

Shine Bright LLCE Cycle Terminal

File 11 Minimal arts

You Call That Poetry?! p. 127

How seven letters managed to freak out an entire nation.

A year after “lighgt” appeared in *The Chicago Review*, George Plimpton decided to include it in the second volume of *The American Literary Anthology*, which he was editing for the National Endowment for the Arts. [...] The NEA¹ cut him a check for \$750—the same as all the other authors in the anthology. The review kept \$250, and Saroyan kept the rest. [...] Mailbags of letters from fuming² taxpayers clogged³ the agency’s boxes, most of them variations on a theme: We can’t afford to lower taxes but we can pay some beatnik weirdo⁴ \$500 to write one word...and not even spell it right?!

Ian Daly, *poetryfoundation.org*, August 25, 2007

1. National Endowment for the Arts 2. furious 3. fill, block 4. eccentric

A defining essay p. 129

In his essay *Specific Objects*, artist Donald Judd explains how threedimensional objects can become works of art. Most critics believe this essay defines minimalism.

Three dimensions are real space. That gets rid of the problem of illusionism and of literal space, space in and around marks and colors. [...] The several limits of painting are no longer present. A work can be as powerful as it can be thought to be. Actual space is intrinsically more powerful and specific than paint on a flat surface. Obviously, anything in three dimensions can be any shape, regular or irregular, and can have any relation to the wall, floor, ceiling, room, rooms or exterior or none at all. Any material can be used, as is or painted.

Donald Judd, *Specific Objects*, 1965

Minimal art in and beyond its time p. 129

Art rarely arises in the rarefied atmosphere of theory. Like any authentic art, Minimal Art too was a child of its age, and, like Pop Art, reflected consciously or unconsciously the reality of society in 1960s America, a society that was undergoing a radical upheaval¹.

Following the 1950s, a decade marked by the Cold War, the anti-communist witch-hunts, and prudish bigotry, the time was ripe² for far-reaching changes in politics and society. [...] Various “liberation” movements increasingly threw-off the shackles³ of state supervision, holding their own demonstrations to make their voices heard, and – at least on paper – quickly saw their aims realised. All this happened against the background of a prospering economy, because from the economic point of view, the USA in the early 1960s experienced the inauguration of the late-capitalist age of mass-production and massconsumption, and in the form of television, there was a mass medium available which could effectively and literally bring home the alleged⁴ advantages of increasing numbers of new products.

Daniel Marzona, *Minimal Art*, 2009

1. sudden change 2. ready 3. chains 4. supposed

Minimalist writing? p. 130

Saturday afternoon the mother drove to the bakery in the shopping center. After looking through a loose-leaf binder with photographs of cakes taped onto the pages, she ordered chocolate, the child's favorite. The cake she chose was decorated with a spaceship and a launching pad under a sprinkling of white stars. The name SCOTTY would be iced on in green as if it were the name of the spaceship.

The baker listened thoughtfully when the mother told him Scotty would be eight years old. He was an older man, this baker, and he wore a curious apron, a heavy thing with loops that went under his arms and around his back and then crossed in front again where they were tied in a very thick knot. He kept wiping his hands on the front of the apron as he listened to the woman, his wet eyes examining her lips as she studied the samples and talked.

He let her take her time. He was in no hurry.

The mother decided on the spaceship cake, and then she gave the baker her name and her telephone number. The cake would be ready Monday morning, in plenty of time for the party Monday afternoon. This was all the baker was willing to say. No pleasantries, just this small exchange, the barest information, nothing that was not necessary.

Monday morning, the boy was walking to school. He was in the company of another boy, the two boys passing a bag of potato chips back and forth between them. The birthday boy was trying to trick the other boy into telling what he was going to give in the way of a present.

At an intersection, without looking, the birthday boy stepped off the curb, and was promptly knocked down by a car. He fell on his side, his head in the gutter, his legs in the road as if he were climbing a wall.

The other boy stood holding the potato chips. He was wondering if he should finish the rest or continue on to school.

