
1. THE SALVAGE ART INSTITUTE (SAI) IS A HAVEN FOR ALL ART OFFICIALLY DECLARED AS TOTAL LOSS, REMOVED FROM ART MARKET CIRCULATION AND LIBERATED FROM THE OBLIGATION OF PERPETUAL VALUATION AND EXCHANGEABILITY.
2. SAI CLAIMS STEWARDSHIP OVER ALL TOTAL LOSS INVENTORIES AS THEY ARE DECLARED, WHEREVER AND WHENEVER, WITH OR WITHOUT PHYSICAL TRANSFER.
3. SAI CONSIDERS THE FORMAL DECLARATION OF TOTAL LOSS AN ACT OF TRANSFORMATION AND SUBSEQUENTLY REFERS TO THE TRANSFORMED PROPERTY AS "NO LONGER ART."
4. SAI SEEKS TO MAINTAIN THE ZERO-VALUE OF NO LONGER ART AND RECOGNIZES ITS RIGHT TO REMAIN INDEPENDENT AND DIVORCED FROM THE DEMANDS OF FUTURE MARKETABILITY.
5. SAI ASPIRES TO MAKE THE NO LONGER ART INVENTORY ACCESSIBLE TO PUBLIC VIEW. SAI PROVIDES AN AUTONOMOUS YET ACCESSIBLE SPACE FOR NO LONGER ART TO REVEAL ITS QUALITIES VIA INTERDISCIPLINARY DEBATE.
6. SAI APPROACHES THE NO LONGER ART INVENTORY THROUGH A NON-HIERARCHICAL SYSTEM AND AIMS AT DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES. EACH ITEM OF SAI INVENTORY CAN POTENTIALLY DELIVER EQUALLY VALID REVELATIONS.
7. SAI CONCEIVES THE DECLARATION THAT AN OBJECT IS NO LONGER ART AS THE SYMMETRICAL INVERSION OF THE SUBJECTIVE DECLARATION THAT ANY OBJECT MAY BE ART. THE SIGNATURE OF THE ADJUSTER MEETS AND CANCELS THE SIGNATURE OF THE ARTIST.
8. SAI ESCHEWS THE AESTHETICS AND THE SENSATIONALISM OF DAMAGE. RATHER, IT IS DEVOTED TO EXAMINING THE STRUCTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF TOTAL LOSS ACROSS ART'S CONCEPTUAL, MATERIAL, LEGAL, ACTUARIAL AND FINANCIAL IDENTITIES.
9. SAI IS CENTERED ON THE TACTILE OBJECTHOOD OF NO LONGER ART, ON ITS OBDURATE SURVIVAL AND ON ITS TRANSFORMED PHYSICALITY. SAI CONFRONTS VIEWERS WITH THE MATERIAL SIGNS OF ALTERATION AND THE LEGIBLE TRACES OF EACH PIECE'S HISTORY.
SAI 0010
SAI 0027

Things Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art

JEFFREY WEISS ON THE CRISIS OF THE OBJECT

WHAT DOES IT MEAN to speak of the "status of the object" in art? The phrase has generally been deployed in discussions around the unfixed material identity of the aesthetic object in the postmodern era. When used this way, it is meant to signal, among other things, the end of medium specificity, which has given way in artistic practice to a mobile, variable, or indeterminate relation between the terms of a work and its material means. At stake is the work's very constitution: It is no longer understood necessarily to take only one form—indeed, it may not require concrete form of any kind. But what if an art object—even a conventional one—is simply compromised? Perhaps it shows signs of inherent deterioration or has suffered damage in the course of being handled or moved. Does the problematic of "status" apply to the circumstances of an object that suffers from no identity crisis, as such, but that is merely no longer sound?

A recent exhibition at Columbia University's Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery put this question to a strategic test. Organized by the artist Elka Krajewska and Mark Wasiuta, of Columbia's Department of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, it bore the blunt title "No Longer Art: Salvage Art Institute." By happy dialectical coincidence, that show was on view in New York at the same time as "In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity in Art" (at the Drawing Center), originally organized in 2011 by Susan Hapgood and Cornelia Lauf for De Kabinetten van de Vleeshal,

View of "No Longer Art: Salvage Art Institute," 2012–13. Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery, Columbia University, New York. Photo: James Ewing.

Middelburg, the Netherlands. In fact, both projects set out to address the unstable identity of the art object in the modern and postmodern eras from opposing sides of the same conceptual space, raising complex historical and philosophical questions the implications of which, while easy to take for granted, are risky to ignore.

