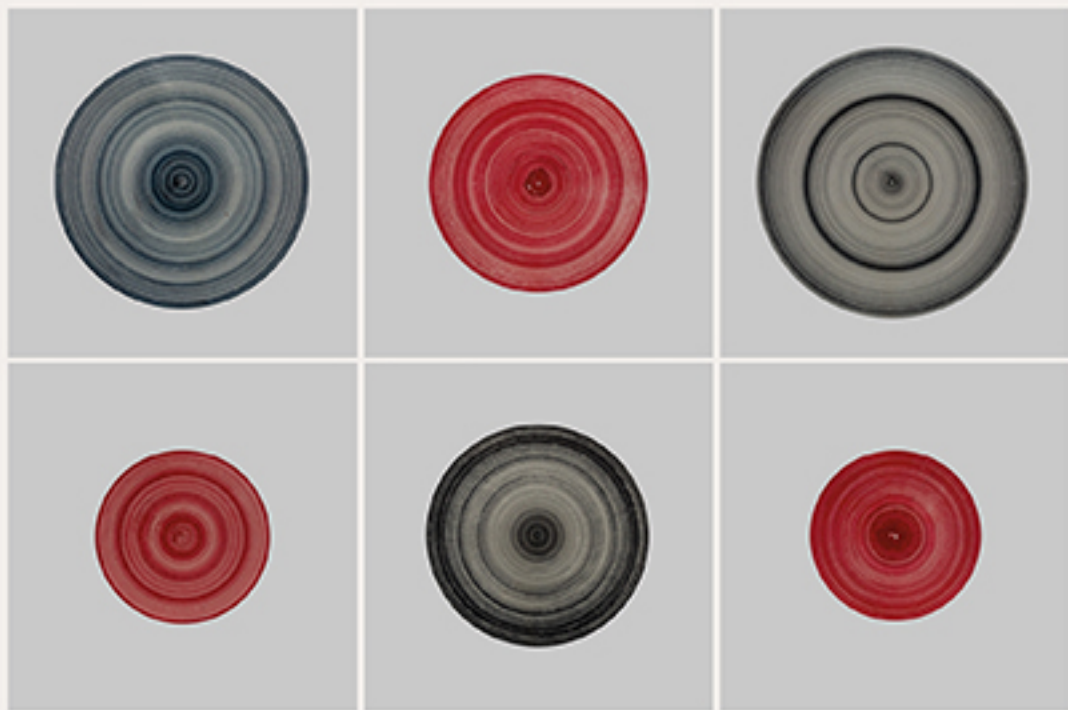


Joe Graham

SERIAL DRAWING

Space, Time and the Art Object



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Serial Drawing

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Serial Drawing

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Joe Graham

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Introduction

What kind of an art object is a serially developed drawing? As a question which pertains to a particular relationship between drawing and seriality, this query appears rather specific – possibly too specific, some might argue. After all, serial drawing can hardly be considered a particularly broad or well-developed field of enquiry, in either practical or scholarly terms. Serial art is a different case of course. As a field of artistic interest that rose to prominence during the late 1960s and early 1970s, seriality, serial art and serial imagery are various names for working practices that have long been connected to the fields of minimalism, post-minimalism and conceptual art. Perhaps the most well-known examples of serial artwork produced in the twentieth century are the serial silkscreens of Andy Warhol, but the roots of serial art stretch back to the dawn of modernism in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, when taken as a thematic understanding connected to the art of painting, seriality is seen to be closely associated with the birth of modernism itself. As Jennifer Dyer identifies, the serial works of Edgar Degas, Piet Mondrian, Egon Schiele and even Francis Bacon can be viewed as redolent of the serial approach, albeit in different ways,¹ although as John Coplans argues, the idea of serial art proper became codified in the work of artists like Alexei Jawlensky and Claude Monet early in the twentieth century.² As a discrete understanding within the domain of contemporary art however, the concept of serial art reaches fruition during the mid- to late 1960s via the minimalist and conceptual works of artists like Mel Bochner, Hanne Darboven, Donald Judd, Eva Hesse, Dorothea Rockburne, Ellsworth Kelly, Sol LeWitt and others. Although these artists all worked extensively across a range of media, they often chose the medium of drawing to realize their serially developed ideas.

Serial drawing is a specific understanding which both emerges from and sits within the domain of serial art considered as a broad field of artistic enquiry. In specific terms, what we mean by the term ‘serial drawing’ is a discrete artwork composed of a series of individual drawings, wherein this group of works is

observed to belong together as a unified whole in both aesthetic and conceptual terms. A work like *The Simpsons: The Complete First Season* (2014–15) by Stefana McClure, for example. Here we have a group of thirteen bright yellow drawings which are presented as a unified group. Appearing as a sequence of drawings that clearly belong together in formal terms, we also realize they belong together conceptually, courtesy of the fact that between them they present the viewer with the closed captions of the entire first season of *The Simpsons*.

As examples of McClure's *Films on Paper*, each individual drawing within this series presents the superimposition of subtitles taken from one of the thirteen episodes which compose this season. When taken as a whole, this means the suite of thirteen drawings offers a full season of transcribed dialogue back to the viewer, albeit in a heavily digested form: within each drawing it appears represented as a minimal composition of two blurred lines situated along the bottom of a monochrome surface. Although a literal rereading of *The Simpson's* dialogue is rendered impossible by this rather stringent set of aesthetic decisions, as a mode of minimalist-inspired drawing practice it does fulfil the more vital function of allowing the discerning viewer to stand back and behold the unified manner in which the thirteen individual drawings come together to form a single artwork: due to not only the shared formal characteristics of the drawings which compose it, but also courtesy of the underlying serial structure to which the group as a whole indirectly refers. Appreciation of this underlying structure gives rise to a sense of withdrawn serial depth, one which is obliquely realized by virtue of the aesthetic manner in which these abstract drawings operate – as nothing is explicitly pictured by McClure in literal or figurative terms, we are invited instead to look beyond the surface of what we see and inquire into the putative objecthood of this serially arranged form. In short, we seem to acquire a sense that the serial artwork we perceive arrayed before us is somehow greater than the sum of its thirteen parts, but without gaining any real idea about how to classify or even properly understand the nature of it as a standalone art object. Despite this, we are sure of one thing – that we have reached this point in our deliberations due to the manner in which this unified set of drawings has directed our attention *to* it. Indeed, to consider the very idea of serial drawing is to consider the way in which the minimalist aesthetic which McClure utilizes draws our attention beyond a literary concern with *The Simpson's* dialogue, towards a place that lies elsewhere, and otherwise conceived.