The birthday boy did not cry. But neither did he wish to talk anymore. He would not answer when the other boy asked what it felt like to be hit by a car. The

birthday boy got up and turned back for home, at which time the other boy waved good-bye and headed off for school.

Raymond Carver, "The Bath" in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*,

1981

Reacting to Carver's writing p. 131

A major row is brewing in American letters. At issue is the text of Raymond Carver's 1981 short story collection, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*; a canonical work of "minimalist" fiction, much admired for its spare, laconic style, and its way of configuring ordinary life to yield¹ unexpectedly powerful emotions. Well, it turns out that Carver wasn't quite the coolly surgical artist that these impeccable deployments of the said and the unsaid suggest. His editor at Knopf, Gordon Lish, cut the stories radically before publication, jettisoning² as much as half of the original in some cases, reshaping them and changing the way they ended. Carver wasn't at all pleased with the results. [...]

Now his widow³, Tess Gallagher, wants to bring out the original versions, restored to their pre-Lish expansiveness by the Carver scholars William Stull and Maureen Carroll. She isn't advocating pulling the Lish versions from the shelves, but she does seem intent on launching a "real" Carver; a kinder, gentler, "life-affirming" (in the words of Stull and Carroll) Carver as an alternative option for the book-buying public. Knopf is opposed to the idea, and a legal battle appears to be in the offing. [...]

The case is complicated by the fact that Carver himself, unlike Eliot⁴, seems to have persisted in preferring his own original versions (though this is a murky matter too).

James Lasdun, *theguardian.com*, October 22, 2007

1. provide 2. abandon 3. *veuve* 4. T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) was a famous poet whose work was edited.

A controversial artwork p. 132

Carl Andre's Equivalent VIII: the most boring controversial artwork ever

Most works of art that cause controversy are by their nature sensational. They are sexually graphic, or violent, or politically contentious¹. Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* is different. It is the most boring controversial artwork of all time. [...]

One problem is that if you look in your *Bluffer's Guide*² to Modern Art you will find that Andre is a minimalist, not a conceptual artist: there is a difference. Conceptual art was a movement in the late 1960s and 1970s that replaced paintings and sculptures with ideas: the art object became a concept, something that could not be bought or sold because it was purely intellectual. *Equivalent VIII* is not immaterial in the way conceptual art aspired to be. It is as solid as brick. It is also as stupid as brick. If this is "idea art" (another term for conceptual art in the 1960s), tell me: what is the idea it embodies?

Equivalent VIII is the very opposite of conceptual art. Instead of airily escaping the physical nature of art into a world of thought, it dumbly and relentlessly³ insists on its material reality – and nothing else. Being an arrangement of bricks is all this arrangement of bricks does or wants to do. It is brute fact. It is there. And that's that.

Jonathan Jones, *theguardian.com*, September 20, 2016

1. controversial 2. a collection of guidebooks 3. persistently

Marfa, Texas: An Unlikely Art Oasis In A Desert Town p. 133

Vegan food, straw-bale houses¹ and funky bars filled with artsy kids clinking Shiner Bocks² with famous painters and film directors. Their pearl-buttoned shirts and cowboy boots can make the place feel like a Western-themed outpost of Brooklyn. And for a town of only about 2,000 people, you can amuse yourself nightly with screenings, readings and, of course, gallery shows, like the one for sculptor Campbell Bosworth. [...]

Johnson runs Marfa's bookstore, with an unsurprising emphasis on art books, art theory and poetry journals. Yoga classes are held there in the morning. It's the only place that sells The New York Times. But even though the Marfa Book Co. makes the town more tourist-friendly, Johnson does not believe Donald Judd would approve of Marfa's emergence as a chic art world destination.

"He thought that making an arts-based cultural tourism was necessarily carnivalesque, which was, for him, anathema³ to the experience of art," he explains. "He knew that people would come see it, but he did not want that to be a large part of the economy, because he thought, socially, that would have a negative impact."

Neda Ulaby, *www.npr.org*, August 2, 2012

1. *maisons en bottes de paille* 2. share a drink 3. hateful, objectionable