What must first be said about that space is that it is strewn with paperwork. Both projects concern themselves, at least in part, with documents that attend the art object as an entity with legal status. According to the impressively concise statement of purpose that accompanied the installation of the Salvage Art Institute's "No Longer Art" (the SAI, it should be noted, is a largely notional institution, founded by Krajewska), "The term 'salvage art' refers to works removed from art circulation due to accidental damage," for which their owners have been compensated, by the insurance company that issued their policy, according to an agreed-upon formula (typically, "fair market" or "replacement" value). Such objects are understood by the SAI to be "subject to a peculiar and transformative actuarial logic." In that the works are "officially devoid of value" yet "often still relatively intact," they occupy a "nether world," "liberated from the burden of constant valuation and the obligation of exchange, yet abandoned to the invisibility of perpetual storage." The term that has been formulated in order to identify this state of affairs is—ominously—"total loss." The SAI is intended to serve as a "refuge," or "haven," for works of this kind. It receives donations of so-called salvage art from the AXA Art Insurance Corporation in New York, which conveys the objects in the form of a gift. But, as we know from anthropology, a gift is also an obligation: The economic burden of eternally warehousing these (commercially) worthless objects, which the insurance company couldn't simply destroy, must now be shouldered by the nonprofit organization. The donation permanently places a holding of decommissioned works in the hands of the SAI, allowing the institute to make them accessible to the public and to serve as a recurring forum for "interdisciplinary debate." On that score, while I do not know how many people ultimately visited the exhibition at Columbia, judging from the panel discussion I attended—which included artists and writers, an architectural theorist, an anthropologist, and an art-insurance evaluator, among others—the debate has certainly been intense.

One might say that the word *salvage* (meaning "to save" or "to preserve from potential ruin") is curiously applied in the case of the SAI, as the word signifies the very opposite of "total loss." And while adoption by the SAI may provide the devalued object a permanent safe harbor (the institute's

Opposite page: **SAI 0015**, materials: aluminum, porcelain; size: 10 x 10 x 3"; damage: 12/24/2008; claim: 5/11/2009; total loss: 5/20/2009; production: 1995; artist: Jeff Koons; title: *Red Balloon Dog*; edition: 51/66. From "No Longer Art: Salvage Art Institute," 2012–13.

Above: **SAI 0041**, material: pine; size: 77 x 14 x 14"; damage: unknown; claim: unknown; total loss: unknown; production: 1989; artist: William King; title: *Primavera*. From "No Longer Art: Salvage Art Institute," 2012–13.

What are the limit conditions of aesthetic identity—a ruined object, an object voucher, no object at all—and to what degree can we really afford to take these questions for granted?

express purpose is to keep the damaged work from recirculating in the market), in many other respects the object surely remains adrift.

The circumstances of the decommissioned art object, as we have noted, produce a great deal of paperwork. With the SAI, this takes the form of "accessory" documents, including condition reports and damage records. Each object on display at the Arthur Ross gallery was accompanied by documents of this kind, which, after having been redacted by AXA (to protect "sensitive client information"), were photocopied and bound together, and in this form placed on display for consultation by visitors. Crucially, art and document were kept together in a single room: The identity of a salvage-art object is such that the work is now *witnessed*, supported by papers that attest to its aesthetic undoing and partial rehabilitation through the agency of the SAI. Such documentation establishes that the object no longer qualifies as a work of art. Its "loss" is indexed by market value and accounted for according to the terms of the insurance company that underwrote that value. Within the confines of a system designed both to establish criteria for the identity of the work and to calculate liability and risk over time, the status of the object has been radically reassigned.

The insurance documents that support this process are representations: They attest to the depreciation of the work's value and of its aesthetic standing. In the case of numerous objects (including paintings, sculptures, and photographs) on view at the SAI installation, the damage is, in truth, difficult to detect without help. Some objects look perfectly fine; their status could be called ruinous only within the confines of the total-loss system. That's not to say that market value and aesthetic value are unrelated. But it does raise questions about the degree to which the object's material integrity can be thought of as a coherent substrate for that object's identity as art. It also raises an obvious question that was not aggressively engaged

by the SAI project (the contractual foundation of which, indeed, renders it moot with respect to the objects that fall under its aegis): How are we to evaluate the range of aesthetic and economic values pertaining to objects that have been subjected to acts of "conservation"? With its evolving battery of techniques and the varying degrees of invasiveness that its methods represent, conservation is an acutely—if too often unselfconsciously—interpretive practice possessed of its own long history of changing philosophies of intervention. The consequences of treatment can be redemptive or detrimental. At times, a single treatment is both of those things in succession: Variable levels of expertise, new discoveries or advances in tools and techniques, and shifting attitudes toward the necessity or acceptability of a given approach can make once-suitable choices appear over time to have been reckless or ill-advised. A commensurately negative outcome with respect to value (of both kinds) often follows suit.