However, although the role of drawing within the development of serial art is today acknowledged, scholarly recognition of how exactly drawing operates within the context of the above understanding is a rather slim affair.³ This lack

is all the more intriguing when we realize that a number of implicit connections between drawing and seriality have long been known to serious art collectors with an eye for this particular aesthetic sensibility. We are referring here to the extensive, minimalist-infused drawing collection of New York collectors Sally and Wynn Kramarsky:⁴ a collection which bears witness not only to the possibility of putting together a comprehensive collection of twentieth-century serial artworks that are predominantly drawn, rather than painted, sculpted or produced through photography, but also one that has the ability to influence the numerous museum exhibitions of serially inspired drawings which have periodically emerged.⁵ The lack of specialized interest stands even further out when we realize that various kinds of serially developed drawing are alive and well today. Not only within the minimalist-themed work of contemporary artists like McClure, Jill Baroff, Ellen Keusen, Tatsuo Miyajima and others working in a similar vein, but also within the work of artists who take a much more narrative, deliberately pictorial approach. Artists like Florette Dijkstra, for example, or Marcel van Eeden, whose ongoing project *The Encyclopaedia of My Death* consists of drawings and other, related works produced in a dark and smoky film-noir aesthetic, and which relate in their entirety to source material that dates from the period before his birth (1965).⁶ Yet despite this diverse range of drawing activity, the somewhat limited scholarly discussion which has so far been accorded to the idea of serial drawing means that the question of what kind of art object a serial drawing 'is' or constitutes has yet to be asked.

Indeed, unlike the attention paid to the putative objecthood of minimalist sculptural works by famed modernist critic Michael Fried,⁷ the limited discussion which so far pertains to serial drawing appears more firmly tied to the idea of serial imagery than anything object-oriented. The fixation on imagery does not normally present an issue for the discussion of visual artworks like drawings. On the contrary, to speak of such works without referring to their imagistic status might be considered by some to be a trifle remiss. However, there is one issue in particular that surfaces within the image-oriented approach to serial drawing: the fact that the topic of structure continually re-enters the discussion, and in doing so, causes no end of object-oriented ideas about this kind of artwork to repeatedly emerge. Structure is central to the understanding of serial art, serial imagery and serial drawing – indeed, to all manifestations of seriality, be they artistic or otherwise. Along with repetition and order, serial structure is the factor which enables the formal appreciation of serially developed artworks, both in terms of how they are produced and in terms of how they manifest themselves as unified entities to those who view them.

This last term, unified, is the key to understanding what is meant by a serial drawing in structural terms. It is the place where we begin to derive the idea that a serially distributed artwork might be more akin to a singular object, albeit one which is differently configured from the norm. Indeed, detecting unity of the structural kind is how we decide upon the singularity of any type of serial artwork, over and above referring to a series of drawings, images or sculptures made by an individual artist and arranged thematically, chronologically or otherwise. For example, the unity of a serial drawing like Ellsworth Kelly's *The Mallarmé Suite* (1991) is found in the particular way in which the eleven drawings which make up the series structurally, aesthetically and conceptually belong together, meaning in both visible and invisible terms. They are not simply an odd grouping of eleven similar-looking drawings which just happen to be hung next to each other upon a gallery wall. On the contrary, like McClure's *The Simpsons: The Complete First Season*, Kelly's *The Mallarmé Suite* exists as the full suite of eleven drawings – not more, not less. When considering this work as a singular art object, serial unity is found within and across the structure of the series as whole, while the non-pictorial mode of drawing which Kelly embarks upon is recognized for the oblique manner in which it draws attention to the sense of serial depth such unity supplies. Moreover, as we will see in relation to our consideration of similar artworks, serial unity is an idea which not only introduces notions of similarity and difference, but also some rather novel interpretations of both space and time.

Serial drawing

While the links between seriality, drawing and the art object have not been extensively reflected upon, the relationship between drawing and seriality has, at least to a greater extent. For example, Gabriele Gopinath, writing in perhaps the only dedicated book on serial drawing to have emerged thus far (*Infinite Possibilities: Serial Imagery in 20th-Century Drawings*), directs our attention towards the rather precise way in which the double-sided character of drawing can be seen to operate in relation to seriality. Arguing that the medium of drawing 'has significantly affected and influenced serial methodologies', Gopinath locates the specific nature of serial drawing in the strive to bring serial methodologies in harmony with the graphic medium.⁸ Serial methodologies are of course what both Bochner and John Coplans were expounding in the mid-1960s, when seriality became recognized as an explicit artistic methodology, in and of

itself. For Gopinath, the dualism of concept and object which is created by the combination of methodology and material particular to serial artwork is itself underpinned by another dualism: one which belongs exclusively to drawing. Rather than provide us with yet another reference to the well-known drawing dualism of verb and noun, Gopinath is referring here to something much more interesting: a 'complicated double valance', or double meaning which the medium of drawing has acquired on its long route through history, and which goes some way to explaining how serial drawings like those of McClure and Kelly operate. On the one hand, drawing has been recognized as 'definitively unfinished' ever since the Renaissance.⁹ This provisional status is bound up with the historical remit assigned to the sketch, whereupon drawing was seen to function partly in a preparatory role, prior to being realized in other, more historically privileged media, such as painting or sculpture. Considered in terms of the sketch, drawing is recognized as the place where ideas are forged, risks taken and experiments made. This sense of emergence and becoming produces a sense of transparency: one responsible for the idea that drawing provides a unique point of access into both the creative process and the artist's mind at work.

On the other hand, many of the uses of drawing in the modern era can be defined as 'positivistic'.¹⁰ Drawing may indeed exhibit a range of visceral and material qualities that link it to the movements of the human psyche, but the myriad and varied uses of drawing are found within the utilitarian world of schematics, blueprints, diagrams and other forms of working drawing. Both architecture and engineering have long been underpinned by drawing in disciplinary terms, while practicability and cost-effectiveness made drawing a staple medium for use within children's education – a pedagogical interest that continues apace today. But as Gopinath indicates, it was in post-war America that both the psychological and the positivistic associations of drawing were seen to emphatically merge. Jungian psychology was in the ascendancy during the 1940s, wherein the clinical application of drawing was an idea taken up enthusiastically within the context of child psychology. Abstract expressionists began to make use of drawings potential for creating psychological revelation: Jackson Pollock's drawings produced under the direction of psychotherapists being perhaps the most famous in this regard. Up until the mid-1960s, the division between drawing as it was traditionally understood within the fine art context and the kind of working drawings found within the context of non-art disciplines was rather stark. Life drawing took place in one context, while the production of blueprints occurred in the other. Yet there was a seminal moment during this period which brought the double valance of drawing just outlined

into play. It also helped bring the idea of serial drawing into being, as it were, in tandem with raising the question of whether the artwork is defined by its conceptual or material form – a form of questioning that would in turn raise the idea of conceptual art.

We are speaking of Mel Bochner's exhibition 'Working Drawings and Other Visible Things on Paper not Necessarily Meant to Be Viewed as Art', held at New York School of Visual Arts in 1966. To present the show Bochner assembled an array of drawings from both art and non-art sources, and then proceeded to photocopy them using the school's new Xerox photocopier. Once all the photocopied drawings were assembled, they were put into four identical black binders, each given its own pedestal. Each binder had 100 photocopied drawings in it. The drawings comprised a selection of studio notes, working drawings and industrial diagrams, including drawings taken from *Scientific American* and anonymous sources. The utilitarian form of the binder, photocopies and the random order in which they were arranged effectively levelled the distinction between art and non-art drawings at a stroke. At the end of each binder was placed a photocopied page showing the schematics for the newly developed photocopier, thereby indicating the technology that permitted this act of levelling to take place. One of the things we can immediately understand from Bochner's effort is how a set of material and conceptual concerns for defining what constitutes the nature of the art object came together within the form of a large, serially presented drawing. Indeed, while the physical array of individual items within the exhibition space was not extensive, the structural integrity which this conceptual artwork conveyed was undoubtedly serial in form, wherein the aesthetically realized, 'definitively unfinished' qualities inherent to drawing combined with its positivistic attributes to produce four filled binders of work that demanded to be read as much as looked at.

