

THE INTERRELATION OF ART AND SPACE: AN INVESTIGATION OF LATE
NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY
EUROPEAN PAINTING AND INTERIOR SPACE

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Interior Design

MAY 2004

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of DEVIN MARIE FITZPATRICK find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Chair

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Abstract

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May 2004

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Today, art related spaces that uphold the modern ideal of neutrality between art and space are being rethought. Interior spaces that adhere to the neutral characteristics of the unobstructed, unadorned, and universal are now criticized as being 'sterile' or 'dead,' while on the other hand; spaces that move away from this neutral relationship are often criticized as being too 'overpowering' for art. The ideal of the neutralized relationship between art and space, as manifested in the standardized 'white box,' is finding itself prone to contemporary rethinking; as a result, the nature of the appropriate relationship between art and space remains vague.

This study suggests that art and space have a vital connection, an interrelationship, and that modernism has influentially defined this interrelationship through the theoretical and aesthetic ideology of neutrality. In consequence, this study challenges the idea of neutrality as an appropriate solution for the interrelationship of art

and interior space and asks: if neutrality is not the solution, *what should then characterize the interrelationship of art and space?*

To answer this question, this study takes an unusual approach as it draws from late nineteenth and early twentieth century artistic and creative thought, specifically within the medium of European painting, as its framework of research and argument. Through the method of a theoretical investigation, a historical review of artistic statements concerning painting and space provides a foundation for the notion of the interrelation of art and space and reveals alternative approaches to this relationship, thereby challenging the supremacy of neutrality.

A discussion follows and suggests solutions that have been interpreted from examples within the theoretical investigation. This study argues that a greater emphasis on the domain of interior space along with the elements of *specificity*, *atmosphere*, and *integration* provide effective solutions that encourage the interrelationship of art and interior space and challenge the prevailing ideology of neutrality. The study concludes by arguing for the assertive participation of interior designers within this complex dialogue and also recommends how further study can be directed in order to expand this topic.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this accomplishment to S.F.B. Eckley.
Thank you for all your emotional and technical support throughout this process!
A special expression of gratitude for my parent's continual encouragement.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“No object of nature or of art can ever exist or has ever existed without environment... We, the inheritors of chaos, must be the architects of a new unity. These galleries are a demonstration of a changing world, in which the artist’s work stands forth as a vital entity in a spatial whole, and art stands forth as a vital link in the structure of a new myth.”

~Frederick Kiesler from “Note on Designing the Gallery,” 1942

The relationship of art and its spatial counterpart has directed artistic dialogue and defined artistic mediums throughout time. Artists, especially painters have focused their work towards exploring the interrelationship of three-dimensional space and the two-dimensional space of the canvas. While the nature of this relationship has taken various forms and meanings, its complexity began to surface specifically throughout the European drive for democracy that marked the sixteenth through twentieth centuries. Alongside of this was the continuous evolution of the understanding of space and the specified domain of the interior. It was during the twentieth century that interpretations of the interrelation of art and space placed a decisive mark on the way future minds would understand its complex nature.

Modernism, in the mid-twentieth century, recognized certain issues within the relationship and strove to challenge and redefine them. During this time architects like Manfred Lehbruck, who trained under Mies van der Rohe, believed that “every object needs space if its qualities are to be brought out.”¹ The influential designer, Frederick Kiesler, would call for an “[extension of] art forms in space, beyond their customary

limits.”² Kiesler demonstrated that the relationship of art and space expanded beyond the traditional limitations of the picture plane and canvas and into the interior environment; he argued in *The Second Manifesto of Correlation* that:

the traditional art *object*, be it a painting, sculpture, or a piece of architecture, is no longer seen as an isolated entity but must be considered within the context of this expanding *environment*. The *environment* becomes equally as important as the *object*, if not more so, because the *object* breathes into the surrounding and also inhales the realities of the environment no matter in what space. Close or wide apart, open or indoor.³

Following this concern over the significance of the vibrant interrelation of art (object) and spatial domain (environment), the director of the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred Barr, would ultimately redefine the relationship through a solution of neutralization. Barr would state that architectural detail and traditional hanging techniques in interior space were “death to a painting.”⁴ This new regard for the dynamic nature of art and space forced the traditional gallery and other art related spaces to be stripped of all adornment and ornamentation and to ultimately be formed into a standardized ‘white box.’

The relationship of art and space continues to challenge theoretical and aesthetic inquires in the twenty-first century. The influential architectural critic, Ada Louise Huxtable (1921-), demonstrates the important consequence of the relationship of art and space, specifically in the context of museums; she states:

when a museum and its contents come together as an integrated aesthetic, something special happens. The art is enlarged and exalted, and the

viewer's rewards and responses are increased. Creating that synthesis of art and setting is the challenge that still faces architects and directors. It is the secret of the great museum.⁵

Yet, contemporary theoretical inquiry continues to be caught within the tight reigns of modernism's neutralization of art and space. While the 'white box' continues to define the spatial domains and aesthetic characteristics of our buildings, the neutral paint has begun to crack under the disproving contemporary gaze. Addressing Barr's modern innovations within the relationship of art and space, the artist and critic, Brian O'Doherty, states "we have now reached a point where we see not the art but the space first."⁶ In his influential book, *Inside the White Cube*, O'Doherty believes that we continue to feed on the modernist disillusionment of spatial neutrality as we rely on its neutral kit of parts: white walls; minimal framing of art; and controlled light and exposure within the interior as solutions to our own gallery spaces.

Believing that artworks deserve a spatial relationship beyond the confines of unobstructed neutral space, some architects have reacted against the idea of spatial neutrality. Those who do and involve post-modern ideas that support such notions of new materials, the transparency of space, and alternative scale, have been accused by architectural critics like Adachiara Zevi of "suffocating artwork" in order to put their own personal "stamp" on the gallery space.⁷ Among the various directions that art and space have been understood and configured, the overall question about the nature of the relationship between artworks and physical space in the twenty-first century remains vague.

This study will attempt to provide clarification to the vagueness that surrounds the relationship of art and space and in doing so; it will demonstrate that artworks do in fact have a vital interrelation to their immediate surroundings. In order to move beyond the prevailing uncertainty that surrounds the contemporary understanding of this relationship, this research will investigate solutions that effectively support the interrelation of art and space. Primarily, this investigation will address the solution of neutrality and explore the cause for its initial ambitions and gestures, questioning its appropriateness today.

In order to further examine this topic, an exploration of art and space before the full maturation of modernism will occur. The medium of late nineteenth and early twentieth century European painting will provide a distinct artistic lens into this query. Influential claims of theorists, critics, and artists who further developed and defined ideas about painting and its relationship to space will be identified. The artistic medium of painting during this time was important to the dialogue of art and space as it revealed new understandings about the relationship between two-dimensional canvas and three-dimensional space. This investigation will recognize solutions provided by artists in order to encourage the interrelation of art and space. It will be argued that the elements of *interiority*, *atmosphere*, and *specificity*, along with an emphasis of the scope of interior space are solutions that support the interrelation of art and space, thereby sustaining a greater appreciation and value for art.

Scope of Study

The framework of this study begins with an investigation of theoretical understandings based on the interrelationship of art and space within the time frame of

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Information will be derived through comparison and summarization of literary sources composed of first-hand published accounts (letters, journals, manifestos) of artists, critics, and designers in the late nineteenth and twentieth century. Secondary sources about the contributions of these influential figures will be analyzed and summarized. Paintings, historical photographs, and drawings will provide insight to the topic and will be used in order to further illustrate key ideas. Contemporary art and architectural criticism will also be examined. All of these research models will be summarized, analyzed, and compiled in order to provide further insight into the dialogue of art and space.

Research findings will be explicated within the chapter, *Theoretical Investigation*, which will be organized into three parts: “Art Unbound,” “Art Unobstructed,” and “Art Boxed-In.” The first section, “Art Unbound: Manipulating the Boundaries of the Canvas,” will begin the theoretical investigation by highlighting particular achievements of late nineteenth and early twentieth century painters who demonstrated a concern for expanding the traditional spatial limitations of painting in order to address larger spatial issues within the interior. The second section, “Art Unobstructed: Modernist Visions for Art and Space” will pick up where early modernism in the twentieth century left off, focusing on how early modernist thinkers continued to unbind art and space beyond their typical considerations. At the end of this section, the idea and evolution of neutrality will be exposed. The last section, “Art Boxed-In: Contemporary Criticism of the Neutral White Box,” will examine the relevance and metamorphosis of this crucial ideology within today’s context. Ultimately, it will be demonstrated that contemporary mindset is challenging the notion of neutrality in order to seek new solutions for this relationship.

This study will then present a *Discussion* chapter in order to suggest possible solutions for this new understanding. The discussion will return to the painters and thinkers presented within the *Theoretical Investigation* chapter and will provide further analysis of how their resolutions might direct and inform popular understanding of the relationship of art and space today. The *Conclusion* of this study will present an interpretation of how ideas found within the discussion can be used within present-day building campaigns. Furthermore, the conclusion will argue for the assertiveness of the profession of interior design in the hope of reaching new solutions and directions.

Limitations

This research limits itself to exploring a particular time of artistic pursuit in Western Europe. Specifically, it will highlight some achievements of late nineteenth and early twentieth century painters who took departing footsteps from the patronage of Impressionism and went on to parent early Modernism. Many historians would argue that French artists such as Henri Matisse and the Nabi brotherhood fit within the stylistic and ideological paradigm of Post-Impressionism, others would argue that they were early modernists. However, stylistic congruencies in painting will not be imperative to this study. Overall, what is important to recognize is the binding cord that ran between the artists discussed -- the crucial fact that these artists kept their eyes, ears, and paint brushes open and aware of artistic and theoretical innovations that took public and critical ground throughout Europe and America in the mid to late nineteenth century. They were not just passively aware of artistic changes from their contemporaries, but were active participants in the assessment and review of artistic innovation. Historical accounts trace

artists such as Henri Matisse, Roger Fry, and members of the Nabi brotherhood as they were actively engaged in artistic dialogue by visiting exhibitions, co-organizing exhibitions and exchanging criticism and commentary. However, as previously stated these artists were just a select sampling of the artistic creativity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In order to secure the objectives of this study, several theoretical and terminological definitions must be addressed. First, the idea of space takes on a complex association. When referring to space, this study assumes that space is understood as a relationship between points or objects, or in this case as a relationship between boundaries. This relationship finds further boundary within the confines of interior space, or where architecture enfolds to form enclosure. By enclosing and defining, dimensional, psychological, behavioral, and ideological limitations result. This investigation seeks to explore the barriers between the relationship of two-dimensional painting and the surrounding third dimension of space. It will be argued that space should be considered under the present-day notion of interior space. However, the idea of interior space in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was one that evolved in significance and in connection to its allied disciplines; during this time, attention to interior space as an important element that affected human behavior, aesthetic experience and psyche was beginning to be recognized but was not yet fully realized. Therefore by directing attention to the interrelation of art and space within the framework of interior space, interior space will continue to be credited as unique and legitimate.

The idea of painting, especially easel painting, also carries with it unique spatial understandings. Pictorial space determines an artwork's artistic scope and aesthetic

organization. Space as understood through two-dimensional painting often refers to an implied domain through the means of perspective within the boundary of the painting's picture plane. This study will find its purpose in investigating the abstract realm where these two spatial domains, pictorial space and interior space, converge.

Furthermore, limitations of terminology are apparent as specific definitions and assumptions about ideas such as exhibition design, installation art, and the decorative bring ambiguity to this topic. This study will not provide a full account of the evolution of the profession of exhibition design, but will instead reveal some of its early milestones as it helped frame ideas about painting and space.⁸ Another term to be defined in relation to the scope of this study is installation art.⁹ According to Reiss in her book, *From Margins to Center: the Spaces of Installation Art*, installation art is categorized as “an assemblage or environment constructed *in* the gallery specifically for a particular exhibition.”¹⁰ Overall, installations are characterized by an artist's response to a particular site, often the gallery, and are focused at engaging the spatial surroundings. While the nature of installation art is to address a particular location or space, it does so by adapting various attributes of the space in order to create a dimensional and sensual artistic statement. However, the purpose of this study is to consider the relationship between a two-dimensional object, a painting, and the dimension of space. The aims and understandings of this study therefore differ from the context of multidimensional and sensual installation art.

Ultimately, following the doctrine of modern art, it is the interaction of the viewer in space that provides essential meaning for the artwork. This study departs from spatial parallels to installation art because it desires to pacify the active viewer in space.

Reiss argues that it is the viewer's experience of art that becomes crucial to the relationship of how an artwork relates to and functions in space: "that there is always a reciprocal relationship of some kind between the viewer and the work, the work and space, and the space and the viewer."¹¹ With this in mind it is important to note that this study will attempt to move away from resonating in the active voice of the observer within the interrelation of art and space; instead, it will move towards a direction that will focus on the powerful impact of the viable relationship of art and space, forcing a passive and universal level of participation on behalf of the viewer.

By investigating ideas about art and space, theoretical notions may become misconstrued within the idea of the decorative. It is incorrect to assume that since artists were interested in redefining the spatial limitations of painting during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that their achievements relate directly to the decorative realm. While nineteenth-century artists such as the Nabis expressed interest in negotiating the ideology of the decorative, their merits can be also viewed within the direct dialogue of art and space. Years later, the De Stijl artist, Vilmos Huszar would clarify the issue of the decorative and the interrelation of art and space by stating that "the decorative is subordinated to the whole in which it is applied, where as plastic art [modern painting] wants to create a self-sufficient image, something that is a whole in itself."¹² Therefore according to Vilmos Huszar, while decoration had spatial interest and needed an architectural context, the medium of painting could have spatial connection but still maintain its own integrity. Even though the ambitions of nineteenth century painting ran parallel to the interest in the decorative, the medium of painting within this study will maintain its own integrity, even when applied to larger spatial and ornamental schemes.