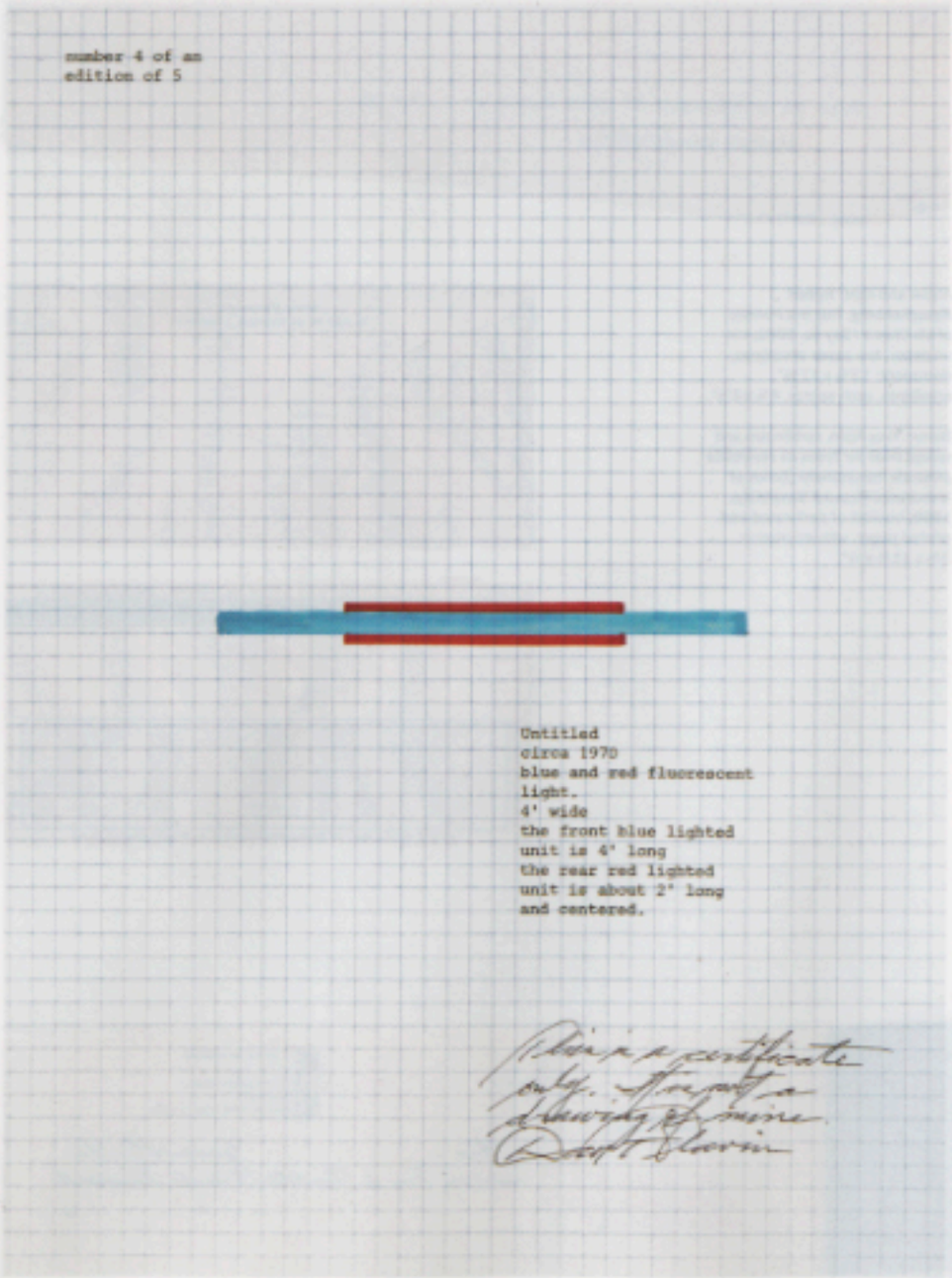
To be sure, conservation practice is increasingly grounded in self-critical debate, and the determinations that different conservators make (which are shaped by a good measure of subjective judgment) frequently conflict. Insurance valuation, to the contrary, requires strict criteria for the quantification of unacceptable material change; it has a low tolerance for ambiguity. Yet the methodologies of the conservator and the accessory documents of insurance appraisal have one basic thing in common: They both presume the fundamental necessity of the material object. In some respects, the certificates on view at the Drawing Center (representing a broad contingent of postwar and contemporary artists from Marcel Duchamp—who was the first to experiment with the certificate—to Yves Klein and Conceptualists Joseph Kosuth and Sol LeWitt to, more recently, Adrian Piper, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Andrea Zittel) reverse that claim. Here the "deeds" derive from art practice itself: In representing the work, the certificate is typically issued in advance—at times in lieu—of the object. In some cases it attests to the authenticity of an existing work; in others it references a nonextant object that may or may not be realized in the future. The certificate's historical circumstances largely pertain to art made after 1960. Minimal and Conceptual art practices respectively challenged two things: the ongoing role of the artist as author in the production of the object, and the very necessity of a viable object to the definition of the work as art. One operative consideration was that of delegated fabrication, according to which an object—a configuration of fluorescent lamps, for example, in the case of Dan Flavin—was to be produced not by the artist's own hands but (with or without his supervision) by studio assistants, commercial shops, or other agents. Authorship and making were thereby pried apart. Under such conditions (which have long since become routine), conventions of authenticity began to lose their hold, especially given the declining prestige of the old imperatives of craft and touch, which endowed the object with uniqueness, once a primary signifier of aesthetic value.

