his legacy has influenced the trajectories of critics who came to prominence after him. Greenberg remains the paradigm for Modernist art history. Although he did not see the value of art following this period the life of art is eternal, and as art develops, critics shall appropriate systems to analyse and interpret cultural production within a framework that best suits their social context and critical needs.

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