Importantly, the nature of this investigation is not focused on an investigation of ideological, social and political issues that surround and inscribe the spatial conditions of art in the context of the gallery space or public museum. While artists of the past sought to reconfigure physical space in order to challenge ideologies such as art as a commercial commodity, the passive viewer, and the authority of the art institution, this paper will move away from resonating in such issues so that it can find focus within a direct reading of the spatial meanings that result from the manipulation and design of interior space.

CHAPTER TWO
THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION
THE INTERRELATION OF ART AND SPACE

In order to challenge the notion of neutrality, an investigation of theoretical issues and statements concerning art and space within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries must first be presented. Information gathered in the section, “Art Unbound: Manipulating the Boundaries of the Canvas,” will highlight the achievements of turn-of-the-century painters who belonged to influential artistic circles specifically interested in expanding painting beyond the conventional borders of the canvas. Painters whose contributions will be discussed are French artists such as Henri Matisse and the Nabi brotherhood, namely Edouard Vuillard and Maurice Denis. Other artists such as James McNeill Whistler and art critics like Roger Fry who observed this time period with critical eyes will be mentioned. All of these prominent figures will demonstrate how painters began to unbind their work and focus painting towards addressing larger spatial concerns within the immediate interior.

The second part of the theoretical investigation, “Art Unobstructed: Modernist Visions of Art and Space,” will concentrate on early modernism in the twentieth century. It will reveal the evolution of the understanding of art and space, promoted within the ideas and artistic statements of theorists, artists, and designers, until its principal formation within the doctrine of neutrality. Influential thinkers like Frederick Kiesler and Alfred Barr, along with members of artistic movements such as De Stijl and Dada, will be investigated as they continued to unbind and redefine art and space beyond their typical consideration.

Concluding the theoretical investigation will be the section, “Art Boxed-In: Contemporary Criticism of the Neutral White Box,” which will provide an analysis of contemporary ideas that respond to the lingering ideology of neutrality in the context of present day gallery spaces and museums. Overall, the evolution of these theoretical understandings will demonstrate the need for further exploration into the controversial issue of art and space and will display the motivations for encouraging the formation of new solutions within the contemporary mindset.

2.1.

Art Unbound: Manipulating the Boundaries of the Canvas in the late nineteenth century

This section describes how some European painters, evolving out of the lineage of Impressionism, attempted to reconcile their artistic medium with the spatial challenges and relationships that rose in relation to the emerging public art galleries and Salons within the late nineteenth century. It will be argued that the spatial challenges of painters during this time were found in their attention to: 1) the exhibition space, 2) the expansive domain of mural and decorative paintings and 3) the manipulation of the picture frame. In conclusion, examples presented in this section help demonstrate that painters believed that art responded to a greater spatial realm-- a realm that extended into the abstract implications of interior space.

Before an investigation of the spatial innovations can occur, an understanding of the traditional approach to the interrelation of painting and space that preceded the late nineteenth century must first be presented. Throughout early history, painting and space was related to the idea of collection and display. Collectors interested in the acquisition

of objects of universal wonderment, both natural and manmade, created *Wunderkammer* (cabinets of curiosity) in order to creatively display their private and eclectic collections.



Figure 1: Illustration of a 16th century Wunderkammer.

Later, following the influence of the Renaissance, these cluttered and assorted cabinets became galleries where paintings and natural specimens cohabitated and filled the interior walls from top to bottom. It wasn't until the eighteenth century with the advent of Empirical and Romantic ideals that a schism was declared between science and art; as a result, objects of natural wonderment were soon separated from artworks and galleries became dedicated to the display of art arranged by artistic styles.¹³

With the power shifts that marked the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these private galleries began to be revealed to the curious eyes of the public. The architectural and philosophical trend of classicism influenced picture galleries to be characterized by the rational virtues of symmetry, balance, and order. In these galleries, the convention of the frame along with a painting's own perspective system were assumed to be adequate factors that secured territoriality and individuality of art within shared space (Appendix B: a, b). With the frame serving as a spatial delineator, the presumption was made that

paintings could be hung close together, allowing gallery walls to be filled with numerous pictures.



Figure 2: *The Exhibition Gallery at the Louvre* by Samuel F.B. Morse (1832-33) reveals the traditional 19th century relationship between painting and space.

The relationship of painting and space within public institutions and galleries of the eighteenth and late nineteenth century was characterized by the tension of multiplicity and individuality. This same tension was found in Salon exhibitions in the nineteenth century, as numerous paintings were displayed within close proximity-- relying on the abstract boundaries of the frame and perspective system to enforce individual integrity (Appendix B:c). This stylistic and ideological method of displaying artwork in space, known as the *Salon style*, involved the stacking and puzzle like arrangement of paintings on a wall. Mary Anne Staniszewski in her book *The Power of Display* states that the salon style of configuration within the nineteenth century gallery referred to a densely tiered configuration of paintings on a wall.¹⁴ Within the compact mosaic wall arrangement, small paintings were typically reserved for the bottom tier, while larger works were seen on the top row and angled down at the viewer; importantly, the middle row was reserved for the most attractive paintings. Twenty-first century artist and critic,

Brian O' Doherty, notes that "the perfect hanging job [was] an ingenious mosaic of frames without a patch of wasted wall showing."¹⁵

It was customary within this traditional philosophy to hang works of art from various periods, genres, and styles together on the same wall and in the same room. The idea of chronological or stylistic sequence seemed apparent to many artists but was not seen in galleries until further modernist invention. The English artist, critic, and curator, Roger Fry (1866-1934), pointed out the fact that various reproductions of old-world masterpieces flooded the walls next to the original and highly valued works of art. While Fry stated that this was done in order to provide a means of education for emerging new masters, he ultimately believed that the galleries should be hierarchically rearranged so that it was "apparent to each and all that some things are more worthy than others of prolonged and serious attention."¹⁶ Artists in the nineteenth century found fault with institutionalized spatial protocols: the compact mosaic arrangement of paintings, the tension between multiplicity and individuality within the gallery interior, and the lack of historical meaning or hierarchy between works. What followed were reactions to the traditional understanding of the relation of painting and space. Ultimately, this rethinking would eventually lead to the extreme measure of enforced neutrality within the modern gallery space and museum.

The Exhibition Space

Following these traditional gallery guidelines, nineteenth century artists began to react against and provide alternative methods of how their art would be displayed within the compact spatial realms of the public gallery or Salon. The French Realist painter,

Gustav Courbet (1819-77), was noted to be the first artist to revolt against the hanging philosophy of the Salon and therefore produced his own temporary exhibition space in 1855. One artist who took great strides to establish his own conditions for the spatial relation of his paintings within the gallery was James Abbot McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). His exhibition at the Pall Mall in 1874 displayed his intent for “walls [to be] brought into harmony with the pictures upon them.”¹⁷ According to Whistler’s direction, the gallery at the Fine Art Society exhibition in 1883 was:

hung with white and yellow, had yellow matting on the floor, yellow chairs and yellow flower pots. The attendants at the door were in yellow and white livery, while the artist wore yellow socks, and his assistants yellow cravats.¹⁸

While this strategic play of yellow in the gallery interior revealed Whistler’s critical humor, more importantly it was seen as an example of an artist’s concern for manipulating the physical qualities of the interior in order to establish connection for his paintings. Following Whistler’s lead, other artists displayed an interest in directing creative attention towards the spatial considerations of their exhibitions.

Working as a curator for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Roger Fry attempted to manipulate the gallery space for an exhibition of old world masters in 1906. His plan was to create a “smalto effect” by treating the paint layers and wood stain of the gallery.¹⁹ Fry also mentioned how the color scheme of “celadon green, darker celadon, high up notes of gold and dry red” was chosen in order to “fit in with the Bramantino panels.”²⁰ Hence, artists in the late nineteenth century began an emerging interest in museum

display and exhibition design in order to address the physical and aesthetic constraints of the typical gallery interior.

Within this quest to reinterpret the boundaries of painting and the exhibition space was the issue of the ideological and spatial boundaries of the easel painting. During the late nineteenth century, artists were concerned with society's proscribed separation of 'high art' (easel painting) from that of 'craft' (decorative painting). Even though this was an ideological concern, it brought with it spatial implications. In their ambitions to react against the hanging philosophies of art institutions and reconcile high art with the artistic merits of craft, painters challenged the spatial and theoretical confines of the traditional anatomy of an easel painting: i.e. its canvas, paint, and frame. This resulted in the belief of the inherent and crucial relationship between the space within and outside of the picture plane and was further encouraged by extending the spatial boundaries of easel painting through both the means of mural and decorative painting along with the picture frame.

Mural and Decorative Painting

“No more easel painting!...The painter's work begins where architecture considers its work finished. The wall must remain a surface, it must not be opened for the depiction of infinite horizons.”

~Verkade from *Le Tourment de Dieu*²¹

The fervent return to the medium of mural and decorative painting in the late nineteenth century was in part due to the interest in reconciling high art with craft. Through movements like the Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau that marked the turn of the

nineteenth century, a great sensibility resulted as artists felt that in the past, mural, fresco, and decorative painting were valued as high art and given different artistic licenses than the confined easel painting. While this argument may give an understanding to the artistic trends of the time, a deeper reading demonstrates that by rethinking easel painting artists were also addressing certain spatial reservations. Decorative painting provided a renewed tool for artists who wanted to explore the boundaries of conventional painting and find their inspiration by using the tools of the frame, the wall, and the space of the interior in order to create one cohesive whole. While numerous artists in the nineteenth century turned to murals and decorative panels as key creative mediums, the French artists of the Nabi brotherhood were influential to the development of the mural as they effectively inquired into its spatial and ideological implications.

In *Beyond the Easel*, Nicholas Watkins states that the Nabi brotherhood preferred creating mural-size paintings instead of easel paintings as murals were “intended for specific architectural interiors.”²² The size and spatial expanse of mural painting allowed the development of a unique relationship to the interior. To further the understanding of the relationship between murals and interior space, Nabi artists such as Edouard Vuillard (1868-1940) would carefully consider the aesthetic and physical qualities of the interior that would relate to the commissioned work. Sketches show that Vuillard accounted for the dimensions and color of the interior room that housed his panel work, *Public Gardens* (1894) (Appendix B: e). Importantly, Vuillard also studied interior elements such as windows, doors, and fireplaces in order to break up his friezes within the space.

Vuillard’s series of decorative paintings, the *Album*, purposely took into consideration the

interior and its dimensions; it was said that the paintings appeared to be “emerging from the existing wallpaper designs.”²³

The interest in the spatial freedom of mural and decorative painting would continue to evolve into the twentieth century, when Expressionism and Abstract Expressionism would get a hold of its powerful spatial license. Mural painting was not the only means that allowed for the exploration of the confines of easel painting and the interior. Some artists took direct aim at negotiating the physical boundaries of the picture frame and its relationship to the interior.

The Frame

“the four sides of a frame are the most important parts of a picture. A painting or a drawing included in a given space ought, therefore, to be in perfect harmony with the frame just as a concert for chamber music will be interpreted differently according to the dimensions of the room in which it is to be heard.”

~Henri Matisse from “Temoignage”²⁴

Traditionally, the appearance and dimensions of frames were regulated by art institutions and an artist rarely had the opportunity to create the frame for his/her own work. Nineteenth century historian, Sadakichi Hartmann, referring to artists in the early 1900s stated that only few painters were against the standardized mechanically produced frame and therefore had their frames specifically designed for a particular picture.²⁵ Hartmann also noted that James McNeill Whistler was unique in that he customized his own frames that were overtly simple. The Nabi brotherhood also explored the issue of the frame in their mural and panel creations. Nancy Groom in *Beyond the Easel* states

that the unframed or minimally framed work of art was more prevalent in the artistic scheme of the Nabis since it suggested “a connection to a larger surface- an image that was to be completed by its placement within an interior.”²⁶

However, in the early twentieth century the French painter, Henri Matisse (1869-1954), provided further artistic influence on the limitations of the frame as he challenged its connection with space. To describe his concern, Matisse created an allegory that likened the idea of painting and space to the relationship of music and space. He stated, “A painting or a drawing included in a given space ought, therefore to be in perfect harmony with the frame.”²⁷ Of important note is the second part of his statement in which he argued that if these instruments (painting, space, and frame) were not in perfect harmony, the result could be an entirely different sound or experience for the viewer, “just as a concert for chamber music will be interpreted differently according to the dimensions of a room in which it is to be heard.”²⁸

His painting *Interior with Aubergines*, created in 1911, demonstrated Matisse’s interest in how the frame related to the melodies of interior space (Appendix B: h). Art Historian, Deepak Ananth, notes that Matisse painted the same floral motifs that appear inside the picture plane of the painting in reverse colors on the frame itself. Matisse therefore attempted to blur the lines between exteriority and interiority of the picture plane and space. He consented to the expansion of painting beyond its normal physical and ideological constraint of the frame, allowing it to seep stroke by stroke into the realm of the interior. With its painted borders, the painting defied the static relationship of picture plane, paint and frame, interior, and space. The relationship of interior and

painting was extended as the picture plane and paint now related to both the frame and surrounding space.

This section of the investigation has revealed artists' attempts at challenging the constraints associated with the medium of easel painting and the protocols found within the traditional gallery interior. By expanding painting beyond the canvas and onto the frame, wall, or interior, artists reevaluated the way art and interior space could potentially relate to one another. As a result, they opened the doors for new paintable surfaces and dimensions, thereby giving an innovative direction to the dialogue of painting and interior and the interrelation of art and space. Overall, they allowed for the evolution of new thought that would redirect the purpose and aesthetic of art related spaces which would one day become 'neutral' backdrops for art.

2.2.