The conventions haven't altogether disappeared—they never will. This is because, as purely propositional as the work of the 1960s often set out to be, qualitative standards of fabrication were persistent: The objects possessed a high degree of particularity, at times even a level of workmanship,

Opposite page: View of "In Deed: Certificates of Authenticity in Art," 2012, The Drawing Center, New York. Photo: Cathy Carver.

Below: Dan Flavin, certificate for Untitled, 1970, marker and ink on paper, 10⅞ x 8½".

Artistic certificates and deeds all represent a key presumption, one they share with the pronouncements of the insurance industry: that aesthetic status is not intrinsic—that it can, instead, be both awarded and withdrawn.



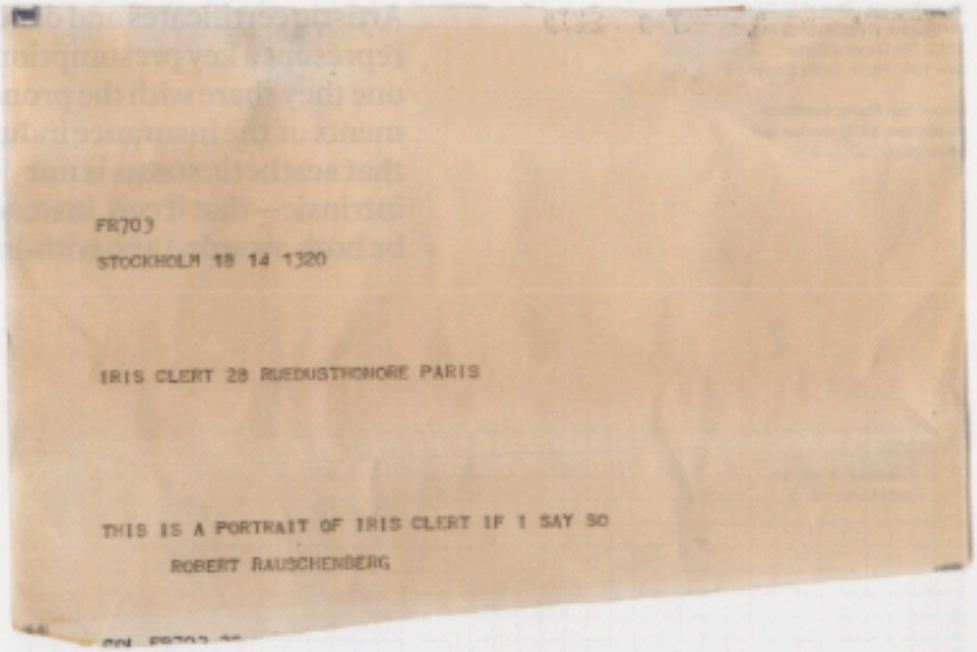
which can come to resemble the criteria of aesthetic craft. Donald Judd invented the term *specific object* to distinguish a certain tendency in recent art from painting or sculpture per se—some kinds of work could now be said to possess elements of both. But he may as well have been speaking of the ways in which an object produced with the materials of industrial or commercial manufacture can be too easily mistaken for objects that are mechanically reproducible. The devices of modular and serial repetition are instrumental in this context: They serve to inscribe aesthetic production with the language of industry. But in referencing duplication, they distract us from the apparently inevitable pull—in art practice—of the unique object.

With respect to art in the age of late industrial and commercial manufacture, delegated fabrication reflects the inheritance of the readymade. Yet in this regard, Duchamp was, for the generation of Minimal art, an ambivalent ancestor, in part because of the conflicted function of craft after 1960. Art historian Martha Buskirk, who has led the way in writing about the legal and economic travails of conceptualist art (and is a contributor to the "In Deed" catalogue), has coined the term *contingent object* in this context and traced the implications of that contingency well into contemporary practice. The phrase is something of an inversion of *specific object* and, as such, an efficient way to denote the broader conditions pertaining both to an object's aesthetic status and to the circumstances of commodity exchange. Further, as Buskirk has also been at pains to explain, the certificate as stand-in (when there is no object) or guarantee (when there is) is closely related to the new kinds of legal contracts that were being devised in order to facilitate sales of works produced in the era of poststudio art.