Yet the viewers inability, or indecision, over whether to read or to look at such serially displayed works is precisely the element of serial drawing which came further to the fore in later works by other artists. For example, returning to our prior example, Kelly's *The Mallarmé Suite*, we can see how the emphasis had shifted and evolved within this serial work from Bochner's earlier, declarative stance. Kelly's piece is less concerned with presenting a set of deliberately conceptual concerns for the audience to mull over, and more focused on revealing how the silent shapes of a monochrome space might play out across an interconnected whole. For although on the surface Kelly's serial drawing appears to be a concern with serial imagery, over and above pushing the boundaries of what can constitute the art object (à la Bochner), the pared back, stringent aesthetics of this

minimalist stance also complicates the viewers gaze, albeit in a different way. In being flatly given, wherein the figure-ground relationship has been removed and replaced with a silent interplay of shape, there appears no way for the viewer of these eleven drawings to access any sense of pictorial space, and yet the serialized form of this drawing complicates the very simplicity which each pair of shapes in each drawing otherwise presents. The push and pull between form and content as it appears within the structure of each drawing (micro-structure) and across the series as a whole (macro-structure) encourages a deliberation on the part of the viewer over whether to read or to look. For commentators like Nicolas de Warren, the minimalist aesthetic utilized in serial drawings like Kelly's *The Mallarmé Suite* are actually equally indifferent to being read or looked at, and yet it is this very indifference which invites the viewer in. Indeed, it is within our analysis of how structure manifests itself within the context of such works that we find the idea of a serial depth emerges. As de Warren eruditely describes:

It is as if the elimination of figure-ground relationship within a single frame precipitated the opening of an added 'serial depth' and is even rendered necessary in order to preserve the possibility of aesthetic structure. Structural depth and form exist across, or in terms of, a series of panels. The added dimension of seriality – not the plurality of the singular but the singular plurality – alters the nature of an artwork essentially.¹¹

The idea that a form of added serial depth can somehow emerge from within the structural unity that a serial drawing presents is a curious notion. So too is the idea of a series of individual works presenting themselves as a 'singular plurality', rather than a plurality of the singular. Yet despite the putative objecthood which this remark would seem to bestow upon the serial artwork, de Warren does not elect to take up an object-oriented approach towards the question of serial art. Instead, his focus remains on the manner in which the idea of serial depth first surfaces from within the beholder's consideration of the decisively non-pictorial mode of address which Kelly's minimalist aesthetic utilizes: one which relies heavily on the language of drawing, despite declining to picture anything in representative terms. However, rather than find our ideas concerning what constitutes the art object to be exhausted by this novel understanding, we actually discover the opposite: they are remarkably intact, albeit differently configured. Indeed, when thought about in object-oriented terms, we emerge with the sense that serial drawings of this type present themselves as a form of distributed yet unified object, one which remains partially withdrawn on this very same basis. de Warren's idea of serial depth

speaks of there being something like a non-visible surplus to such an art object: one that indirectly reveals itself both within and across the series as a whole, albeit in a fundamentally non-representative manner. From this last point springs the realization that such a form of serial depth only reveals itself when a certain combination of aesthetic and structural arrangements are contemplated by an interested viewer – arrangements which have the language of drawing right at their core. Indeed, one might be tempted to say it is precisely this kind of serial depth which a certain kind of serial drawing creates, rather than reveals. A depth which not only serves to disrupt the flatness of the picture plane which any single iteration (single drawing) within a series displays, but which also introduces a form of objecthood into an otherwise image-oriented discussion.

Object-oriented seriality

The claim being made in this book is that serial drawings like Kelly's *The Mallarmé Suite* and McClure's *The Simpsons: The Complete First Season*, offer themselves as perfect vehicles for appreciating the idea of serial depth, courtesy of the combined aesthetic and structural choices which such works present. In pursuing this claim, we will develop an object-oriented approach to serial drawing in order to argue for a new kind of art object: one that, in being so appreciated, reveals sides to it that are both seen and unseen, as it were: veiled and unveiled. Furthermore, in exploring this claim via the examination of serial works by four selected artists – Alexei Jawlensky, Ellsworth Kelly, Hanne Darboven and Jill Baroff – we look to unpack a further idea, one that emerges from idea of serial depth: the idea of *seeing serially*. Seeing serially is a performative notion which relates to the beholder of such artworks and describes the manner in which serial drawings are appreciated as being the singular kind of art objects that they are. It can emerge as an idea in various ways, depending on the knowledge and interest of the beholder, but in the context of this book, it surfaces once a number of serial artworks by our four selected artists have been examined in object-oriented terms.

We engage in this process courtesy of the philosophical framework provided by Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology, otherwise known as OOO for short.¹² Thanks to the clearly articulated, semi-modular and altogether flexible framework provided by OOO, we are enabled to examine a set of serial drawings by slightly modifying the four-sided structural understanding which underpins

Harman's phenomenologically inspired realist approach, and so treat the serial drawing as a very particular kind of art object. On this account, a serial drawing like Darboven's *Wunschkonzert* (1984), or Baroff's *New York Harbor, March 31 – April 30, 2005* (2005), is held to be something more than simply a series of mid-sized durable constructs that are observed to hang quite close together along a wall. While not aiming to dilute either the physical, formal or aesthetic attributes of this clearly visible phenomenon, we are enabled via the workings of OOO to approach the phenomenon of the serial art object in ontological terms, and so consider those aspects of it which are obliquely or indirectly given, together with those which are fundamentally withdrawn. Doing so not only enables us to inquire into how such a distinctive, combinatory understanding might be considered to operate as a drawing, but also to ask why parts of such an object might appear akin to surface qualities while other parts be considered veiled. Indeed, the very fact that a physically distributed artwork like Kelly's is able to be thought about in unified terms is what enables de Warren to note the opening of an added serial depth in the first place. In being designated as a 'singular plurality',¹³ a unified art object composed of numerous parts, serial drawings like Kelly's are always already partly withdrawn from view, which means always already more than the visible array of images which they present. The recognition of serial depth is no more or less than a recognition of this very withdrawal and emergence: a phenomenon which is properly encountered by those who appreciate the flowering of drawing in its serial form, and who can therefore sense the invite *in*.