Art Unobstructed: Modernist Visions for Art and Space

Following the lead of the late nineteenth century, voices in the twentieth century rose against the ideological, social, and economic boundaries of the gallery. This was specifically manifested in the idea of the gallery's influence and adherence to the notion of the separation of art from everyday life. Modernist artists and thinkers, following in the footsteps of late nineteenth and early twentieth century painters, continued to question previous assumptions about art and space. During this time, designers such as Manfred Lehbruck, El Lissitzky, and Frederick Kiesler began to abstract the relationship as they interpreted art as 'object' and space as 'environment.' Ultimately they would argue that the environment was essential to the character and value of art. Followers of the Dada art

movement embarked on whimsical and controversial campaigns to reexamine the structure and ideology of the gallery interior. Artists involved in De Stijl founded a new artistic philosophy based on a heightened understanding of the power of painting and architecture. Finally, with the opening of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, a new neutralized understanding of art became institutionalized.

De Stijl

One of the most influential contributors to the dialogue of art and space, specifically within the realm of painting and interior, was the De Stijl artistic circle. Their creative attention was directed at reconstituting a connection between all the artistic disciplines and reconnecting art with ‘life.’ To achieve these goals, they found cause to reexamine the relationship of painting and architecture. Nancy Troy, in her significant book, *The De Stijl Environment*, stated that their goal was to find the balance of a monumental style of painting that was in direct relation to architecture.²⁹

To achieve this relationship, De Stijl collaborators, like artists from the nineteenth century, addressed the spatial limitations of the frame. In an article for “Lijstenaesthetik” (the aesthetic of the frame), published in *De Stijl* in 1920, Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) criticized the use of frames. Troy states that van Doesburg believed that “frames tend to emphasize the separate, individual character of easel painting, reinforcing the viewer’s sense of standing before a single object rather than in the extended *space* of the painted composition.”³⁰ In a composition for a private dining room, van Doesburg refrained from the convention of the frame in order to paint directly on the wall surface. According to van Doesburg, this was done in order to create a “connection between

painting and the environment in an explicit, material sense, through the application of color to the architectural plane itself.”³¹

However, De Stijl artists did not feel that the frame was the only element that deterred painting away from a solid relationship with the architecture of the interior. In another essay, “De Stijl der toekomst” (the style of furniture) in 1917, van Doesburg suggested the idea of architectonic painting or painting whose abstract nature makes it fit to form a rhythmical unity with architecture.³² At the same time, Theo van Doesburg made an important distinction as he stated that Impressionism, with its unique perspectival elements, could not be understood as architectonic as it “could not work with architecture and therefore it remained easel painting.”³³ In other words, van Doesburg made the claim that easel painting, with its own distinct perspective system and framing device, could not form a direct relationship with architecture. Instead the idea remained that painting must be created in immediate connection with architecture so it could therefore “work rhythmically with the architecture” and have a “balanced relationship.”³⁴

Troy notes that the painter, Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), was unique to De Stijl as he still conformed to the merits of easel painting even though he was concerned with negotiating its spatial limitations. Mondrian wrote, “You should remember that my things, are still intended to be paintings, that is to say, they are plastic representations, in and by themselves, not part of a building.”³⁵ Like his predecessors, Mondrian explored the idea of extension of art into space, not by mural or frame painting, but by the implications of a painted motif. Throughout the 1920’s Mondrian began painting a diamond motif on his canvases. Historians believe that this specific motif was used in order for Mondrian to suggest further spatial expansion of his canvas (Appendix B: m).

Troy writes that Mondrian seemed to enjoy using this motif as it allowed him “to establish a strong relationship between the painted composition and the wall in front of which it would be seen.”³⁶

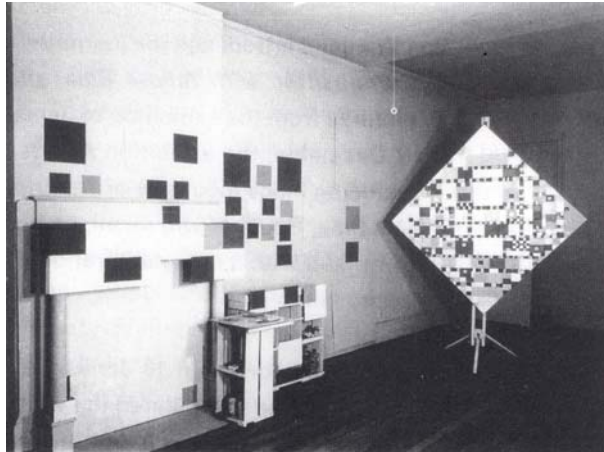


Figure 3: A photograph of Mondrian's studio shows his attention to interrelating his painting with interior space.

Importantly, De Stijl expanded the significance of painting beyond the easel and into the architecture of the interior in order to embrace harmony and congruence within space. The dimensions and qualities of interior space served as their forum, allowing them to negotiate ideas about the future direction of painting, the nature of painting, and the ultimate role of painting and architecture.

Duchamp and Surrealist Installations

While De Stijl negotiated the boundaries between the artistic disciplines of architecture and painting in the realm of the interior, other early modernists found interest in addressing human behavior within the interrelation of art and space, namely the issue of the passive observer in the gallery. In order to reconcile art with life, new configurations and ideas had to be challenged within the traditional gallery structure,

including its predetermined spatial formulas. The Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme at the Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1938 provided a unique attempt at instituting a new spatial and behavioral understanding of painting and art within the context of the art gallery. Here, the traditional gallery space along with the artworks themselves were manipulated to ultimately challenge both the behavior and psyche of the visitor along with the notion of the institutionalization of art.

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) and the Surrealists challenged the visitor's preconceived notion of how the space of a gallery should feel and function. Instead of the typical wooden gallery floor, visitors walked on a floor plane composed of leaves and sand. More extraordinary was Marcel Duchamp's interpretation of the windowed ceiling plane of the gallery. To the visitor's surprise, he had created a cloud canopy comprised of coal sacks that hung directly over their heads (Appendix B: i). The Surrealists also commented on the issue of light in the typical gallery interior. In order to see the paintings through the strategically enforced darkness, the artist Man Ray armed each visitor with his/her own flashlight (Appendix B: j). Overall, while these unusual adventures were commentaries on the social and ideological notion of art and the passive visitor, they can also be interpreted as commentary on the spatial and behavioral protocols within the traditional gallery interior.

Duchamp and the Surrealists continued their manipulative spatial play on the gallery throughout other exhibitions. The *Mile Long String* exhibit demonstrated Duchamp's commentary on the visitor's predefined path of movement through the gallery space and therefore his/her controlled exposure to artworks. Duchamp used string to 'tie' up the gallery and ultimately obstruct the visitor from defining his/her own path of

movement, enforcing his/her passivity. Duchamp created a commentary on the effect of spatial focus and distance between paintings in space. While historians argue that these examples are a foundation for installation art in the late twentieth century, they can also be understood as examples of how avant-garde modernism viewed and reacted to issues associated with art, human behavior, and psychology within the traditional gallery interior.

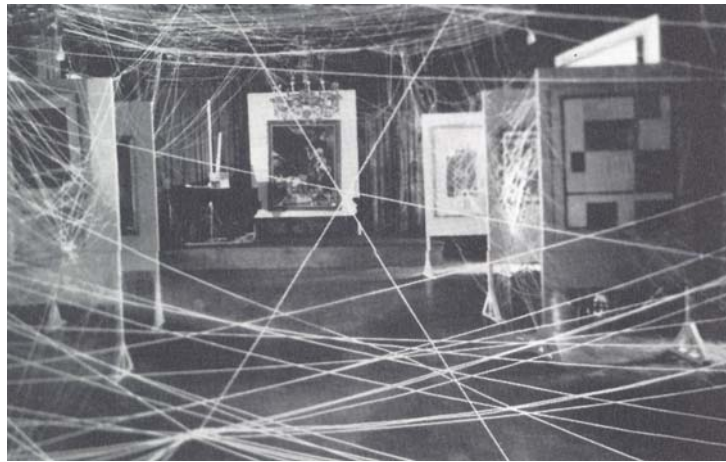


Figure 4: Duchamp's string presented a new spatial obstacle to the visitor's experience of painting and space.

Modern designers: Kiesler and Lissitzky

Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965) followed the theoretical and artistic lineage of Viennese Modernism, De Stijl, and the ideas of the Dadaists and Surrealists. His approach to the problem of abolishing the barrier between art and life involved a reaction against the typical spatial structure of the gallery. In his *Notes on Designing the Gallery*, Kiesler stated that primitive man knew no boundaries between art and life as no “frames or borders cut off his works of art from space or life.”³⁷ But for Kiesler, the issue of barriers also carried with it a spatial concern. He called the frame a “plastic barrier” and stated that the barrier must be dissolved so that space and art could be liberated,

boundless and ultimately endless.³⁸ Like his contemporaries Kiesler addressed the issue of the picture frame as a metaphorical and physical means for disconnection in space. He believed that the architect would serve to abolish such spatial confinements for art within the interior; ultimately creating a unity that was made possible by removing “the prison of the frame.”³⁹ Kiesler argued, “Today the framed painting on the wall has become a decorative cipher without life and meaning.”⁴⁰

To revitalize painting and redefine its relationship to space, Kiesler manipulated interior elements, artwork, and the viewer within the gallery space. In order to prevent paintings from being hung on the wall like “laundry on wash-lines,” Kiesler employed one of his most recognized solutions: actually detaching paintings from the wall.⁴¹ His innovative approach was first seen in the International Exhibition of New Theater Technique in Vienna in 1924. It was in this exhibition, as Staniszewski notes, that Kiesler first used his L and T structural element in order to detach the artworks from the walls and bring them into the direct space of the viewer (Appendix B: k).⁴² This allowed the paintings to be both physically and theoretically “separated from the room’s decorative detailing and architectural interior.”⁴³

Kiesler again engaged the ‘detachment from architecture’ tactic in his design for Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of the Century gallery in New York (1942). He not only deframed the modern paintings, but also projected them from the wall in order to detach them from the architecture. Paintings were configured in various angles and directions projecting into interior space. In the *Abstract Gallery*, deframed paintings were suspended in space on thin rope like mechanisms, allowing visitors to determine the angle, direction, and height desired for viewing the artwork. This design solution

encouraged a new approach to the interrelation of art and space and also challenged the visitor's predetermined notions of the traditional gallery space.



Figure 5: In Kiesler's Surrealist Gallery, paintings were projected from the walls at various angles and in multiple directions.

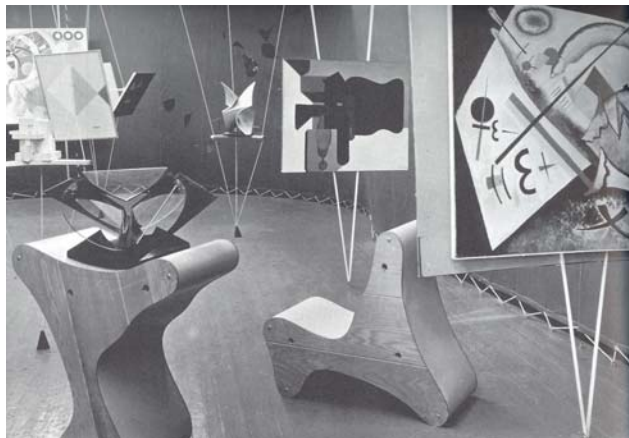


Figure 6: Paintings were also suspended on rope like mechanisms, completely detached from the architectural structure, and allowed to float in space.

Another designer associated with De Stijl who was imperative to redefining the relationship between painting, gallery interior, art and space was El Lissitzky. He was regarded for his artistic innovations in *Pronoun Room* and his design for the *Abstract Cabinet* (1927-28) commissioned by Alexander Dorner at the Landesmuseum in Hanover. Following his colleagues, Lissitzky's artistic concerns were directed at

addressing both art and space and the behavior of the viewer in space. His goal for the *Abstract Cabinet* was to present contemporary abstract painting in a novel way in order to actively engage the visitor within the gallery space. He wanted to encourage a dynamic relationship between art and space by allowing the space to transform itself as the visitor reconfigured the works of art. Lissitzky removed the frames from the paintings, inserted them on sliding panels, and allowed the paintings to move throughout the space revealing hidden layers of paintings underneath. In the *Abstract Cabinet*, painting folded over into the seams of architecture as movable panels changed the arrangement of the paintings within the interior space. Lissitzky allowed the walls to come alive through the implementation of three toned vertical panels that were applied in different directions so that they would change color as the visitor walked through the space.⁴⁴ This innovation allowed interior space to be dynamic for the viewer and therefore instituted a new relationship between art, space, and viewer.



Figure 7: Lissitzky's *Abstract Cabinet*. Painted panels moved and slid around the interior space of the gallery, allowing a dynamic relationship between art and space.

The spatial vitality and freedom that modernists such as Kiesler and Lissitzky gave to painting would eventually take another form-- a neutral form as the possibilities

of how interior space could be reinterpreted, along with an interest in challenging and activating the viewer would ultimately be addressed within the principle of neutrality.

The Modernist Museum

While early modernists demonstrated an interest in human behavior and experience within the interrelation of art and space in addition to expanding pictorial space into realm of interior space, these concerns would be addressed within the guise of neutrality. To understand the evolution of these concerns within the ideology of neutrality, the contributions of two leading museum directors: Alexander Dorner (1893-1957), the Director of the Landesmuseum in Hanover in 1922 and Alfred Barr (1902-1981), the Director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1929, must be examined. Both influential directors took innovative and monumental steps to codify the way that art within galleries and art related spaces has been understood and continues to be understood today.