MANY IRONIES surround this state of affairs, one of the most pointed being that Conceptual and post-Conceptual work, with its presumption—in the now-historic locution of Lucy Lippard—to have "dematerialized" the art object, is sometimes supported by political or ethical claims against art as commercial property. As for dematerialization, over time the concept has come to look more and more like a red herring, particularly with respect to the rising—very material—tide of paper. Lawrence Weiner, among others, made the point early on: "When artists are dealing with so-called 'dematerialization of the object,' and they present large sheafs of papers, photos, objects, all signed, sealed, delivered, insured, they haven't dematerialized anything, they've just substituted six reams of papers and six reams of photos for a large stone sculpture." Indeed, beginning in the 1960s, the uses and abuses of

certification were legion. Hapgood and Lauf devise a kind of typology of applications, including guarantee of authorship, protection from unauthorized replication, and transfer of ownership and/or representation of sale. In some cases (see, for example, efforts by Daniel Buren and Michel Claura, or by Seth Siegelaub and Robert Projansky), new contracts were developed in collaboration with lawyers to establish a list of requirements that create elaborate protections for the "integrity" of the work (artistic "intention" is ever cited) as it passes through the hands of dealers, collectors, and museums. These contracts carry an explicit threat: Failure to comply will result in cancellation, whereby the work's identity is annulled. In other cases (Robert Rauschenberg's telegram work *This Is a Portrait of Iris Clert if I Say So*, 1961, for example), the certificate is slyly deployed to interrogate or deflate the very language of the bureaucratic claim as it applies to the authorship or ownership of aesthetic work. Here, the often intangible motivations of aesthetic practice and experience are understood to be incompatible with the strict quantifiability of legal standards and rules.

Regardless of their application, however, certificates and deeds all represent a key presumption, one they share with the pronouncements of the insurance industry: that aesthetic status is not intrinsic—that it can, instead, be both awarded and withdrawn. This is where the concerns of "In Deed" and "No Longer Art" intersect. The identity of the work—be it object or idea—emerges as *negotiable*, as if its aura has been fitted with an on/off switch. One could argue that damage inflicts genuine change—that the status and market value of the work is justifiably demoted, given the object's altered state. But the principle is difficult to quantify and shaky at best: Every art object changes over time, and that change, more often than not, has little or no bearing on its categorical identity as art. In that it responds to the demands of the market, paperwork—whether it derives from the artist (and his legal counsel) or the insurance adjustor—was invented to bring the certainty of the bookkeeper to matters of philosophical debate. Robert Morris was among the first to lay bare the absurdity of this scenario—the actuary as arbiter of aesthetic identity—when, in 1963, having failed to

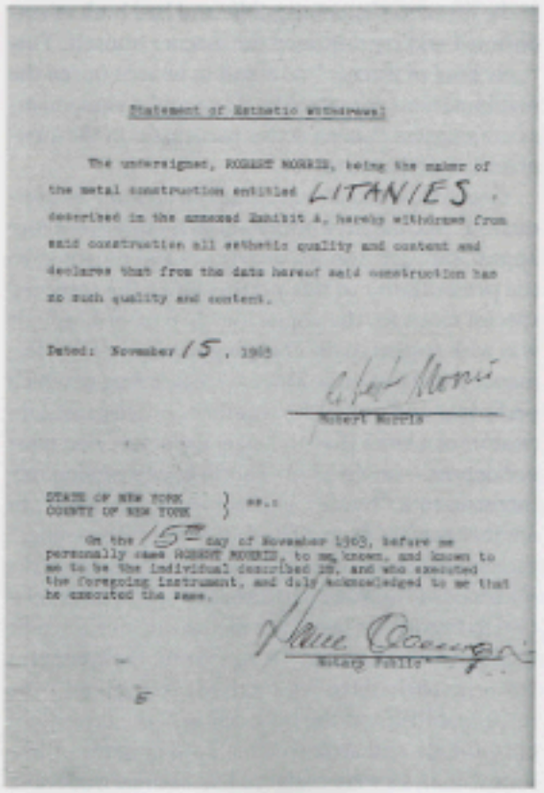


Above and right: **Robert Rauschenberg, *This Is a Portrait of Iris Clert if I Say So*, 1961**, ink on paper, two paper envelopes; document: 13⅜ x 17⅝", envelopes: each approx. 4⅛ x 8⅛".

Below: **Yves Klein, certificates and receipt book for *Zones de sensibilité picturale immatérielle* (Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility), 1959**, booklet of perforated and printed paper, with inscription, 3⅜ x 11¾ x ⅛".