However, with the above in mind, and given the flexibility of Harman's object-oriented approach, this book sets out to do a bit more than simply rehearse a set of well-worn arguments on what drawing is, or how it operates. To be specific, within this book we both develop and utilize a slightly modified version of OOO, in order that Harman's realist philosophy prioritizing the role of objects might better fit our serially developed ends. For reasons of simplicity, we have named this modified version *object-oriented seriality*, or OOS for short. In producing OOS as a framework for thinking about serial drawing in object-oriented terms, and using it to analyse works by Jawlensky, Kelly, Darboven and Baroff, we emerge not only with a better conception of how serial drawing is understood in relation to notions of space, time and the art object, but also with the means to gain a fuller appreciation of what seeing serially means in performative terms. As we previously indicated, seeing serially casts the viewer of serial drawings as an active beholder, one who is charged with constructing meaning in and over time, based on what and how they see. The object-oriented attitude espoused by OOS

also affects the manner which the argument laid out in this book is structured, and which the following chapter summaries will help outline. For example, in 'Chapter 1: A History of Definitions', we examine various attempted definitions of seriality/serial art as they are detailed by a number of key commentators on the topic; namely Mel Bochner, John Coplans, Christy Mag Uidhir and Jennifer Dyer. The task of trying to define in advance an understanding of either seriality or serial art is common to all these commentators, with varying degrees of success. However, when we approach this idea according to the tenets of Harman's OOO, we find it to be somewhat problematic, based on the manner in which such a determinate attitude risks either undermining or overmining the (withdrawn) reality of the serial art object.

Undermining and overmining are a pair of terms that emerge from within Harman's OOO, and about which more will be said in due course. In essence, they are used by those who take issue with the idea that knowledge about objects can be acquired in a total or exhaustive sense – an issue that relates expressly to the topic of defining serial art. For example, given the mathematical precision that (we assume) must underpin the concept of series, one would be forgiven for thinking that a wide degree of differentiation in defining what is meant by seriality/serial art is unlikely to emerge. However, by examining the relevant literature on the topic via the work of the contributors listed above, it turns out the truth is rather different. Instead of taking issue with this finding, we use the stance of OOO to stand back and embrace the spread of opinion, as it were, wherein the various definitions of seriality which are espoused by these commentators are thoroughly examined for whatever insights they might hold, yet without our needing to nominate one above the rest. Furthermore, this stance enables us to add the thoughts of another, non-art commentator to this group: namely Iris Marion Young. Young is chosen for the erudite manner in which she introduces the Sartrean idea of series as being a background or withdrawn condition – an idea which is observed to be lacking from the other commentators' contributions, yet which has already surfaced here.¹⁴

With the above review in place, we are able in 'Chapter 2: An Object-Oriented Approach' to start putting together the framework of OOS in more detail, once a more thoroughgoing description of OOO has been outlined. The preliminary overview of OOO is required for two reasons. In the first instance, it enables the reader to see and understand how Harman's philosophical framework has been modified for use within our argument, meaning before we outline our modified version (OOS) in relevant detail. As we are using the framework of OOS in Chapter 3 to examine a selection of serial drawings, a working understanding

of it is required by the reader prior. In the second instance, an overview of Harman's philosophy can serve as a useful framing device for those unfamiliar with the relevant tenets of this realist philosophical approach, including its all-important link to art. Given this is a book that focuses on serial drawing there is no guarantee that the majority of readers are familiar with the basics of Harman's thought, but for those that are, they may find further areas of interest in seeing how some of Harman's ideas have been modified towards our serially developed ends. The overview of Harman's OOO unpacks ideas like undermining and overmining in more detail, but more importantly, it introduces Harman's 'quadruple object' for use within our argument: the fourfold framework which describes how OOO operates in philosophical terms. Practically speaking, we will focus only on unpacking those aspects of Harman's programme which serve to elucidate how OOS operates: although it is relatively young as a philosophical movement, OOO represents quite a large and varied corpus of ideas, not all of which are relevant for this investigation into serial drawing. Relevant aspects include understanding how this framework pivots on a pair of intersecting axes: between the visible and the unseen on the one hand, and between the singular and the plural on the other.

More importantly, we examine how the intersection of these two axes enables the user to reflect not only on the nature of how objects appear and interreact with other objects, but also how such objects do not appear; in other words, to understand how a part of them remains fundamentally withdrawn from direct modes of access. Using the example of William Blake's *The Ghost of the Flea*, we explore how the fourfold framework of OOO can be understood and deployed in relation to perceiving a standardly single kind of art object, before proceeding to describe how our modified understanding, OOS, operates in serially understood terms, courtesy of a somewhat canonical work of serial art: William Hogarth's *A Rakes Progress*. It is within our discussion of Hogarth's serially conceived and executed work that we introduce the ideas of time, space and seriality as they are understood within the context of serial drawing, where each is described as a form of tension. Although the metaphysical scope of Harman's philosophy undeniably introduces a number of variables into our task, the purpose of including it is not to simply add unnecessary layers of complexity for the sake of doing so. On the contrary, we are merely responding to the phenomenological complexity that is already present once the singular, yet distributed, visible, yet partially veiled status of serial art objects is revealed.

In 'Chapter 3: Serial Drawing' we move to examine serial drawing in more concrete terms. Deploying the framework of OOS as it has been described in the

previous chapter, we use it to examine a number of serial artworks producing by our four selected artists working in this field: Alexei Jawlensky, Ellsworth Kelly, Hanne Darboven and Jill Baroff. Between them, the careers of these four artists cover a span that stretches from the dawn of serial art as an idea early in the twentieth century until now, with the contemporary work of Baroff serving to reveal how serial drawing has solidified as both an idea and a practice. While there are undoubtedly other artists who could have been selected to appear alongside, especially from the period during the mid-1960s and the early 1970s when the idea of serial art was at its peak, these four artists serve the purpose of outlining how serial drawing has developed as both a practical and conceptual notion, and how the non-pictorial, minimalist-themed variety in particular performs in object-oriented terms.

To reiterate, the reason for our focus on minimalist-themed drawing is not simply a subjective choice. Instead, it is predicated on the manner in which serial drawings produced in this vein are seen to operate in aesthetic and structural terms. Instead of seeking to actively picture or mimetically represent things which are clearly other than themselves, the mundane, restrained aesthetic deployed in abstract drawings of this kind deliberately point back to the serial choices which underpin them, wherein elements like repetition, reversal, rotation, permutation and iteration are all raised in the beholder's awareness, while ideas about time and space come strongly to the fore. Rather than seeking to provide an exhaustive, art historical overview of all the possible varieties of serial drawing which have developed since Jawlensky was first probing the issue, the purpose of this book is to use such drawings to investigate how ideas like serial depth and seeing serially can be understood in object-oriented terms, and how elements like space, time and seriality stand forth within the appreciation of serially developed artworks that have the concerns of drawing right at their core. That being said, there is no argument put forward here for what does/does not count as drawing, either in this chapter or elsewhere. Certainly, at the time that Jawlensky was working drawing was not considered to be a primary form of art in the manner of painting or sculpture, and so to spend time trying to emphasize the drawn aspect to his work over say, the painterly, would be a foolish exercise.

However, with the onset of minimalist sensibilities as they are seen in Kelly's, Darboven's and then Baroff's practice, the various strengths of drawing which Gopinath noted – namely a restrained use of materials, openness of form, conceptual framing of content, coupled with an ability to diagrammatically and structurally link topics connected to time and space within the context of seriality as an idea – all reveal themselves in different ways, and to differing

degrees. In short, the strengths of drawing speak for themselves within the various artworks considered in this chapter and serve as a way for the withdrawn reality of the serial art object to be better appreciated. Furthermore, in using OOS as a practical framework for considering different works by each of these four artists, the serial artworks themselves are 'broken up', as it were, for consideration: an act which, although it might sound a touch drastic, is actually not that dissimilar to how the philosophical framework of OOO operates, or indeed, how a serial drawing appears. The act of breaking up the various serial drawings for consideration is performed according to how the topics of space, time and seriality are considered as tensions within the context of OOS, meaning they can be considered both apart from and in relation to the serial art object to which they relate. Within this process, serial drawing is seen to constitute a rather unique form of understanding: a singular, yet distributed form of art object which is generated according to the manner in which the concepts of space, time and seriality are perceived via the beholders informed appreciation of such works.