Working as the new director of the Landesmuseum, Alexander Dorner adopted an innovative strategy to revive the spatial and ideological flaws of the museum's collection. Dorner innovatingly rearranged the collection of paintings according to styles and chronology, and even went as far as to reconfigure the gallery spaces. He significantly formulated the notion of "atmosphere rooms," with the intent of providing a minimal context for the artwork within the gallery space in order "to provide insight into the vision of an earlier day."⁴⁵ Dorner addressed interior concerns such as flooring, ceiling, furnishings, and windows in order to provide a coherent glimpse into a certain historical period. For instance, in the medieval rooms, Dorner used dark colors for the walls, as

medieval cathedrals that originally housed the artworks were dark by nature. The attempt to reflect interior elements of the original location and period of a piece was played out throughout the entire museum- from the Dutch rooms to the Rococo galleries. Dorner believed that his attention to spatial and atmospheric qualities would allow the paintings “speak for themselves.”⁴⁶ According to Dorner, the relation of space and art was one in which space could create a context for painting. However, even though Dorner still maintained a concern for spatial qualities within the interrelation of art and space, thereby encouraging the notion of atmospheric context, his modern innovations would influence the institutionalization of neutrality and the definitive formation of the ‘sterile’ white box.



Figure 8: Dorner’s Landstattmuseum before and after the reconfiguration of the collection and galleries.

Alfred Barr, would fall under the influence of Dorner’s understanding of the interrelation of art and space, but would employ an approach much different from Dorner’s atmosphere rooms in order to also allow “artworks to speak for themselves.” The white box aesthetic is often traced directly to Alfred Barr, the inaugural director of the United States of America’s first modern museum, the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. A deliberate attempt at catering to neutrality within the interrelation of art and space was brought to public attention at MoMA’s first exhibition, *Cezanne, Gauguin,*

Seurat, van Gogh in 1929. Staniszewski notes that while Barr kept a mild appreciation for traditional symmetrical placement of paintings, he did away with the skewed, closely hung arrangement that characterized the normal gallery hanging.⁴⁷ Even though the exhibit's new configuration reflected Barr's respect for the typical symmetrical wall scheme, Barr purposely moved beyond tradition as he moved all the paintings down to a standard viewer eye level, placed the paintings along a horizontal guideline, and spaced them far apart so that they would not "impinge on one another."⁴⁸ Barr also made the innovation of covering the gallery walls with a natural colored monks cloth (the grandfather of the white wall).



Figure 9: Barr's modern 'neutralized' galleries began to emerge.

Barr's wife, Margaret Scolari Barr, commented on Barr's gallery adjustments when she stated:

the paintings were installed on plain walls; if the walls were not totally white then they were the palest gray, absolutely neutral... there were no pictures above other pictures, all the walls were neutral, and the pictures were hung intellectually.⁴⁹

The argument behind Barr's adaptation of the gallery space was the need to dissolve the tension between multiplicity and individuality that had characterized the traditional interrelation of art and space. Barr attempted to ensure the integrity of an artist's work and that paintings maintained their own identity within interior space. Margaret Barr argued, "The idea was to let the pictures stand on their own feet" as they were typically placed on an invasive backdrop of colored brocade that "sucked the color out of the pictures."⁵⁰

Philip Johnson, architect and curator of MoMA's architectural department in 1932, explained that Barr's inspiration for this modern arrangement was a result of witnessing European museum innovations in places such as Dörner's Landesmuseum in Hanover and the Folkwang Museum (Appendix B: n). He noted that the Folkwang museum utilized "beige simple walls" and no wainscoting or interior detailing as it was "death to a painting" because it required paintings to be displayed at a raised level.⁵¹ Johnson also reinforced that monks cloth was the most neutral material Barr could get a hold of and soon after modernists accepted white paint as the primary vehicle of neutrality.⁵²

In order to allow for these 'modern' revisions to the original historic townhouse building of the MoMA, several changes were first made to the building's interior; "architectural detailing such as pilasters were eliminated, and the rooms' corners were chamfered to provide additional space for hanging paintings."⁵³ Staniszewski argues that Barr treated paintings "not as decorative elements within an exhibition whose aesthetic dimension took precedence over architectural and site-specific associations."⁵⁴ Barr's overarching objective was to therefore secure the individuality of artwork, isolating it

from any type of pestering binds to the past or present. Staniszewski calls this ideology “modernist autonomous aestheticism.”⁵⁵ Barr’s innovations or ‘modernist autonomous aestheticism’ would soon evolve into the contemporary notion of the neutral ‘white box.’ While the white box may seem purposeful during this particular time, it resonates in criticism today. Contemporary minds have rethought its appropriateness and are ready to point out its limitations and inconsistencies.

2.3.

Art Boxed-In: Contemporary Criticism of the Neutral White Box

Contemporary regard for the interrelation of art and space carries with it a direct critique of the modernist idea of a universalized and neutral environment for art. Blatantly stated, artist and critic, Brian O’Doherty believes that “with postmodernism, the gallery space is no longer *neutral*.”⁵⁶ His book, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, became a call at the end of the twentieth century for artists and critics to challenge the standardized gallery space. He stated that the white box is really a sterile limbo-like space that functions as a “tomblime container for artworks that can be considered dead.”⁵⁷ According to O’Doherty, the ideal gallery space derived from modernism would subtract from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is art; in other words, it “deprives art of an architectural context and isolates it in a timeless, limbo-like gallery...”⁵⁸

Numerous books focus on the subject matter of the contemporary architecture of museums. As Kiesler previously confirmed, it appears today that architecture is the prevailing element that determines the quality and characteristics of art related spaces and therefore dictates the interrelation of art and space. Of recent work to address the issue of the relationship between contemporary architecture and art is Victoria Newhouse's, *Towards A New Museum*. Referring to the idea of neutrality in contemporary museum spaces, Newhouse dedicates a chapter of her book to the idea of "The Museum as Sacred Space." She writes that architects continue to "design museums as sacred spaces with mixed results: attempts to remove everything extraneous to the viewing of art often produce anonymous spaces that fail."⁵⁹ While the idea of neutrality is often negated due to cultural, social, or political criticism, Newhouse dismisses the idea of neutrality within a design sensitive framework. She states that "it would appear that there is no such as neutrality. There is bland architecture that isolates and deadens art..."⁶⁰



Figure 10: Herzog and de Meuron's contemporary gallery space follows the neutral lineage of Alfred Barr's MoMA gallery (right).

On the other side of the equation is concern for architects whose designs react against neutrality and instead ‘impinge’ on interior space and therefore on the artwork. Adachiara Zevi in his article “For and Against Architecture,” argues that the architecture of museums such as the Guggenheim, in New York City, can “suffocate” art as it “encloses” it like “an abusive mother toward the art it houses.”⁶¹ As a demonstration of his argument, Zevi looks at specific artists who have directed their work at addressing the key architectural symbol of the Guggenheim Museum: namely Frank Lloyd Wright’s spiral ramp. Zevi describes how artists have in turn reacted against this bold architectural statement and designed their installations specifically to comment and explore this spatial concern.

Philip Ursprung further translates this idea of spatial character and interior quality within a museum in his essay, “The Macro Private and Micro Public.” This essay was written to show how artists have responded to the spatial challenges of the museum and have therefore been drawn towards creating ambience and interior qualities within their work. He mentions Nam June Paik, who with his media installations “transformed the whole museum into an atmospheric interior.”⁶² Ursprung states that artists create these types of installations in order to purposely react against the neutrality that resonates within the gallery space.

Even though contemporary thinkers have rethought and addressed the issue of the white box, either by criticizing or supporting it, the interrelation of art and space remains in a state of ambiguity. Some still find favor with the modern solution of neutrality, as they believe it ensures the individuality of art, allowing it to ‘speak for itself.’ Yet, on the other hand, twenty-first century critics argue that the objective for the unobstructive

gallery space may not be as imperative as the goal of revitalizing its 'sterile' and 'lifeless walls.' Perhaps, what is to account for the vagueness that resonates in today's understanding of the interrelation of art and space is the ambiguity of the idea of space itself.

The theoretical investigation has demonstrated that artists of the past expressed their spatial concerns within the abstract notions of the interior, architecture, environment, and /or space. Now, this notion of space can be linked within the definition and understanding of interior space. As demonstrated throughout the investigation, artists were interested in negotiating concerns associated with the physical, psychological, and experiential implications of space. This was clearly seen in the work of Duchamp, Kiesler, and Lissitzky. Thus, because of the psychological, aesthetic, and behavioral implications, the notion of the interrelation of art and space needs to be considered within the complexity of interior space. In order to further suggest the need for addressing the interrelation of art and space within the domain of interior space, a discussion will review artistic statements of artists within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under the direct spatial framework of interior space. It will be argued that by interpreting artistic statements concerning art and space within the expanded notion of interior space, better understandings and more appropriate solutions will result.

CHAPTER THREE

DISCUSSION

ENCOURAGING ATMOSPHERE, INTERIORITY, AND SPECIFICITY WITHIN THE INTERRELATION OF ART AND INTERIOR SPACE

“It is as difficult to paint a room as to make a painting. It is not enough to set a red, a blue, a yellow, a gray, etc., next to each other. That would be merely decoration...It is all in the how: how the elements are placed, how the dimensions are worked out, how the colors of the various elements are interrelated...”

~Piet Mondrian from “Natuurlijke en abstracte realiteit,” *De Stijl II*, 1920

This section will introduce a discussion based on information presented in the theoretical investigation-- beginning with the unbinding of the picture plane and leading up to contemporary architectural criticism. By compiling common ideas about painting, art, and space, a framework for understanding the thoughts and tactics of artists prior to the formalization of neutrality will result. This framework will encourage alternative solutions and approaches to the interrelationship of art and space and will provide maturity to the vague understanding that prevails today. The discussion will argue that historical ideas examined in the theoretical investigation encapsulate three principles, which support an effective understanding of the interrelation of art and space.

Atmosphere, integration, and specificity are identified as key elements that provide direct consideration of the importance of interior space as a principal factor for the appreciation of art.

Importantly, what will be addressed in conjunction with the discussion is the complex notion of space. While artists and designers defined space within a sea of

generalities and meanings, the discussion will suggest that their ideas referenced a larger domain that stretched beyond the physical dimension of the interior. It will be argued that the expanded notion of interior space along with its complexities was beginning to emerge. Space was starting to be theorized and considered beyond its physical ramifications within the interior; its aesthetic, psychological, and experiential implications alongside of its physicality was now being explored. As a result, artists argued that the physical and aesthetic manipulation of planes, forms, and color within the interior was important but that further consideration of the experiential and psychological capabilities of interior space was even more crucial to the dialogue of art and space.

3.1.

Atmosphere

Based on the theoretical investigation, it can be argued that artists during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrated a concern for qualities within interior space. While James McNeill Whistler displayed a concern for color within the interior, his attention to the exhibition space at the Pall Mall in 1874 also displayed a concern for encouraging further environmental qualities within the domain of interior space. This type of attention was used in order to provide an atmospheric context for the artwork. Even though Whistler may have taken the idea of atmosphere to an extreme, requiring yellow flowerpots and yellow socks to match the wall color of the exhibit, he did so in order to create mood and aesthetic effect within the interrelation of art and

interior space. Fry's description of his 'smalto effect' was another example of early attempts at securing atmosphere within interior space for works of art. This idea of producing an effect rather than merely a statement displays recognition of the capacity of interior space to influence or stimulate psychological and emotional responses within physical confines. Atmosphere within interior space therefore encourages a greater definition of the interrelation of art and space as it spans beyond a direct physical relationship and into the metaphysical.

Within the notion of atmosphere is the idea of intimacy. The Nabis demonstrated a strong regard for atmosphere through the principle of intimacy within their work. With their expansive mural paintings that absorbed the walls and surrounding space, the Nabi brotherhood wanted painting to move away from the interior spaces of public institutions and museums and instead into the private domain of the domestic interior.⁶³ In return, paintings would have a more intimate and defined relation to their surrounding space and to the viewer. To express this ethereal goal, the Nabis themselves stated that the atmosphere within the space of a domestic interior should be "light, simple, and pleasing, neither a museum nor a bazaar."⁶⁴ By adapting painting to the private domestic domain, the Nabis hoped that the abstract qualities of intimacy and mood would be cultivated within interior space.

In order to allow for atmosphere and intimacy, the Nabi brotherhood showed that certain elements within the interior such as: color, texture, materials, and form, needed to be accounted for within the relationship of painting and space. One critic who commented on Vuillard's panels, *Woman Reading on the Bench* (1903) (Appendix B: g), noted the way that velvet curtains within the interior space were used to frame the panels

allowing them to “fit into” the room’s scheme of textures, colors, and sensual mood.⁶⁵ In a letter, a patron noted how Maurice Denis’ work, *April* (1904) (Appendix B: d), corresponded “admirably with the white paint of the gallery.”⁶⁶ Denis, along with other Nabi artists, directed their attention to the aesthetic schemes of interior spaces in order to provide a more intimate and atmospheric relationship between painting and space.

Furthermore, the Nabis’ attentiveness to atmosphere within interior space dictated their artistic style. Groom notes that the Nabis opted away from depicting “subject[s] that [were] objectively too precise” as they would become “unbearable” and therefore tiresome if fixed within an interior.⁶⁷ In Vuillard’s *Dressmaking* panels (1892) (Appendix B: f) the style for imprecision rings true throughout the entire painting as “figures and objects merge into the atmosphere of the interior.”⁶⁸ The rough and abstract Impressionistic style of painting that characterized the Nabis was in fact purposeful to their goal of catering to atmosphere within the interrelation of art and space.