How reliable are the historical claims we make on behalf of an object if it can be said to have endured continual change?

Above: **Robert Morris, *Document*, 1963.** typed, signed, and notarized statement on paper, 11 x 8½"; lead sheet mounted in imitation leather; overall 17⅛ x 23⅛". Below: **Robert Morris, *Document* (detail), 1963.**



Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal

The undersigned, ROBERT MORRIS, being the maker of the metal construction entitled LITANIES, described in the annexed Exhibit A, hereby withdraws from said construction all aesthetic quality and content and declares that from the date hereof said construction has no such quality and content.

Dated: November 15, 1963

Robert Morris

STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF NEW YORK } ss.:

On the 15th day of November 1963, before me personally came ROBERT MORRIS, to me known, and known to me to be the individual described in, and who executed the foregoing instrument, and duly acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

Notary Public

receive payment from Philip Johnson for *Litanies*, one of his early lead relief sculptures (made that same year), the artist produced a "Statement of Esthetic Withdrawal." According to that document, "all esthetic quality and content" the work had previously possessed was revoked. (The episode, an indispensable case, is discussed by Hapgood and Lauf in the catalogue to "In Deed.") Morris's statement was notarized and then mounted in an imitation-leather frame alongside frontal and profile line drawings of *Litanies* (made with a stylus on a sheet of lead), which are duly labeled EXHIBIT A. The two objects—sculpture plus document—now belong to the Museum of Modern Art in New York and together constitute a working demonstration of rival claims: those of authorship versus ownership in addition to the ontological claims of the aesthetic object.

IT IS, THEN, AESTHETIC ONTOLOGY that both "No Longer Art" and "In Deed" address: What are the limit conditions of aesthetic identity—a ruined object, an object voucher, no object at all—and to what degree can we really afford to take these questions for granted? We do, after all, typically bracket this set of concerns in the interest of getting on with the routines of interpretive practice. It could be said that the viability of the work simply has to be thought of as given; otherwise most conversations about art would never get out of the gate. Yet, conversely, one could easily imagine that the material viability of the work, once it is given any consideration at all, potentially challenges *every* critical approach to interpretation. For how reliable are the historical claims we make on behalf of an object if it can be said to have endured continual change? Why shouldn't our comprehension of the work therefore be grounded in a theorization of the life of the object in time? With this in mind, the simultaneous appearance of "No Longer Art" and "In Deed" is provocative because it draws our attention to the breach, after 1960, between aesthetic identity and the paradoxes of material constitution.

Built into the significance of the certificate is not only the status of the object but the status of object making. Weiner famously produced a "declaration of intent" to this effect: that a work can exist as language only—as a proposition; that it need not be fabricated or produced, but, if it is, that authenticity will not require realization by the artist's own hand. Yet Weiner's edict, which was formulated in 1968, already presumes that the crisis of the object had begun to pass; before it could, any account of aesthetic identity, at least philosophically speaking, would have to contend with the problem of making itself. That this historical problem is oddly implicated by the deliberations of the insurance industry was made clear by a meaningful if perhaps inadvertent resemblance between one aspect of the SAI project and a key installation work of the mid-'60s, Mel Bochner's *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art*, which was mounted at New York's School of Visual Arts in 1966. There Bochner famously showed, on white wooden pedestals, four ring binders containing photocopies of sketches, mechanical drawings, diagrams, notes, and even receipts, many of them borrowed from "Minimalists" and their kin, including Judd, Flavin, and LeWitt, as well as Dan Graham, Robert Smithson, and Eva Hesse. Having been refused sufficient funds for the proper framing and hanging of such materials, Bochner chose to exhibit photocopies of the sketches and documentation instead. The Xerox machine (which was itself represented by a copy of the manufacturer's diagram) made everything conform to standardized dimensions (those of the 8 ½ x 11" sheet). The "drawings" in question constitute nothing like drawing in the conventional aesthetic sense; they largely qualify, instead, as information. Copying them and displaying them in binders amplified this fact. The *Working Drawings* project is routinely taken to represent the very emergence of Conceptualism, but as much as it may have signaled the rising tide of Conceptualist paper, it must also be understood to concern itself with the issue of craft versus technique. With Bochner, it is less the disappearance of the object that matters than the variety of ways—including but not limited to the object—in which a viable "work" could now be defined. He submits the borrowed "drawings" to the same test that Flavin or LeWitt, for example, submit the object to. Is there a "working" difference between copy (or photocopy) and original? If not, then how do we define authorship when the drawing as a functional thing—of interest primarily as concept or information—is opposed to the drawing as something that is also valued for having been handmade? We must too ask, then, Under what criteria can we fix such a work according to date if the link between conception and realization is moot?