Finally, in the conclusion we move to discuss the notion of seeing serially in more detail, reflecting on how it can be understood in light of the serial drawings we have previously discussed, plus the work of McClure. The idea of seeing serially requires us to accept the object-oriented assessment of serial drawing which comes prior. It also requires us to accept the idea that seriality is a partially withdrawn condition evident within the serial art object, wherein the concept of series is recognized as being that which subsists within the work as a fundamentally real quality, but which itself remains unseen. As strange as this idea might sound to some, it is really no more complex than realizing what we literally perceive when we look upon a serial drawing is an array of individual drawings, connected together in various ways, some more visible than others. What we then intuit from our appreciation of this phenomenon is whatever concept (or concepts) of series we think underpins and unites the artwork as a serial entity, and which in turn reinforces our singular understanding of the serial artwork in object-oriented terms. To paraphrase Harman, our object-oriented approach towards serial drawing tries to understand how the idea of seeing serially *emerges* as something distinct from the structure which produces it, and yet also *withdraws* behind the effects which this same structure produces. In short, we make claims which both require and promote the act of thinking about drawing in philosophical terms.

A history of definitions

Mel Bochner

Mel Bochner's *The Serial Attitude* provides perhaps the clearest expression of Bochner's understanding of seriality, itself one of the most defining contributions to the subject within the context of visual art. While Bochner's article does not explicitly describe itself as a definition of either seriality or serial art, it remains the site where Bochner decisively lays out the terms of his argument for defining how seriality ought to be understood within this context, whilst also providing a useful set of historical examples that illuminate how this understanding can be applied.

First published in *Artforum* in 1967, the remit of the piece is geared towards articulating what the title alludes to. As far as Bochner is concerned, the concept of seriality is fundamentally concerned with describing an attitude rather than a style – one which is concerned with articulating how order of a specific type is made manifest.¹ In making the strident claim that 'serial order is a method, not a style',² Bochner sets about distinguishing the kind of work which he considers to be examples of (strictly) serial art, over and above a superficially similar kind of work, namely that which is merely produced in series. As Bochner says, 'many artists work "in series" ... that is, they make different versions of a basic theme'.³ This kind of work is not what Bochner means by seriality, in the context of visual art or otherwise. Differentiation between the two groups is key to Bochner's understanding of seriality, although it must be added that, in cancelling out the kind of work which is made 'in series', Bochner's position differs quite radically from the majority of other theorists referred to here. In considering this difference, we are redirected towards the question of what Bochner does mean by seriality – if you take away the kind of work which is loosely described as being made 'in series', exactly what kind of serial artwork are you left with? This is where Bochner's description of the serial attitude makes sense. Described

in such terms, serial art for Bochner means work produced according to a strict and preordained serial methodology: one where ideas about structure, order, permutation and progression all take centre stage over concerns with either the material execution of the work or the question of what is pictured.

Bochner's descriptions of the various serial methodologies used to develop serially produced artworks are all united by the fact that they produce fundamentally unified constructs. Considered as discrete entities, the works which Bochner takes to be paradigmatic examples of serial artworks are centred around being indivisible unities: they are singular works composed of parts, units or other elements. Most importantly from a methodological point of view, such works are considered to be fundamentally parsimonious and self-exhausting. Artworks that do not fit this bill are thus not considered by Bochner to be examples of serial art, nor are they considered to be representative of the serial attitude, at least as he understands it. Indeed, it is the fundamentally self-exhausting characteristic which distinguishes Bochner's understanding of seriality from other, superficially similar definitions. Taken as such, this conception of seriality also discounts the kind of series which is composed of multiple variants of the same work – itself another understanding of seriality that commentators such as Coplans and Dyer are happy to include. To help explore these distinctions, Bochner provides the following three points for clarifying the specific type of separation that divides serially ordered works from those composed of multiple variants:

1. The derivation of the terms or interior divisions of the work is by means of a numerical or otherwise systematically predetermined process (permutation, progression, rotation, reversal).
2. The order takes precedence over the execution.
3. The completed work is fundamentally parsimonious and systematically self-exhausting.⁴

As an example of the kind of work which is being referring to, Bochner refers the reader to the example of Edward Muybridge's photographs. These renowned early black and white images serialize time by using photography to capture various events involving the actions of individuals or animals. Muybridge's photographic series presents us with sequences of static images that capture the sense of duration associated with various kinds of physical events: the act of a dog running, or groups of men performing gymnastic manoeuvres. In one of the most famous scenes, a sequence of black and white images shows a horse as it is galloping, photographed by Muybridge in order to settle a wager over whether

or not all four hooves of the horse are ever simultaneously lifted off the ground while it is galloping (they are). As Bochner observes, Muybridge's work is held to be paradigmatically serial on the basis each sequence subtracts 'duration from event',⁵ and hence serializes time. Here is the temporal aspect to seriality laid bare. Muybridge produced many of his better known serial photographs by utilizing the camera designed in 1890 by Dr Etienne Jules Marey. Marey was a French physiologist, who was himself influenced by Muybridge's early work. The camera device was based upon a rotational mechanism similar to that found in Gatling's machine gun, meaning it could take pictures in excess of 100 frames a second. Using such devices Muybridge could simultaneously photograph the same event from 180°, 90° and 45°, and then print the three sets of photographs horizontally. This process sets up what Bochner refers to as 'alternative reading logics within a visually discontinuous sequence', thus fragmenting the sense of perception which is normally associated with the observation of such events.⁶

In defining seriality as an attitude, Bochner makes the point that we ought not to confuse serial ideas with modular ideas. Although both are types of order, modular works are considered by Bochner to be simple repetitions of a basic or standardized unit, and hence are not considered to be sufficiently various to be associated with seriality proper. Bochner cites Carl Andre's bricks and Warhol's soup cans as paradigmatic examples of this kind of simple unit repetition, both of which produce the detrimental effect of not altering the basic form sufficiently enough – as Bochner states, 'while the addition of identical units may modify simple gestalt viewing, this is a relatively uncomplex order form'.⁷ Indeed, the lack of complexity which Bochner attributes to modularity means such kinds of work do not produce the minimum conditions to meet the conceptual threshold for seriality which is being espoused. The same is not the case for the topic of serial logics, however. As Bochner says, 'Logics which precede the work may be absurdly simple and available'.⁸ Bochner cites Jasper John's number and alphabet paintings as a paradigmatic example of this kind of serial understanding. Both types of works are underpinned by types of logic that define the ordering of the numbers/letters which compose them. These conventions are in turn based on the prime sets of either the letters A–Z, or the numbers 0–9. While such conventions just 'happened to be serial', there is nevertheless a fundamentally parsimonious and self-exhausting element to John's works that render them serial on Bochner's account.⁹