As suggested in the theoretical investigation, another artistic group that displayed an unmistakable regard for atmosphere was De Stijl. Theo van Doesburg explicitly stated, “For the pure revelation of painting, what is necessary in the first place is an atmosphere.”⁶⁹ Van Doesburg believed that it was the architect’s responsibility to bring to fruition the atmosphere, within domain of interior space, that would allow painting to be understood in its full splendor; he stated: “We are in need of a new interior. And who brings the interior about? The Architect.”⁷⁰ According to van Doesburg, De Stijl architecture had a great responsibility to the interrelation of art and space; he affirmed that it is “around our [artists’] realized emotions” that the architect (or designer) “can create a space, an atmosphere. Which shall do justice to our artistic expression..”⁷¹

In addition, Duchamp's unique Surrealist gallery installations involving the creation of string labyrinths, coal sack ceiling canopies, and torch lit lighting systems brought a regard for whimsical and controversial atmosphere within the interior space of the gallery. Duchamp addressed atmospheric complaints within the typical gallery—for instance the ideas that the traditional gallery was too dark to adequately see the quality of paintings and that movement through the gallery was predictable, enforced, and predetermined. Through his unusual antics, Duchamp and the Surrealists clearly (and humorously) showed a greater regard for the psychological, behavioral, and experiential implications of interior space. Not only did they manipulate the physical qualities of the interior (ceiling canopies, lighting systems, obstructed paths, etc.) but also did so in order to demonstrate the atmospheric qualities that resonated within the relation of interior space and art. By catering to mood and effect, their memorable exhibits allowed for the “seepage of energy from art to its surroundings.”⁷²

Kiesler also believed in the idea of atmosphere when he argued in *The Second Manifesto of Correlation* that:

the traditional art *object*, be it a painting, sculpture, or a piece of architecture, is no longer seen as an isolated entity but must be considered within the context of this expanding *environment*. The *environment* becomes equally as important as the *object*, if not more so, because the *object* breathes into the surrounding and also inhales the realities of the environment no matter in what space. Close or wide apart, open or indoor.⁷³

Therefore, art was seen as active and alive within the interior, “breathing” and “inhaling” in the atmospheric realities of interior space.

Dorner’s reconfiguration of the Landesmuseum in Hanover provided an example of how gallery interiors were designed in order to encourage atmosphere. While Dorner refrained from relying on the conventional, symmetrical, salon style method of installation, he still realized the value of providing atmospheric context for artwork. His “atmosphere rooms” were intended to immerse the visitor in the stylistic and historic spirit of each period through the vehicle of interior space. The Baroque and Rococo galleries were examples of atmosphere rooms as they each had their own specific color scheme, decorative adornment, furnishings, lighting designs, and interior layout.



Figure 11: Dorner’s Baroque Room displays an attempt to create an abstract atmosphere for artworks through the elements of color, scale, light, and texture.

For Dorner, it was not only important to configure color and form in the interior, but to provide an atmospheric mood that catered to the interrelation of art and interior space. This idea of atmosphere was so immanent that Dorner went as far as installing areas for music reception within the galleries in order to add another sensual dimension and mood

to the relationship. While interior atmosphere may resemble the notion of context for a work of art, Dorner discerned a difference; for him, the challenge was to create an appropriate atmosphere for art instead of recreating its exact historical and literal context.

Of interesting contrast to the understanding of atmosphere within the modern understanding of art and space was Alfred Barr's deliberate deterrent from Dorner's atmosphere rooms. Barr, directly influenced by Dorner's innovative renovation of the Landesmuseum, purposely steered away from the idea of atmosphere within the exhibition, *Italian Masters*, in 1940. In his description of the exhibit Barr stated; "No effort of any kind was made to suggest a period atmosphere, either by wall coverings or accessories. In other words, the works of art were considered as objects valuable in themselves and isolated from their original period."⁷⁴ Therefore, with neutrality any connection to atmosphere, and to the larger scope of interior space, must be consciously discredited from the interrelation of art and space.

In the contemporary context, atmosphere within interior space proves to be problematic. The idea of atmosphere within the contemporary museum or art related space takes crucial form within the concept of time. According to Brian O'Doherty, the ideal modernist gallery space would subtract from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is art.⁷⁵ As a result, O'Doherty states that the interior space of the modern neutral gallery is untouched by "time and its vicissitudes."⁷⁶ The debate over this element of time within the relationship of art and space thickens as the ideas of time and atmosphere are argued to be critical factors to the value of art. The nineteenth century art theorist, Walter Benjamin (*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*) wrote about this relationship of art, space, and time. He believed that an artwork acquires

its worth through its existence within a specific space and time, or, “[its] unique existence at the place where it happens to be.”⁷⁷ Therefore the modern notion of neutral space that enforces timelessness is in opposition to Benjamin’s notion that time and space are what actually assign value to art. The argument therefore remains; if space is robbed of these contextual clues, and atmosphere becomes devoid, how does value get assigned to art? By stripping spaces bare, decontextualizing art, and placing it within glossy neutral walls, art’s valued historical patina is aesthetically, experientially, and mentally removed.

Attention to interior space and its abstract implications such as atmosphere provide a necessary solution for our contemporary uncertainty. As we try to negotiate between the lingering modern mindset of white, neutral, unimposing, and timeless spaces for art, and the instinct to provide a greater value to the relationship between art and space, we must turn to interior space for solutions. Influential designers like Kiesler and El Lissitzky manipulated lighting systems and levels, color fields, the floor plane, ceiling plane and furnishings. With one gesture towards the ceiling, Duchamp allowed clouds of coal sacks to affect the visitor’s preconceived notion of how a gallery space should feel, function, and be experienced. This type of attention to atmosphere within interior space allowed for unmistakable and unforgettable artistic statements. The interior element of atmosphere, with its abstract qualities of mood, affect, intimacy, and energy in addition to its aesthetic characteristics has been shown to be a critical factor in the interrelation of art and space.

3.2.

Integration

Like atmosphere, the notion of integration was advocated by late nineteenth and early twentieth century artistic thought. Integration found its foundation within the issue of the separation of art from life and high art from craft. The nineteenth century found reconciliation in the idea of *gesamtkunstwerk*, or ‘total work of art.’ Arguably the ‘total work of art’ would embody all artistic disciplines (painting, architecture, decorative arts, fashion, print, etc.) within space in order to create one conceptual statement. Under this mode of thought, art forms and space could ultimately interrelate to form one integrated harmonious whole. Therefore, individual artworks created by multi-disciplinary artistic circles were integrated with other dimensional art forms such as architecture, painting, furniture, graphic materials, clothing, and ceramics to form one solid statement. Space was the forum in which all these elements could interrelate and where meaning could thus be derived.

This desire for artistic integration within space continued to grow and evolve within the late nineteenth and twentieth century intellectual and creative thought. For many, the idea of integration was expressed through the metaphorical term ‘harmony.’ As revealed in the theoretical investigation, Henri Matisse stated that frames and painting should “harmonize” with interior space like music in space. Whistler’s yellow color scheme and attention to the atmospheric conditions of the gallery space including “the moldings, the ceiling, the mantel-piece, the curtains, and the matting on the floor

enhanced and beautified” the “general harmony” of the room.⁷⁸ Harmony between space and art was a strong objective throughout the turn of the nineteenth century.

De Stijl neoplasticity introduced the idea of the fluidness of space along with the aspiration for integration. De Stijl artists believed in modern plastic painting-- painting that expanded beyond the canvas and became as crucial to the overall integrity of a room as the architecture. The painter Vilmos Huszar stated, “Therefore the painter must have the same essential attitude as the architect in order to achieve a complete, harmonious whole.”⁷⁹ Huszar not only linked painting with architecture but, in order to create a harmonious whole, he linked painting and architecture with the interior elements of furnishings, windows, and doors, as “all the elements of the interior work plastically together.”⁸⁰

Mondrian’s painting can also be understood as a testament to the idea of integration between art and space. He believed that the neo-plastic picture would “disappear as soon as we can transfer its plastic beauty to the space around us.”⁸¹ His atelier in Paris in 1919 pays homage to this creed as he began to allow neo-plastic painting to be transferred and absorbed within the interior space (Appendix B: 1). What marked Mondrian’s creations as unique was his attention to the specific debate over the integrity of easel painting within larger idea of spatial integration. Historic photos document Mondrian’s purposeful integration of easel painting within the interior space of his studio. He expanded his plastic painting to elements within interior space as he considered the furnishings, organization, and arrangement of his space.

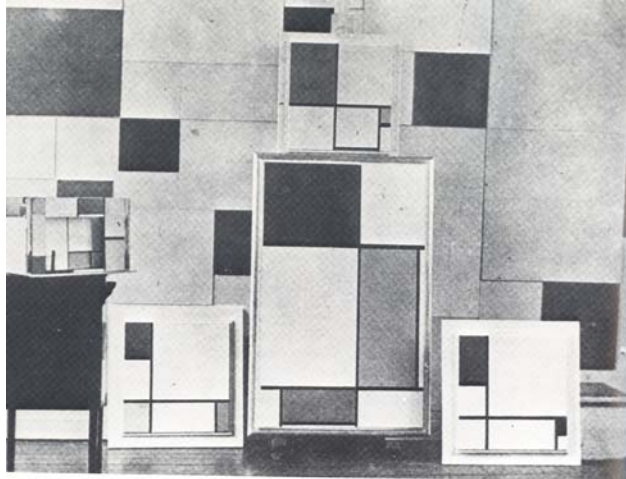


Figure 12: Mondrian's studio (1929). He integrated his easel painting within the interior space of his studio.

Creative attention to the canvas allowed for the vitality and significance of the interior space within his studio. Troy writes that Mondrain's studio underwent "continual transformation alongside the evolution of the artist's easel painting style, for which it served as a background and perhaps as a kind of three dimensional sketch."⁸²

Mondrian's studio displays the tension and connection between the dimension of interior space and the two-dimensional realm of painting. Troy notes how several photographs of Mondrian's atelier reveal empty easels in front of the wall. She argues that this preconceived composition of the empty easel "imply[s] its own extension outward to incorporate the entire atelier."⁸³ Mondrian was therefore suggesting the expansive (plastic) domain of the canvas within the greater spatial realm of his studio. In consequence, Mondrian supported the idea that the integration of painting within its interior spatial domain was as significant as the individual easel painting.

Furthermore, Troy notes that Mondrian continued to explore spatial expansion and integration between easel painting and interior space as he focused the subject matter of his paintings towards the abstract depiction of diamond motifs. Mondrian referred to

these diamond paintings as “surrogates” to his original exploration of the expansion of painting within the interior space of his studio. He wrote, “As my painting is an abstract surrogate of the whole, so the abstract-plastic wall takes apart in the profound content that is implicit in the whole room.”⁸⁴ Mondrian’s exploration of integration and wholism was further manifested, as his integrated studio was highly desired by his patrons. His patrons, after recognizing the value of Mondrian’s integrated compositions, desired and commissioned not only his paintings but the entire ‘spatial package.’

El Lissitzky’s *Proun Room* in 1923 was another important example of integration as Lissitzky attempted to “make painting, architecture, and sculpture work harmoniously.”⁸⁵ In this exhibition room, Lissitzky highlighted the merits of various artistic mediums and integrated them within the boundaries of interior space. Lissitzky’s *Proun Room* displayed his goal of dematerializing the interior architecture, walls, and ceiling in order to integrate abstract art with space; as Troy states, Lissitzky used form in order to “dematerialize and optically destroy the limitations imposed by architecture.”⁸⁶

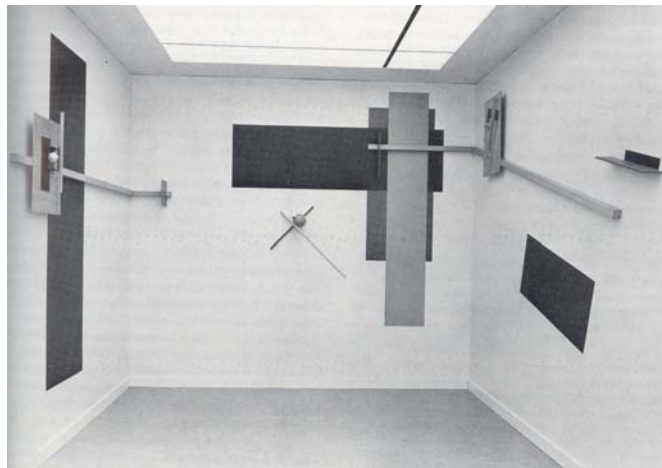


Figure 13: Lissitzky's *Proun Room* (1923) allowed painting to interrelate with architectural form and space.

Overall, Lissitzky attempted to integrate his designs for the gallery interior with abstract art forms. This was again displayed in his *Abstract Cabinet* at the Landesmuseum as it was “designed as a visual unity, incorporating the floor and ceiling as well as the walls- a total environment...”⁸⁷

Kiesler also commented on the idea of creating an integrated and harmonious whole between interior space and art. This was mainly adopted within his doctrine of correalism in which he stated:

in my work, whether it be an architectural project, a sculpture or a painting, the desire to coordinate parts of various plasticities into a *related* ONE, has replaced the *isolated* object on the wall and in space.⁸⁸

Kiesler’s theory of correlation argued for the importance of integration as a solution to avoid the disconnection that resulted from ‘isolation.’ Kiesler’s idea of correlation argued for integration as Kiesler understood that 1) objects have a relationship to each other, 2) that no object can exist by itself, 3) that everything depends on its association with its environment, and therefore 4) the reality of every living object is a correality.⁸⁹ Kiesler, in his essay *Towards the Endless Sculpture*, revealed one tactic for achieving correlation within exhibitions. He described how careful and proper dimensioning between one unit (or artwork) and another contributed to the notion of integration within space as “the intervals between the units became of major importance to the correlation of the total work of art.”⁹⁰ The removal or change of one unit or artwork either higher or lower from another would in return have drastic and meaningful affects on the entire spatial composition.⁹¹

Mondrian's wholistic studio spaces, Kiesler's concern with correlation between space and living object, and Matisse's harmonization of painting, frame, and interior space, all demonstrated conscious support of the notion of integration within the interrelation of art and space. These artists and designers believed in the merits of integration between art and interior space as it brought expansive meaning to the work, resulting from the value found within a greater harmonious whole. The notion of integration, while expressed differently throughout time, continues to be relative to the debate over the appropriate relation of art and space. Early on, Vuillard concurred that the goal was to create "overall decorative cohesion."⁹² Later, Alfred Barr would interpret neutrality as a way to introduce complete fusion within space in order to create an "impression of unity."⁹³ In the contemporary context, integration is seen within the greater relationship of museums as architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable's states:

when a museum and its contents come together as an *integrated* aesthetic, something special happens. The art is enlarged and exalted, and the viewer's rewards and responses are increased. Creating that synthesis of art and setting is the challenge that still faces architects and directors. It is the secret of the great museum.⁹⁴

While each theorist said it in their own way, the overall need for integration between interior space and art is evident. While some argue that integration is problematic as it brings with it the negative attributes of permanence, inflexibility, and predetermination, it will be demonstrated in the next section that the notion of permanence within the interrelation of art and interior space might not be a bad idea after all.