At the SAI show, visitors browse Xerox books as well; here the "drawings" in question are documents that—seen in relation to Bochner's installation of 1966—*represent* the work *in reverse*, now in the interest of relinquishing the work-as-object to the purgatory of permanent storage. Two different transactions are in play: between author and fabricator and between object and appraiser. Both implicate documents that broker the identity of the work; again, this means that here aesthetic identity is partly a question of decree. In the case of *Working Drawings*, there are no original objects, only copies—examples

At some point in the passage from installed object to component parts and back again, the utilitarian technological elements of a work by Dan Flavin are not necessarily meant to be viewed as art.

View of "No Longer Art: Salvage Art Institute," 2012–13, Arthur Ross Architecture Gallery, Columbia University, New York. Photo: James Ewing.

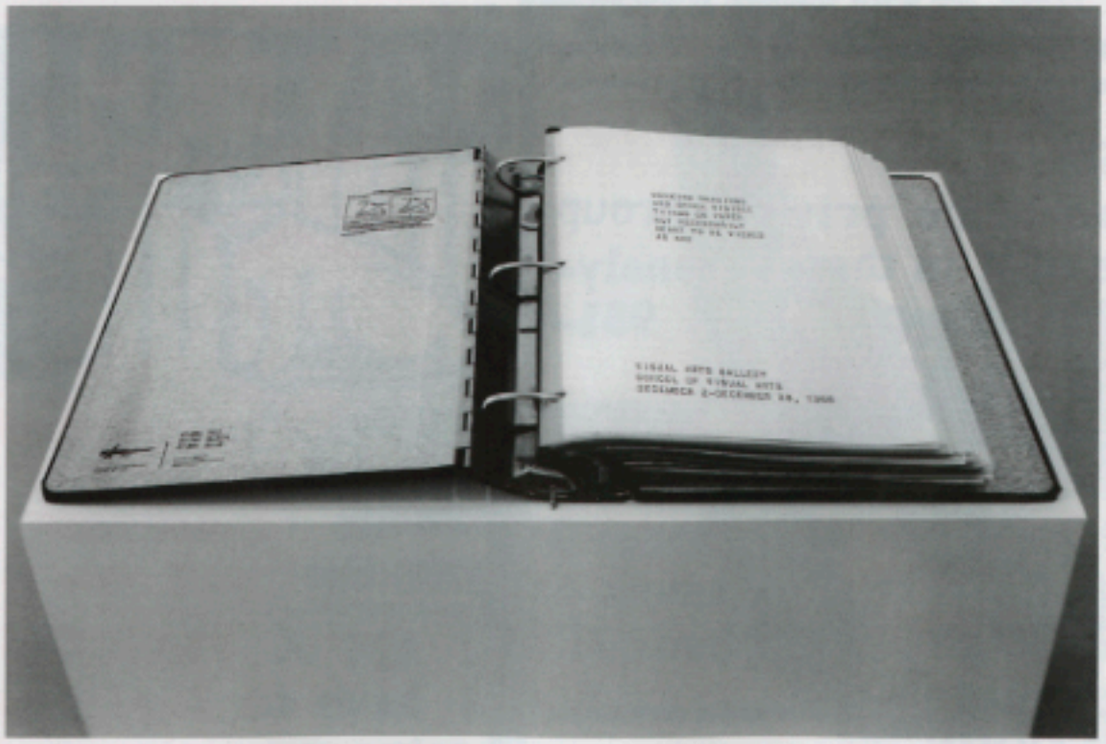
motivated by a work order or a plan. With the insurance claim, the unique object is also deprived: It cannot escape its actuarial fate, despite the status it was once said to have. Either way, the paper deed is a kind of "accessory document," carrying as it does more authority than the object (but less authority than the work). One consequence also concerns the status, with respect to aesthetic identity, of medium, and it still prevails. As I compose this essay, the new issue of *Harper's Magazine* is running a brief piece about an attempt on the part of customs authorities in England, begun in 2006, to collect £36,000 in unpaid duties on works by Flavin and Bill Viola because, dismantled in order to be shipped, the materials—lighting fixtures and video projectors—fail to qualify as fine art (which is not subject to import duty). London gallery Haunch of Venison, which was receiving the work, brought the matter to a UK tax tribunal in 2008. The tribunal found in the gallery's favor, but the customs authority, in turn, appealed the decision to the European Commission, which ruled to the contrary in 2009: "The customs committee," said a commission spokesperson, "looks at the nature of the goods and not at their use." In their wisdom, customs lawyers explained that the parts "only become works of art again when they are put together for display." As we would expect, the art world's commercial interests dismissively claim otherwise, but, in Flavin's case, doesn't the critical history of the work and the artist's radical approach to medium tell us that the commission is, with respect to the question of ontology, actually right? At some point in the passage from installed object to component parts and back again, the utilitarian technological elements of a work by Dan Flavin are not necessarily meant to be viewed as art.