Bochner also gives us Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase* of 1912 as an early example of seriality, based on the way in which Duchamp's technique pictures the idea of simultaneity. Although this painting is physical singular in

form, Duchamp's division of the canvas into discrete time intervals provides for a serial understanding of the figure, wherein a sequence of movements of the figure are superimposed atop one another. Although not self-exhausting in the way that John's work is, Bochner considers this work to be attitudinally concerned with seriality on the basis of how it seeks to serialize time. In this respect it is interesting to see Bochner refer to the fact that Duchamp was reportedly influenced by the photographic investigations of Marey, and the serialization of time enabled by Marey's rotational camera. We also find in *The Serial Attitude* a brief, but all-important reference to music, beginning with a short quote belonging to the composer Arnold Schoenberg. Neither the serial technique of Schoenberg, nor the importance of twelve-note serial composition goes unnoticed by Bochner. On the contrary, the blend of creative and methodical thought which Reginald Smith Brindle notes as being key to the development of serial music is arguably echoed across the arts in general.¹⁰

Although Bochner does not state the compositional importance of the relationship between imagination and method with the same degree of emphasis that Brindle does, Bochner's concern with serial methodologies works along roughly similar lines. Brindle's *Serial Composition* (1966) constitutes a rather dense set text of musical theory rather than anything art related. It was published around the same time as Bochner's initial investigations into seriality, when forays into the realm of seriality were very much all the rage. That being said, Bochner himself does not pick up on the Brindle link, perhaps in part because Brindle's *Serial Composition* is designed first and foremost as being a pedagogical textbook for music students, with complex exercises designed for those with the requisite degree of knowledge. As Brindle states in regard to serial composition, 'In serial music, the method itself is a powerful stimulus to the imagination, through the very fact that the creative mind can set to work without delay on already-prepared note-successions.'¹¹ While Brindle is considering this relationship in terms of the act of producing musical scores, where the importance of having a serial anchor to hold on to, as it were, enables the imagination to roam more freely over the compositional possibilities this creates, Bochner is more concerned with gauging the composers' possibilities regarding the numerical permutations of sounds. This is evidenced in the attention which Bochner briefly gives to identifying the number of numerical permutations possible in American composer Milton Babbitt's *Three Compositions for Piano*. However, music is not the focus of Bochner's attention, and the section is merely given as a precursor for listing a number of key terms which underpin Bochner's understanding of seriality in relation to visual art, coupled with offering the reader a brief definition of

each. Some of the definitions are described by Bochner as being ‘standard,’ while others are ‘derived from the above investigations, (while) the rest are tailored to specific problems of the work itself.’¹² We find these terms listed in strictly alphabetical order, with no apparent preference given by Bochner to any single one – instead, they are presented as a group, indicating that which is required for the discussion of serial art to be conducted in the manner which Bochner deems it ought:

Abstract system
Binary
Definite transition
Grammar
Isomorphism
Orthogonal
Permutation
Probability
Progression
Rotation
Reversal
Set
Sequence
Series
Simultaneity

From this list we can select a few terms of interest, to see how the definitions which Bochner allots them might be applied in the context of the current discussion. Appended to the term *Grammar*, for example, we find the following note: ‘that aspect of the system that governs the permitted combinations of elements belonging to that system.’¹³ We can infer from this description that something like serial drawing could be interpreted in grammatical terms, provided of course that our interpretation posited the materiality of drawing as the ‘aspect of the system’ under discussion, rather than merely a particular instance of drawing. *Permutation* is also an interesting term to see appearing in this context, defined by Bochner as representing ‘any of the total number of changes in order which are possible within a set of elements.’¹⁴ Unlike Dyer’s focus upon the idea of serial iteration in order to define seriality, Bochner’s *permutation* does not in itself suggest any form of ongoing (iterative) change: it refers instead to the number of modifications which any current configuration makes possible, which is not quite the same thing. Had Bochner seen fit to try and employ the idea of serial permutation however, the situation could have looked

rather different. *Progression*, on the other hand, is definitely defined in relation to the ongoing change associated with seriality (but not in iterative terms), although the movement associated with it is implied, rather than explicitly described. *Progression* for Bochner means, 'a discrete series that has a first but not necessarily a last element in which every intermediate element is related by a uniform law to the others'.¹⁵ Finally there is *Series*. As with several other commentators who have elected to reflect upon the topic of serial art, Bochner finds a way to provide his own spin on this overarching concept, interpreting it according to his own requirements whilst maintaining a basic integrity with the core understanding shared by all. Accordingly, for Bochner *series* is defined as meaning:

A set of sequentially ordered elements, each related to the preceding in specifiable way by the logical conditions of a finite progression, *i.e.*, there is a first and last member, every member except the first has a single immediate predecessor from which it is derived and every member except the last a single immediate successor.¹⁶

This definition of series as requiring a first and last member is by no means universally shared – as we shall see, Coplans presents us with a rather different interpretation, one inspired by the precise mathematics of Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order. Nevertheless, with the above list of terms in place, Bochner then proceeds to use them to identify further examples of seriality in the visual arts, taken from across the spectrum of painting, sculpture and performance. We find here a mention of Alan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, which Bochner describes as an 'odd "free" utilization of series'.¹⁷ To produce this work Kaprow picked a selection of seemingly disjointed elements: 'seven smiles, three crumpled papers and nineteen lunch box sounds', according to Bochner. However, although this choice of elements might appear odd, what stands out the most for Bochner is the element of freedom itself, indicated by the way in which Bochner places the term 'free' into quotation marks. We can infer from this decision that this work does not perhaps operate according to the particular definition of seriality which Bochner has subscribed to, wherein the concept of freedom is, like all the other elements, made manifest only in an orderly and proscribed fashion.

Although Bochner provides us with a few more examples of serial artworks in this piece, such as Larry Poons's early paintings, Donald Judd's galvanized iron pieces and Sol LeWitt's floor pieces, there is another, similar article which Bochner wrote at around the same time, but which provides us with a more in-depth account of how this understanding of seriality can be applied.

Published in *Arts Magazine* in the summer of 1967 when public interest in both minimalism and seriality was still at its peak, Bochner's examines the sculptural work of three key artists, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin and Sol LeWitt, from a serial perspective. Interesting from our object-oriented approach is the way in which Bochner begins this article by focusing on the thingly nature of art objects, and by questioning the manner in which our knowledge about such objects is gained via their appearance to us as viewers.¹⁸ The close interest that Bochner takes in Husserlian phenomenology is strongly in evidence here, where Bochner speaks of a desire to 'bracket-out all questions which, due to the nature of language, are undiscussable' in order to focus on the manner in which (art) objects appear to us.¹⁹ This phenomenologically informed preamble provides Bochner with an opportunity to sensibly frame his altogether descriptive mode of critique. Indeed, Bochner's choice in this regard stands somewhat to one side of the prevailing approaches to art criticism at that time, given it places a decided emphasis on describing the perceptible and material individuality of the artwork in thingly terms – a philosophically informed approach in keeping with Husserl's appeal for 'doing' phenomenology certainly, but not necessarily one which historically accords with the style of most art critics, as Bochner describes:

Criticism has traditionally consisted of one of three approaches: 'impressionistic' criticism which has concerned itself with the effects of the work of art on the observer – individual responses; 'historical' criticism which has dealt with an *a posteriori* evolution of forms and techniques – what is between works; 'metaphorical' criticism which has contrived numerous analogies – most recently to scientism. What has been generally neglected is a concern with the object of art in terms of its own material individuality – the thing itself.