3.3.

Specificity

The next link to understanding the interrelation of art and interior space within the framework of late nineteenth and early twentieth century artistic thought, is to consider how atmosphere and integration relate to the idea of specificity. By returning to Henri Matisse in the early twentieth century, the idea of specificity within this relationship becomes apparent. Not only did Matisse renegotiate the spatial boundaries of his painting, *Interior with Aubergines*, but he also secured a distinguishable spatial quality for the work depending on its specific location. Paintings typically followed a spatial trajectory as they moved from the location of the artist's studio, to the gallery or Salon, and then into the private interior of a patron or the public interior of a museum. Matisse demonstrated a concern for the spatial susceptibility of paintings as they followed along this dynamic trajectory; he arguably painted the frame of *Interior with Aubergines* and then later removed and disposed it after buying the painting back before its was finally acquired and installed at the Grenoble Museum (its trajectory included Matisse's studio in Collioure, its purchase by Michael Steins in 1912, its repurchase by Matisse, and its final resting place at the Grenoble Museum).⁹⁵ The painting's placement in the spatial and public context of the museum, out of its private gallery domain, caused Matisse to take severe action to secure and enforce a unique relationship between the painting and a particular space.

Matisse's act of deframing his work, or as Deepak Ananth calls it in her essay "Frames within Frames: On Matisse and the Orient," his act "of structural (formal/plastic) displacement" is critical to the meaning and value of the painting.⁹⁶ By

manipulating the frame, Matisse thereby argued that he could affect the way his work reacted and responded to a specific space and site. Annath states that Matisse argued the idea that to frame or in this case to deframe is “creating a site- at once a physical locus and a metaphysical locale- for the work of art, and thereby to establish a specific context in which it is to be experienced.”⁹⁷ With this in mind, it can be suggested that the frame provides direction and introduction for the type of spatial reception that could be possible; through framing, a specific context and experience for art is encouraged. Overall, Matisse demonstrated the artist’s concern and awareness for resolving the temporal spatial trajectory of his/her work with the need for specific agreement of the work within space. Matisse’s *Interior with Aubergines* endorsed the notion that a painting demanded more than one uniform or standardized interpretation of how it should interrelate with interior space; Matisse exemplified the notion of securing a unique spatial relationship for art through the implications of specificity.

Specificity was also displayed by the Nabi brotherhood through their dedication to the medium of mural painting. With easel painting, paint is set directly onto a mediary form and then hung on the wall. Arguably, mural painting provides a more intimate and specific relationship, as subject matter is painted directly on the wall, therefore becoming engrained within its seams. Kiesler expressed this relationship graphically when he stated, “the mural painting sucks the painting into the wet wall and interbinds it with the building structure while swallowing it.”⁹⁸ Thus, in this case, the particular medium of mural painting arguably provided a more specific relationship between art and space as its affixation to a particular location deterred from the factor of relocation and therefore temporality. As stated previously the Nabi brotherhood preferred creating mural-size

paintings instead of easel paintings as murals were “intended for specific architectural interiors.”⁹⁹

The Nabi brotherhood also stressed specificity’s implications within the relationship of interior space and their decorative panel paintings. Because of their concern with how their paintings related to a particular interior space, the Nabis supported specificity by considering the distinct interior qualities found within the color, texture, and form of a space. This was displayed in a letter to Maurice Denis in which a patron commented on how the work, *April* (1904), went “admirably with the white paint of the gallery.”¹⁰⁰ This reveals the idea that Denis took into account the color scheme of this particular interior and directly corresponded the color palette of his painting with certain spatial characteristics.

Specificity was also seen in the work and ideas of early modernists. The unique atmospheric qualities enforced throughout each Surrealist exhibition displayed a concern for the notion of specificity between art and interior space. Marcel Duchamp accounted for special lighting effects and transitions within his exhibition spaces, thereby encouraging unique experiences for the viewer and securing a special context for the artwork. De Stijl philosophy also encouraged the idea of specificity in the relationship of art and space. Van Doesburg commented on the problem of temporality within the relationship of space and art when he visited a painting exhibition in 1916. He wrote that the nature of current exhibitions did not embrace the psychology of the visitor and “the painting in its environment.”¹⁰¹ He argued that “art and intimacy are very close to one another” and that this was not “being embraced by current exhibitions.”¹⁰² The type of intimacy that van Doesburg was addressing was the intimacy found in securing a specific

and special relationship between an artwork and interior qualities. He stated that the exhibition space should give “the idea of permanence” and not temporality.¹⁰³ If specificity was not supported in space, then the impression of the transitory was enforced-- an impression that van Doesburg believed brought disillusionment to the spiritual nature of art. Hence, van Doesburg argued for specifying distinct environments for art in order to allow for a sense of specific purpose and uniqueness within the relationship. He felt that if space was allowed to give off a transitory, random, or temporal quality, then this inappropriateness could contribute to the misrepresentation of a work of art.

Frederick Kiesler also demonstrated a concern for specificity in his designs for art related spaces as he incorporated interior elements to create distinct spatial experiences. In the International Exhibition of New Theater Technique in Vienna (1924), Kiesler innovatingly created a flexible system of lighting that operated on a calculated timer in order to highlight specific paintings and produce strategic colors within the gallery interior. Furthermore, Kiesler’s doctrine of correlation suggested the idea of specificity. To provide visual example for his theory of correality, Kiesler created the expansive piece, *Galaxies*. These large panel paintings were set at different distances from each other, the ceiling, floor, and wall, protruding and receding within interior space. Importantly, following his guidelines of correality, Kiesler removed the frames from these panel paintings since “the exact interval –space between them makes frames superfluous. The total space of the wall or room-space provides framing in depth- in fact, a three-dimensional frame without end.”¹⁰⁴



Figure 14: Kiesler's *Galaxies* (1954) expand the painted plane to the interior dimension as he pushed painting onto the floor, wall, and ceiling planes.

Kiesler displayed his concern for specificity by indicating particular dimensions, layout, and aesthetic attributes within the interior in order to define a specific relationship between his paintings and the entire space of the gallery. Like Matisse, the Nabi brotherhood, and De Stijl, Kiesler proved that the specific dimensions, qualities, textures, and location within interior space had a special meaning and relationship to painting.

Today, the element of specificity is best seen in the innovations of installation art. Since the 1970s, artists have turned toward the medium of installation art in order to directly address the idea of specificity within their work as installation art is “usually dependent on the configuration of a particular space or situation.”¹⁰⁵ Installation art demonstrates the notion of specificity by proving that certain qualities of art are temporal depending on their given location and relationship to spatial elements. Importantly, within a different space or context, these qualities or meanings might not be revealed or repeated due to inherent environmental and spatial differences.



Figure 15: Installation art by Ernesto Neto embraces specificity as his art engages the spatial qualities of one particular interior space.

It is the notion of specificity that drives contemporary artists to find purpose in the fact that the meaning of their art will change depending on its physical locale. This idea is not far from Matisse's method of removing the frames from his painting as a result of their changing spatial relationship or the Surrealist's strategic manipulation of lighting systems within their unusual exhibitions. All were interested in the meaning that is linked to an artwork by establishing a specific relationship to the aesthetic, experiential, and psychological attributes of a particular interior space.

Specificity becomes challenging when considering how the contemporary understanding of art and space, along with current museum ideology, discourages this idea. Today, most museums encourage the development of both a permanent and temporary collection of artworks. Due to the perils of limited funds, time, and legal policy it is difficult for most museums to cater to specificity within both their permanent and temporary exhibitions. Van Doesburg would not be supportive of many contemporary exhibitions as they reverberate the qualities of non-permanency and

indeterminacy— qualities that arguably deter from intimacy with artwork. Victoria Newhouse comments on the evasion of specificity within present-day galleries and museums. She finds fault with Mario Botta’s Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco (1995) because the interior galleries display a “formulaic impersonality” as they appear to have been “designed to accommodate anything that might go on their walls- a one size-fits-all approach (see figure 5.16).”¹⁰⁶ Today this one-size-fits-all approach becomes masked within the notion of flexibility (derived from modernist roots). But, by moving beyond the notion of flexibility and embracing specificity, museums today can secure an intimate and unique relationship between art, interior space, and the visitor, therefore allowing art to effectively relate with its spatial surroundings.

Specificity within museums and art related spaces is crucial as we continue to explore the complexities and possibilities of the digital realm. At the moment, artworks complete a fourth step in the spatial trajectory as they move from studio, gallery, museum, and into the final realm of digital space. At this last stage in the spatial trajectory, an artwork’s image becomes pixilated within the boundaries of the digital museum or computer screen. Without securing specificity for artworks how does an original artwork hanging in a museum differ from an image hung within a digital museum?

Specificity, integration, and atmosphere have been argued as three interior elements that can better encourage the interrelation of art and space. While they have been defined separately, their viability should in fact be understood holistically.

Understanding the compatibility of these elements would prove to be more valuable to the interrelation of art and space. The interior elements of interiority, specificity, and atmosphere vitalize the potency of interior space to better affect the relationship of art and space. While Barr and other modernists were concerned with the physical and aesthetic qualities of the interior, they did not recognize the powerful experiential, symbolic, and behavioral capacity of interior space. By underestimating the relationship of art and interior space and simply coating it within the powerful façade of aesthetic neutrality, modernists and those who still conform to its principles, have rendered art related spaces ‘sterile’ and ‘dead.’ Even though the recognition and definition of interior space was developing during this time, there is no excuse for it not to be more prevalent in our understanding of art and space today. While modernism may have killed the complex vitality of interior space, it is now time that interior designers resurrect the “tomblike containers” in order to create effective spaces for the appreciation of art today.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

This study explored the abstract notion of the interrelation of art and space through an examination of the medium of painting and its relationship to interior space within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In order to investigate the question of what can serve as an appropriate solution to effectively cater to the interrelation of art and space, this study confronted the modernist solution of spatial neutrality. It was argued that a neutral relationship between art and space has been, and continues to be understood as the appropriate solution, theory, and aesthetic for art related spaces in most contexts. However, as demonstrated in the theoretical investigation, this solution is problematic and detrimental to the development of the interrelation of art and space.

A theoretical investigation explored interpretations of the interrelation of painting and space within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries including the unbinding of canvas, the move towards neutrality, and the debate over the challenges of this enduring ethic in today's museums and galleries. It was demonstrated that neutralization was not the only solution within the interrelation of art and space. A discussion suggested that in order to move beyond the dominating mindset of the neutral interrelation between art and space, the complexity and capacity of interior space must first be considered and reflected within this dialogue. Following this premise, ideas found within the artistic statements within the late nineteenth and early twentieth century provided valuable solutions to effectively encourage the interrelationship of art and

interior space. This study found that the interior elements of *integration*, *specificity*, and *atmosphere*, derived from artistic statements of the past were relevant and necessary to the maturity of the current understanding of the interrelation of art and space.

The question then remains to be asked: who must be responsible for carrying out these solutions in the contemporary context...the artist? ...architect?...designer?

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century encouraged artists, architects, and designers to work together to define the aesthetic and ideological scope of the relationship between space and art. Importantly, it was believed that collaboration between artistic disciplines produced proper solutions along with an aesthetic virtue and moral value within the built environment. De Stijl upheld the idea that architecture should give spatial direction and coherence to the relationship of art and space, *but* not determine the overall character of spaces. Kiesler foresaw the energy of the architect someday being focused at the spatial concerns and design challenges of the art gallery. He called on the architect to mend the problem of the disconnection of plastic barriers, confidently believing that the architect would not offend the art, or “debauch” the historical and stylistic integrity of the work, but would instead “[express] through the methods of his profession his answers to the problems of life and of that aspect of life which is art.”¹⁰⁷ In addressing the designer’s role in the context of the interrelation of art and space, the modern architect Manfred Lehbruck argued that “it is quite possible to reproduce the inherent conditions of the environment of a work of art, for example, when these remain abstract: scale, light, direction, etc.”¹⁰⁸ Lehbruck suggested that design elements and grammar could be used to reflect and reveal attributes of a two-dimensional painting within the third dimension of space.

From a contemporary perspective, the responsibility of abstracting the qualities of an artwork into the complex domain of interior space should be directed at the profession of interior design. If the issue of space and art is to be mitigated through the realm of interior space, and if this relationship is better secured through the interior elements of atmosphere, integration, and specificity, then it is the duty of interior designers to bring their creative potential to this issue. Should the architect secure the qualities of atmosphere, integration, and specificity within the interior space? Must the exhibition designer bridge the gap between ‘overbearing architecture’ and the interrelation of interior space and art? Interior designers can “express through the methods of their profession” answers and design solutions to “the problems of life and of that aspect of life which is art.” Interior designers must take a more active role in helping translate the abstract qualities of art into the immediate spatial surroundings.