AS IT HAPPENS, 1966, the year of *Working Drawings*, is also the year that a critical assessment of status and authenticity was directed at the circumstances of musical performance—and it is one measure of the estranged state of visual art that its changing terms correspond to those belonging to a whole other category of work. In April 1966, the pianist Glenn Gould published a long, still somewhat startling essay in *High Fidelity* magazine called "The Prospects of Recording." Gould, a dazzling technician, had renounced live performance and left the stage for good in 1964, at the age of thirty-one. In the essay, he characterized this choice as having been simply inevitable due to the rising capabilities of "electronic media"—by which he meant not the electronic medium of new music but, in the context of the so-called classical repertoire, recorded sound. Gould argued that the music industry fetishized live performance to the detriment of the recording studio, which, with its various acoustical and editing techniques—above all the "tape splice"—in fact was positioned to lend an extraordinary level of analytic focus to the interpretation of a score. The studio, he believed, had expanded the role of the performer in relation to the life of the work. It had also introduced a new figure, the tape editor, who had emerged as the performer's equal partner. Gould called for the full exploitation of the "possibilities indigenous to electronic means." He further remarked that the electronic *transmission* of sound had itself transformed the function of music in the life of the listening public and had both reconditioned and repositioned the listener himself. This "new kind of listener" now had to be seen (given the manipulations permitted by home audio equipment) as nothing less than an active participant in the interpretation of the work.

Gould's diagnosis was meant to counter an antiquated, fraudulent humanism that supported any appeal, through notions of urgency and presence, to the preferability of live performance (he reserved special scorn for the vogue for "live recording"). It was with respect to the changing status of the performance that he mounted his case, according to which performer and technician together are delegated fabricators of a work that no longer depends—that *must not* depend—on the kind of authenticity presumably intrinsic to a "living" experience of the work. In another passage from "The Prospects of Recording," the consequences of technology were directed at the influence of recorded performance on a work's relation to historical time: "The inclination of electronic media," Gould wrote, "is to extract their content from historic date." Consequently, given "the responsibilities of the tape editor," the criteria of chronology and style to which old systems of historical analysis were enslaved had become irrelevant.

Above: **Mel Bochner, *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art*, 1966,** four loose-leaf notebooks each with one hundred Xerox copies of studio notes, working drawings, and diagrams collected and Xeroxed by the artist, on four plinths. Installation view (with artist), School of Visual Arts Gallery, New York.

Below: **Mel Bochner, *Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper Not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art* (detail), 1966.**



So, too, with the conditions of studio recording, did "the individualized information concepts which define[d] the nature of identity and authorship" lose their grip. Both of these developments contributed to a shifted apprehension of the historical work itself. The circumstances were further heightened by the cultural pervasiveness of what Gould called "background sound" (aka Muzak). "Much criticized and often misunderstood," it represented, for Gould, "an exhaustive compilation of the clichés of post-Renaissance music." In its turn, background sound represented a kind of transmission that also retained "no sense of historic date." Yet it was precisely for this reason that it allowed the "cliché residue of all the idioms" to become "an intuitive part of our musical vocabulary." In this way, Muzak proved to be a ground against which the extraordinary analytic intensity afforded by studio recording would eventually become even more pronounced.

Music has long been recognized as something of a model for Minimalist and Conceptualist art practice: The musical score—a kind of working drawing—makes "delegation" a given. Gould's essay is, however, addressed not to the relation of work to score, but to an unprecedented ontology of performance per se. In this way, his argument impinges on the status of the art object, in that it recasts the recording, with respect to the new attenuation of the human element in performance, as a radically propositional object in its own right. The recorded tape supports a vast profusion of potential manifestations and multiple "authors" (or fabricators, including the listener); given these factors, its relation to historical time is thoroughly estranged. As for those fluorescent lamps and fixtures in London: They may or may not constitute a work by Dan Flavin, and the work's material existence may or may not be confirmed by the signed certificate. Once assembled (by other "authors"), the lamps could be damaged. Are they, then, lost, or can they simply be replaced? How are we to choose between a vintage fabrication and a new one: Is it the historicity of the *medium* or of the work's conceptual *terms* (the permissibility of later fabrication) that we should respect? There are no instructions for installing the object. Do we rely on precedent? What if the record shows a multiplicity of precedents, each specific to the unrecoverable circumstances of a given time and place? In Flavin's absence, choices will always be made on his behalf, with every choice representing an interpretation of the work. Content is thereby extracted from historical date, and claims of the market notwithstanding, identity and authorship elude even the fantasy of actuarial truth. □

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