The concept of seriality is then introduced, whereupon Bochner explains that the work of Andre, Flavin and LeWitt cannot be appreciated via either the impressionistic, historic or metaphoric modes, meaning Bochner opts for the fourth, materially descriptive approach instead. While we could choose to query the labels that Bochner applies to these other modes of criticism – and possibly dispute the idea that they all neglect to engage with the materiality of the art object itself – what is of key interest here is the structural approach which Bochner takes. In claiming that the works of Andre, Flavin and LeWitt 'cannot be discussed on either stylistic or metaphoric grounds',²⁰ Bochner identifies what they all have in common: namely 'a clearly visible and simply ordered structure'.²¹ It is interesting that Bochner elects to pursue a materialistic concern with the individual appearance of objects when the unifying factor is order and structure.

Aside from the act of counting out an array of visibly similar formal units in order to affirm that the work is indeed serial in scope, the idea of structure which is inherent to the understanding of serial order is also a conceptual concern: the very idea of the series refers the spectator to wider ideas about method, logic, arithmetic and mathematical formulas, whether or not the artist professes any explicit interest in these themes. However, as with a number of other instances in which serial art is discussed, the overtly conceptual concerns which Bochner alludes to remain somewhat withdrawn behind the perceivable, stylistic attributes of the work. Indeed, despite their differences, what clearly counts the most for commentators like Bochner and Coplans is the visible appearance of serial artwork, and the way it manifests itself within a space.

With this in mind, the manner in which Bochner identifies the similarities between the work of Andre, Flavin and LeWitt is instructive. The bricks, Styrofoam planks, cement blocks, ceramic magnets and wooden beams that Andre uses to construct his minimalist-themed works are linked by Bochner according to a set of common physical attributes, such as rigidity, density, shape, opacity, uniformity of composition. But elements which are linked according to the visibility of bare surface appearance – such as shape, opacity and uniformity of composition – are bundled in with elements which require a different sort of prior knowledge on the part of the viewer – rigidity and density being but two examples. The fact that certain materials are rigid and dense is not seen so much as inferred, based on certain assumptions that operate according to the viewers' prior material understanding of such objects. While it might be argued that such knowledge is quite likely to be possessed by most (if not all) of the viewers of such works, it still goes somewhat against the earlier, Husserlian-inspired edict from Bochner to derive one's observations in a purely empirical manner by simply looking at the way the thing appears. The reason for highlighting this point is not merely to quarrel with Bochner in phenomenological terms, but to point to the fact that such subtly withdrawn properties are in fact inherent to all forms of artwork, not to mention all forms of object. However, it seems to be especially the case when we consider serial art: the unifying link between each individual piece that comprises a series is often only properly perceived when the underlying method which unites them all is also understood.

Although Bochner states his desire to take a descriptive, materially oriented approach to describing the works of Andre, Flavin and LeWitt, he also recognizes that the methodological element to seriality is crucial, given it both links and differentiates Andre, Flavin and LeWitt from one another. In emphasizing the importance of methodology to each of these artists, Bochner claims that a break

with the past is occurring, wherein each 'are further differentiated ... by their individual methodology which in relation to the methodology of the past can only be termed serial'.²² Indeed, the idea of their being a newly minted methodological approach to consider is of paramount importance to Bochner's understanding of serial art over other, superficially similar types of work. The premise for what constitutes a viable serial methodology operates according to the three criteria which Bochner identifies in *The Serial Attitude*, cited earlier. First, the interior divisions of the series should be determined according to an order of some kind; second, this order ought to take precedence over the execution and third, that the completed work ought to be fundamentally self-exhausting.²³ As a result, Bochner suggests that works which are based on modular ideas do not fit the bill, given that 'modular works are based in the repetition of a standard unit', and are therefore not considered to be self-exhausting.²⁴ Bochner includes within this modular understanding Warhol's soup cans, along with Carl Andre's bricks and Morris's truncated volumes. Also excluded are serial works that are merely thematically linked: the kinds of series that deploy multiple variants of the same topic or theme, for example, like Monet's *Haystacks*, or de Kooning's *Women*. This is the kind of serial art that Coplans takes an interest in, as we shall see.

To that end, Sol LeWitt's modular structures stand out as being a prime example of the kind of work which ticks all of Bochner's boxes, fitting his rather terse three-part description of serial art outlined above. As a pioneering example of conceptual art, the series of multi-part aluminium structures which LeWitt began exhibiting at Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles in 1967 are paradigmatic types of serial artwork as far as Bochner is concerned. LeWitt's room-sized, three-dimensional structures operate according to a rigid logic system, where a governing set of decisions are made in advance. Furthermore, they prove to be self-exhausting in terms of the rules which generate them, given these rules permit only a fixed number of permutations – or 'arrangements' as Bochner also calls them – of the structure possible. As described by Bochner in *Serial Art*, these modular structures operate according to a number of fixed causes, or rules, which set the entire piece into motion. The first cause is 'an open frame square placed on the floor in the centre of a large square ratio 1:9, which in extension becomes a cube within a cube ratio 1:27'.²⁵ The next limitation are the three height variables. The first of these is 'low', indicating the height of the cross-section bar (floor level). The second is 'medium', that is, the height of one cube. And the third is 'high', meaning three times the height of the second variable. As Bochner clarifies, from the combination of these three rules, a set number of combinations of open frame and closed volume structures are

permitted, considered in terms of four 'binomial' possibilities: 'open inside–open outside', 'open inside–closed outside', 'closed inside–open outside', and 'closed inside–closed outside'. Aside from the various physical iterations of this serial structure that viewers were treated to at Dwan Gallery and elsewhere, the work included the conceptual understanding that such visible iterations were themselves related to a larger unseen structure which the rules governing it permitted. In LeWitt's case, this larger structure is the 122 possible variations which the mathematical underpinning allows, creating what is otherwise known as the incomplete open cube. Once this facet of the artwork is appreciated by the spectator, the question of whether or not the fullest version of the structure is ever actually seen 'in one go' becomes a moot point. As an early and successful example of conceptual art, LeWitt's modular structures not only proved that the idea of the artwork could be just as important as the visual manifestation thereof, but also that one only needed to be explicitly presented with parts of a serial artwork in order for the whole to be inferred.

Bochner makes a final point about this work that is interesting from our perspective, given it concerns the question of what remains withdrawn or withheld within the appreciation of the serial art object. In referring to the manner in which LeWitt's work is encountered by a viewer, Bochner claims that 'although an order is immediately intuited, how to apprehend or penetrate it is nowhere revealed'.²⁶ What the viewer is presented with is a 'mass of data – lines, joints angles'. This withdrawn element is easily appreciated in the context of describing sculptural, three-dimensional work like LeWitt's modular cubes. But it also brings us squarely back to the topic of drawing: specifically, the drawing which LeWitt completed to show all 122 iterations of the modular structure, titled *Variations of Incomplete Open Cubes* (1974). While this drawing is not strictly speaking a serial drawing (in the sense it is not composed of a number of physically discrete units or parts), it does indicate one of the primary uses of drawing in this context: namely revealing the whole sequence of 122 variations of the incomplete open cube so that the underlying method which unites them all can be clearly seen in one go.