By the mid-nineteenth century, some art critics like John Ruskin were already calling for the “the sacrifice of the ordinary elements of architectural splendor” within public galleries in order to give more visual weight and significance to the paintings.¹⁰⁹ This understanding about the ‘unobstrusive’ interrelation of art and space continued to evolve until it finally became canonized into the doctrine of neutrality. It is time for interior designers to use their grammar and knowledge in order to restore “elements of architectural splendor” within the interrelation of art and space. Otherwise the relevance and meaning of interior space within art related spaces will move beyond endangerment to that of extinction. As museums keep taking new ground, interior designers can begin to establish validation by mediating ‘overbearing architecture’ and securing appropriate spatial relationship for artworks in the interior environment.

While this study sought to explore artistic statements within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to contribute new direction to the challenging dialogue of art and space, it did so under certain limitations. Therefore, further study into this topic could benefit from expansion in several ways. First, the exploration of art and space related issues before the late nineteenth century could be taken into account. Secondly, investigation could be directed at the influences of Cubism within the dialogue of art and space, as it was not highlighted in this study. Merits of nineteenth century collaborative artists who, like Gustav Courbet, created their own exhibition spaces for their artworks could provide interesting and relevant examples within this study. Ideally, future research would involve an investigation of art and space through a broader historical lens in addition to a more expansive definition of art, thereby including other artistic mediums such as sculpture within the dialogue of art and space.

Limitations within the scope of this study were created as broad definitions were used to demarcate the ideas found within the complex notions of the decorative, the gallery, the museum, installation art, and exhibition design. In order to establish a more unrestrained scope of study, future interpretations must reactivate the passive observer.



Figure p: Visitors within the neutral gallery space as seen by Thomas Struth, 1990.
From Victoria Newhouse, *Towards a New Museum*.

Human behavior, psychology, and emotion were explored in their relation to interior space; however, additional study should allow the relationship of interior space, viewer/visitor, and art to take a more dominant focus. Therefore stressing the importance of human behavior, experience, and emotion within interior space would produce a more solid reading into the nature of the relationship of art and space.

Contemporary society is faced with the growing complication of how advances in technology and the digital realm relate to the tarnished neutral gallery. As artists continue to explore digital medias, and architects and museum personal continue to dictate the interior spaces of museums and galleries based on an old ideology, we must consider how contemporary art and space will interrelate. Ultimately, how will spatial interrelation be understood between the digital object and digital/physical space? An expanded regard for interior space along with the elements of atmosphere, integration, and specificity can be seen as appropriate solutions needed to bridge the gap between physical and digital space, and digital art and physical object today.



Figure 17: The void of the neutral gallery space. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, designed by Mario Botta.

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APPENDIX A.

DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

Dada: An art movement (1915-1922) that grew out of the absurdity and horror of World War I. It protested all art, modern or traditional, as well as the civilization that had produced it, to create an art of the absurd. Foremost among the Dadaists was *Marcel Duchamp*.*

*as defined by *Gardner's Art Through the Ages (Volume II: Renaissance and Modern Art)* by Richard Tansey and Fred Kleiner (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers): 1996, 1161.

De Stijl: (Dutch: "the Style") The name of a movement (and magazine) of Dutch artists founded in Leiden in 1917. They sought laws of equilibrium and harmony that would be applicable to life and society as well as art.

*as defined in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, edited by Ian Chilvers and Harold Osborne (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 1997, 538.

Impressionism: Movement in painting originating in the 1860s in France. Impressionism was not a homogenous stylistic and ideological school, but a loose association of artists linked by some community of outlook and banded together for the purpose of exhibiting. The group was opposed to the academic training of the schools. They were in revolt of Romanticism and embraced the idea that the primary purpose of art is to record fragments of nature or life in an objective and scientific spirit, and were interested in the objective recording of contemporary and actual experience. Their ambition was to capture the immediate visual impression rather than the permanent aspects of a subject.

*as defined in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, edited by Ian Chilvers and Harold Osborne (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 1997, 279-80.

Modernism: In the early decades of the twentieth century, artists demanded that art would be of its time, expressing the modern experience and not holding on the reigns of past styles and ideologies. Therefore, artists and designers sought to break away from traditional structures of representational art and the art institutions and academies that adhered to it. *Cézanne* is often noted as the principle patron of Modernist painting. In 1929, the Museum of Modern Art in New York was founded and modern art found its authority. In architecture Modernism is defined by the emergence of Art Nouveau and the International Style.*

*see pages 1020-1024 in *Gardner's Art Through the Ages (Volume II: Renaissance and Modern Art)* by Richard Tansey and Fred Kleiner (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers): 1996.

Neoplasticism: A theory of art developed by *Piet Mondrian* to create a pure plastic art (nonrepresentational art) comprised of the simplest, least subjective, elements, primary colors, primary values, and primary directions.*

*as defined by *Gardner's Art Through the Ages (Volume II: Renaissance and Modern Art)* by Richard Tansey and Fred Kleiner (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers): 1996, 1164.

Post-Impressionism: Term applied to various trends in painting, particularly in France, that developed from Impressionism in the period of 188-1905. *Roger Fry* coined the term as a title of an exhibition in 1910. Post-Impressionist such as Cézanne, Seurat, Gauguin and van Gogh, sought to move away from the naturalism of Impressionism and return to emotional and symbolic values. Some historians extend the notion of Post-Impressionism to include the entire artistic period of 1880-1914.*

*as defined in *The Oxford Dictionary of Art*, edited by Ian Chilvers and Harold Osborne (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 1997, 445.

Surrealism: A successor to Dada. It incorporated the improvisational nature of Dada into its exploration of the ways to express in art the world of dreams and the unconscious.*

*as defined by *Gardner's Art Through the Ages (Volume II: Renaissance and Modern Art)* by Richard Tansey and Fred Kleiner (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers): 1996, 1167.

APPENDIX B.

IMAGE GALLERY



Figure r: Giovanni, Pannini. *Picture Gallery with Views of Modern Rome*, 1757.
From Gardener's Art through the Ages.



Figure s: Victorian print depicting the Louvre Gallery.

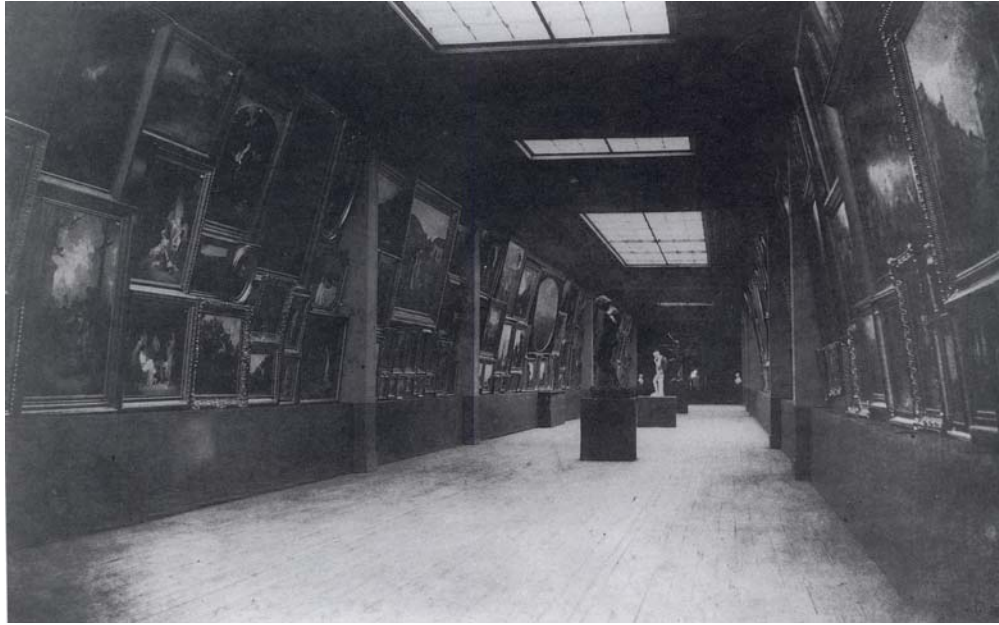


Figure t: Photograph of the Salon style gallery.
From Kynaston McShine, *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*.



Figure u: Edouard Vuillard's *April*, 1894. **Oil on canvas (78 in.)**
From Gloria Groom, *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930*.



Figure v: Edouard Vuillard's *Public Gardens* panels, 1894. **Distemper on Canvas (84 x 26 in.)**
From Gloria Groom, *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930.*



Figure w: Edouard Vuillard's *Dressmaking* panels, 1896. **Distemper on Canvas (210 x 75cm.)**
From Gloria Groom, *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930.*



Figure x: Edouard Vuillard's *Woman Reading on the Bench* and its interior installation within a residence, 1898.

From Gloria Groom, *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930.*

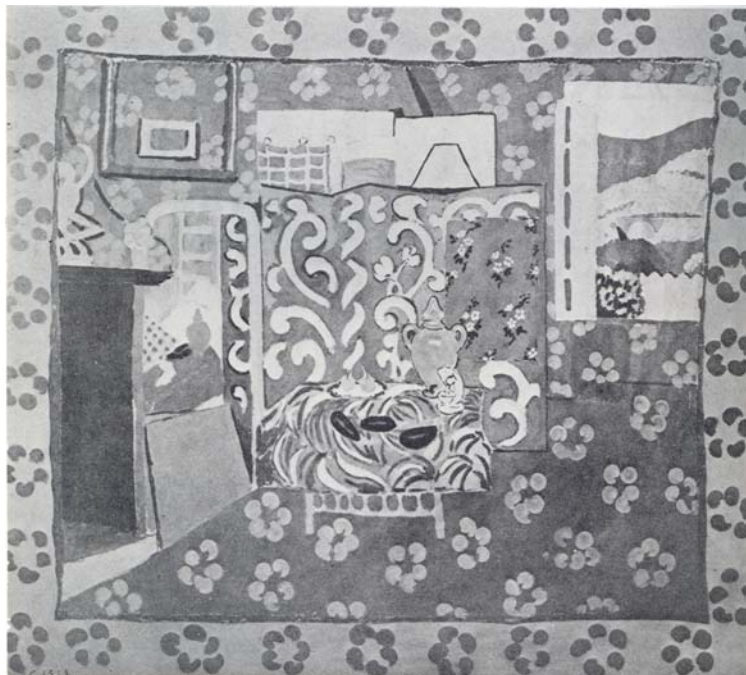


Figure y: Henri Matisse's *Interior with Aubergines* (1911) with painted border and removed frame.
Tempera (82 x 96in.)

From Alfred Barr, Alfred H. *Matisse: His Art and His Public.*



Figure z: Duchamp's Coal Sack canopy at the Surrealist Exhibit
From Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations*.

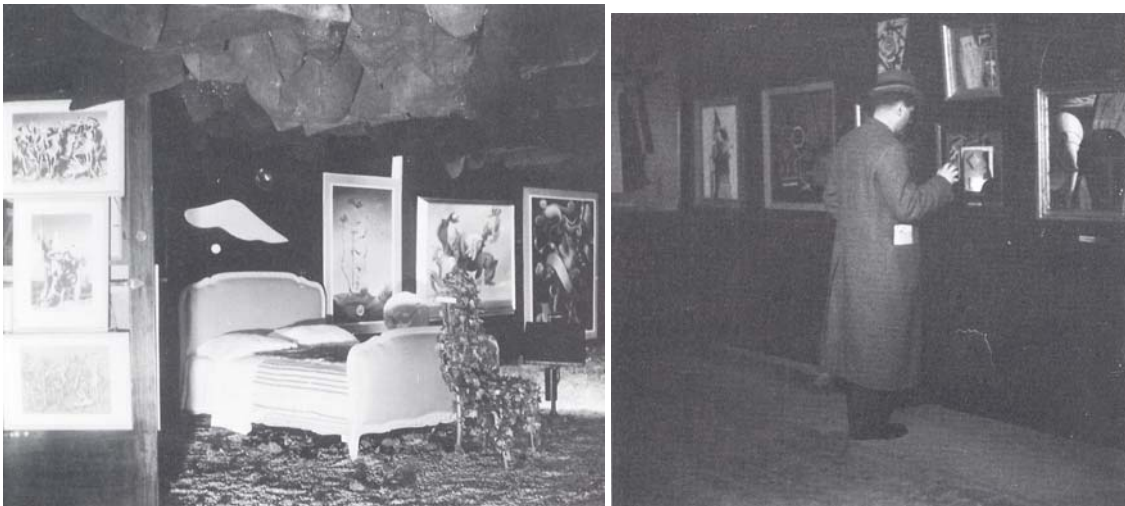


Figure aa: Interior views of the Surrealist Gallery Exhibit. Visitor's were given flashlights in order to see the paintings and walked on a carpet of leaves and dirt.

From Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations*.

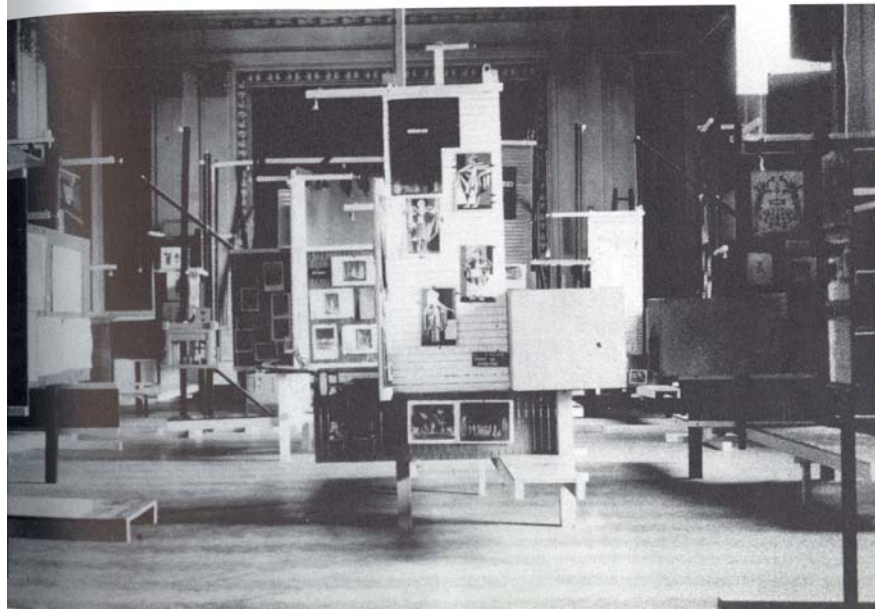


Figure bb: Kiesler's L and T System allowed images to become independent of the wall.
From Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the MoMA*.

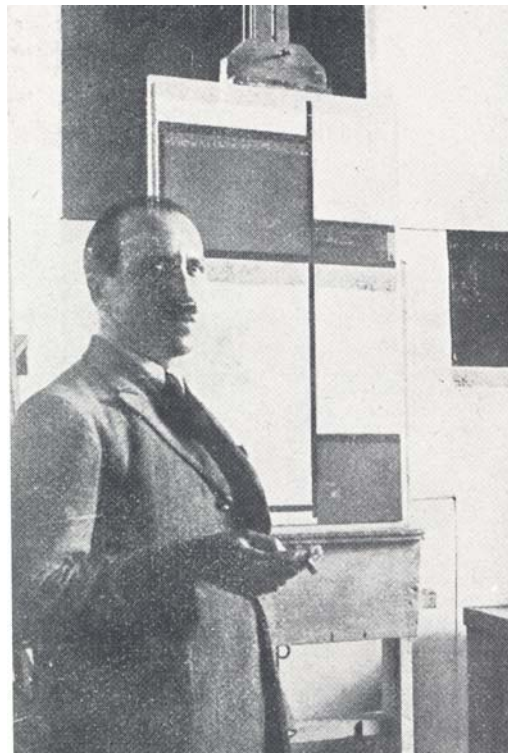


Figure cc: Mondrian (1924) in his atelier revealing easel painting and interior painted scheme.
From Nancy Troy. *The De Stijl Environment*.

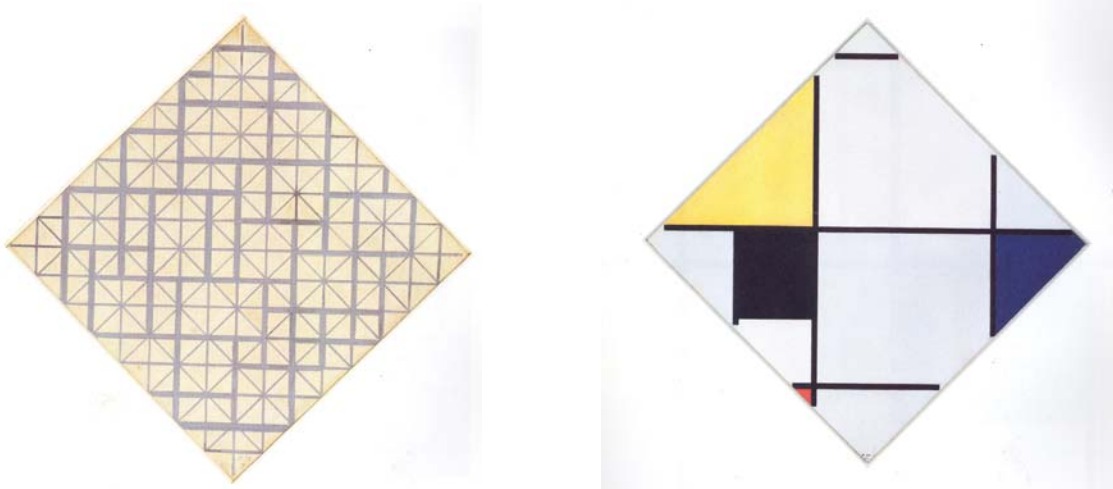


Figure dd: Piet Mondrian's diamond motif expands the boundaries of the canvas. *Composition with Grid 4*, 1919 (oil on canvas). **Right:** *Lozenge Composition with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red, and Gray*, 1921 (oil on canvas)

From Yve-Alain Bois, *Piet Mondrian*.

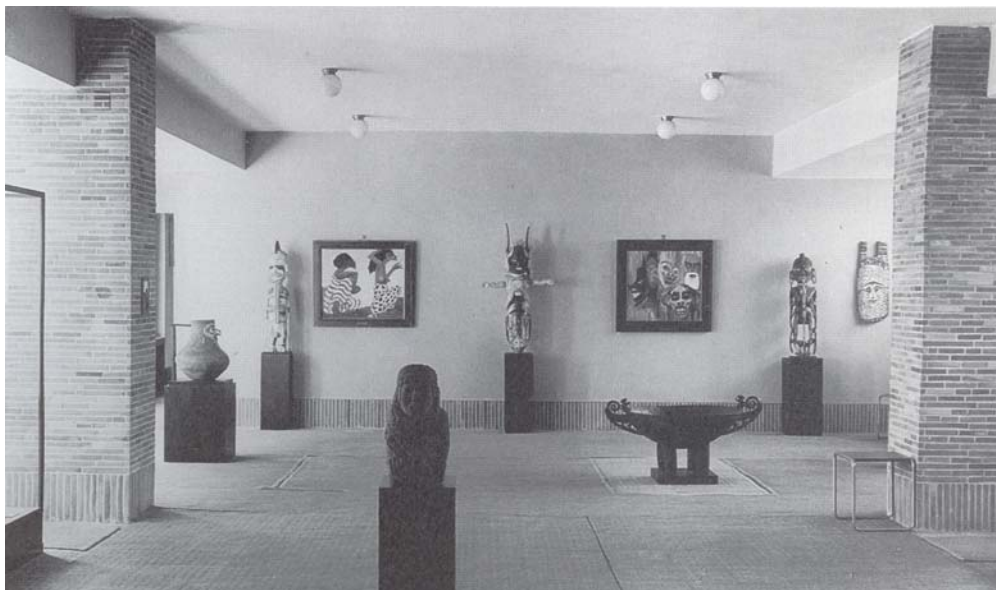


Figure ee: The Folkwang Museum, Essen in 1934. An inspiration for the modern idea of neutrality and minimalist relationship between art and space.

From Samuel Cauman, *The Living Museum: Experiences of an Art Historian and Museum Director-Alexander Dörner*.

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- ¹ Manfred Lehbruck, "Museum, psychology, and architecture," *Museum International*, (UNESCO, Paris), no. 212 (2001): 61.
- ² Frederick Kiesler, *Inside the endless House: Art, people, and architecture: a journal* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 19.
- ³ Kiesler, *Inside the endless House: Art, people, and architecture: a journal*, 573.
- ⁴ Sybil Kantor, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 64.
- ⁵ Victoria Newhouse, *Towards A New Museum* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998), 220.
- ⁶ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 14.
- ⁷ Adachiara Zevi, "For and Against Architecture," *Lotus International* 113, (2002): 10.
- ⁸ Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 6. The notion of exhibition design took form in the 1920s with Dadaist artistic creations and with the innovations of El Lissitzky, Frederic Kiesler, and de Stijl artists.
- ⁹ Julie H Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), xi. Before the term installation art became part of our understanding of contemporary art and space, there was the idea of the *environment*, referring to Allan Kaprow's spatial configurations in the late 1950s. In the 1970s, these environments evolved into the artistic medium of installation art.
- ¹⁰ Reiss, xii.
- ¹¹ Reiss, xiii.
- ¹² Nancy Troy, *The De Stijl Environment* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), 36.
- ¹³ Samuel Cauman, *The Living Museum: Experiences of an Art Historian and Museum Director- Alexander Dornier* (New York: New York University Press, 1958), 69. The Belvedere in Vienna (1776-80) is argued to be the first to reconfigure its galleries according to styles.
- ¹⁴ Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the MoMA* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 8.
- ¹⁵ O'Doherty, 16.
- ¹⁶ Roger Fry, "Ideals of the Picture Gallery," *A Roger Fry Reader*, ed. Christopher Reed (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 263.
- ¹⁷ Sadakichi Hartmann, *The Whistler Book* (Boston: L.C. Page and Company, 1910), 116.
- ¹⁸ Hartmann, 117.
- ¹⁹ Roger Fry, *Letters of Roger Fry*, ed. Denys Sutton (New York: Random House, 1972), 2:263.
- ²⁰ Fry, *Letters of Roger Fry*, 2:257.
- ²¹ Patricia Boyer, ed., *The Nabis and the Parisian Avant-Garde* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 94.
- ²² Nicholas Watkins, forward to *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), I.
- ²³ Gloria Groom, *Beyond the Easel: Decorative Paintings by Bonnard, Vuillard, Denis and Roussel, 1890-1930* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), 35.
- ²⁴ As quoted in: Deepak Ananth, "Frames within Frames: On Matisse and The Orient." *The Rhetoric of the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, ed. Paul Duro (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1996), 153.
- ²⁵ Hartman, 118.
- ²⁶ Groom, 35.
- ²⁷ Ananth, 153.
- ²⁸ Ananth, 153.
- ²⁹ Troy, 138.
- ³⁰ Troy, 30.
- ³¹ Troy, 30.
- ³² Troy, 30.
- ³³ Troy, 30.
- ³⁴ Troy, 30.

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- ³⁵ Troy, 64. Mondrian in a letter to Theo van Doesburg in 1917.
- ³⁶ Troy, 159.
- ³⁷ Frederick Kiesler, *Frederick Kiesler- Selected Writings*. Edited by Siegfried Gohr and Gunda Luyken (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1996), 42.
- ³⁸ Kiesler, *Frederick Kiesler- Selected Writings*, 42.
- ³⁹ Kiesler, *Frederick Kiesler- Selected Writings*, 55.
- ⁴⁰ Kiesler, *Frederick Kiesler- Selected Writings*, 42.
- ⁴¹ Kiesler, *Inside the endless House: Art, people, and architecture: a journal*, 156.
- ⁴² Staniszewski, 4.
- ⁴³ Staniszewski, 4.
- ⁴⁴ Cauman, 104.
- ⁴⁵ Cauman, 88.
- ⁴⁶ Cauman, 91.
- ⁴⁷ Staniszewski, 62.
- ⁴⁸ Kantor, 62.
- ⁴⁹ Staniszewski, 62.
- ⁵⁰ Kantor, 62.
- ⁵¹ Kantor, 64.
- ⁵² Kantor, 64.
- ⁵³ Kantor, 66.
- ⁵⁴ Kantor, 66.
- ⁵⁵ Staniszewski, 61.
- ⁵⁶ O'Doherty, 79.
- ⁵⁷ O'Doherty, 79.
- ⁵⁸ O'Doherty, 15.
- ⁵⁹ Newhouse, 51.
- ⁶⁰ Newhouse, 72.
- ⁶¹ Zevi, 10.
- ⁶² Philip Ursprung, "The Macro Private and Micro Public." *Werk, Bauen=Wohnen*, (2000): 77.
- ⁶³ Watkins, 8.
- ⁶⁴ Watkins, 8.
- ⁶⁵ Groom, 68.
- ⁶⁶ Groom, 86.
- ⁶⁷ Groom, 21.
- ⁶⁸ Groom, 21.
- ⁶⁹ Troy, 19.
- ⁷⁰ Troy, 19.
- ⁷¹ Troy, 19.
- ⁷² Staniszewski, 69.
- ⁷³ Kiesler, *Inside the endless House: Art, people, and architecture: a journal*, 573.
- ⁷⁴ Staniszewski, 66.
- ⁷⁵ O'Doherty, 14.
- ⁷⁶ O'Doherty, 15.
- ⁷⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 220.
- ⁷⁸ Deanna Bendix, "Whistler as Interior Designer: Yellow Wall at 13 Tite Street," *Apollo* 143, (1996): 33.
- ⁷⁹ Troy, 36.
- ⁸⁰ Troy, 36.
- ⁸¹ Troy, 65.
- ⁸² Troy, 68.
- ⁸³ Troy, 135.
- ⁸⁴ Troy, 138.
- ⁸⁵ Troy, 126.
- ⁸⁶ Troy, 126.

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- ⁸⁷ Kantor, 181.
- ⁸⁸ Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, from “A Note on the Exhibition,” 108.
- ⁸⁹ Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, 131.
- ⁹⁰ Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, from “The Endless Sculpture,” 55.
- ⁹¹ Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, from “The Endless Sculpture,” 55.
- ⁹² Groom, 52. Vuillard used the term in reference to *Woman Reading on a Bench* and another decorative project.
- ⁹³ Cauman, 89.
- ⁹⁴ Victoria Newhouse, *Towards A New Museum*, 220.
- ⁹⁵ Ananth, 154.
- ⁹⁶ Ananth, 154.
- ⁹⁷ Ananth, 153.
- ⁹⁸ Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, 35.
- ⁹⁹ Nicholas Watkins, I.
- ¹⁰⁰ Groom, 86.
- ¹⁰¹ Troy, 123.
- ¹⁰² Troy, 123.
- ¹⁰³ Troy, 123.
- ¹⁰⁴ Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, 55.
- ¹⁰⁵ Reiss, xix.
- ¹⁰⁶ Newhouse, 65.
- ¹⁰⁷ Kiesler, *Selected Writings*, 43.
- ¹⁰⁸ Lehmbruck, 62.
- ¹⁰⁹ John Ruskin. *The Lamp of Beauty: Writings on Art*, ed. Joan Evans (London: Phaidon Press, 1959), 291.