John Coplans

Bochner's contributions to the topic are joined by John Coplans's equally influential *Serial Imagery* (1968). Produced to accompany an exhibition of the same name held at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1968, Coplans's piece focuses

on what Bochner's deliberately left out, namely a discussion of series of works. However, as M. J. Grant eruditely points out in *Serial Music, Serial Aesthetics: Compositional Theory in Post-War Europe*, a 'series of works' is not in itself sufficient criteria to define the art as serial.²⁷ The distinction is not unimportant, linked as it is to the understanding of serial art in terms of seriality, outlined by Bochner, rather than the art of producing work in series, which Coplans's discussion of serial imagery engages with. We can locate the distinction which M. J. Grant is pointing to if we pay attention to Bochner's third point concerning the 'systematically self-exhausting' element to the work. On this understanding, serial art is that which is understood to be generated through the application of premeditated rules or plans, rather than simply being a number of works that are linked together by theme or content. However, the counterpoint to Bochner's argument provided by Coplans is needed for a fuller discussion on seriality, or even serial art to proceed: indeed, omitting reference to work which is simply produced in series means potentially omitting a substantial amount of serial artwork, drawn or otherwise, from entering the discussion. To that end, Coplans's discussion is firmly rooted in an aesthetic commentary, albeit one that is mathematically influenced. It relates to the idea of serial art as constituting a unified, visible structure: principally, the macro-structure which Coplans feels defines a work *as* serial. Coplans offers the following points to clarify how this particular aesthetic understanding of serial art is to be understood:

Serial Imagery is a type of repeated form or structure shared equally by each work in a group of related works made by one artist ... Seriality is identified by a particular inter-relationship, rigorously consistent, of structure and syntax: Serial structures are produced by a single indivisible process that links the internal structure of the work to that of other works within a differentiated whole. While a Series may have any number of works, it must, as a precondition of Seriality, have at least two. Thus a uniquely conceived painting or sculpture *cannot* be Serial.²⁸

As is evident from this quote, Coplans takes a slightly different tack than Bochner towards explicating the fundamentals of what constitutes a working understanding of serial art. For one thing, Coplans's *Serial Imagery* places a clear and unambiguous emphasis on the topic of imagery, wherein the idea of Serial Imagery takes centre stage. Coplans's reasons for capitalizing the term 'Serial Imagery' are not explained within this text, although given the somewhat didactic tone we can presume the decision was taken in order to allow Coplans to distinguish his particular understanding of serial art from other, competing understandings, Bochner's included. While an approach which is focused on the topic of imagery looks

useful from the perspective of discussing serial drawing, the imagistic element is not revealed to be Coplans's primary concern. Indeed, the imagistic factor appears to be something which is taken as read, given that this curatorially inspired discussion focuses almost exclusively on painters who produce serially developed artwork. Instead, Coplans reveals his interests lie with assessing the impact of serial structure and serial form. These are two elements which can be applied to discussing any form of serial art, including the three-dimensional, but which are limited in Coplans's text to discussing serially developed images.

Specifically, it is the idea of the overall or 'macro' structure that Coplans takes a keen interest in exploring in relation to defining Serial Imagery. Coplans's macro-structure is an idea related to themes of infinite expansion and timeless boundaries, and owes its origins to set theory and the mathematics of the continuum hypothesis, first advanced by Georg Cantor in 1878.²⁹ While Bochner's understanding of seriality places a high degree of emphasis on the fundamentally self-exhausting aspect to seriality, Coplans opts to emphasize the importance of macro-structure, and with it, the idea of endlessness which is associated with the mathematics of serial forms. As Coplans describes it, 'Central to Serial Imagery is the concept of *macro-structure* – that which is apprehended in terms of relational order and of continuity, but not in terms of distance, number or magnitude.'³⁰ However, by insisting on the importance of macro-structure in relational terms, Coplans is actually insisting on the relationship that holds between macro- and micro-structures: a distinction which can be otherwise understood as the relationship which pertains to parts and wholes, unity and plurality. Although Bochner also recognizes this division, given that speaking of the 'interior divisions of the work' is another way of referring to the micro-structure, his insistence on the parsimonious and self-exhausting aspect to serial artwork is observed to take precedence.³¹ By emphasizing the importance of macro-structure, Coplans is then able to articulate the equal importance of micro-structure by claiming that a self-contained serial painting is effectively composed of a number of 'units', presented lineally and without hierarchy. The non-hierarchical nature to the configuration of units which make up the macro-structure is linked to the idea that each unit is of equal importance, interchangeable and similar. While such a claim requires concrete examples in order to be properly understood, the underlying framework of Coplans's definition of Serial Imagery appears clear enough, if a trifle counterintuitive. What appears to be most important to the understanding of Serial Imagery is not so much the images that appear courtesy of each individual painting or panel within a series, but instead the macro-structure which binds them all together.

From this we can take the logical step of assuming that there must also be a macro-image which appears courtesy of the viewers' appreciation of the whole series: something which is perhaps seen or experienced serially.

Furthermore, while the viewer of serial artworks is always implied in Coplans's invigorating and well-researched description of Serial Imagery, they are not directly called upon to make sense of the claim that serial structures are constituted by a 'single indivisible process that links the internal structure of a work to that of other works within a differentiated whole'.³² Instead, what are called upon, and what underpins this claim, are certain mathematically inspired predicates. All of these are based on Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order, otherwise known as the mathematical theory of the continuous independent variable.³³ The theory was originally developed in two halves, with the first part appearing in a publication by Richard Dedekind in 1872, while the second half of the theory was published by Georg Cantor in 1895. Like Coplans, we do not need to delve too deeply into the original mathematical underpinnings of this complex and complicated theorem in order to understand the principles of seriality to which it refers, although a quick overview will prove useful. Central to Cantor's theory of the continuum is the concept of the transfinite number, which are 'infinite' insofar as they are larger than all finite numbers, but without being absolutely infinite. For the purposes of argument in contemporary usage however, transfinite is synonymous with infinite. Within this mathematical understanding we find two further understandings of interest: the transfinite cardinals and the transfinite ordinals. Any finite number can be employed in at least two ways: as a cardinal and as an ordinal. Cardinal numbers specify the size of sets, that is, a room with eight windows, while ordinal numbers specify the order of a member within a given set, that is, the fourth window from the right. Hence, the transfinite cardinals determine the size of infinite sets, while the transfinite ordinals provide the ordering of transfinite sets.

We can already see the influence of these mathematical constructs on Coplans's idea of macro- and micro-structure in relation to Serial Imagery: cardinal numbers relate to the idea of macro-structure, given they define the size of the total set (or serial artwork), while ordinal numbers relate to micro-structure, given they indicate the position of an individual unit/piece relative to other units/pieces within the same serial work. Interesting from this mathematical perspective is the notion of infinity which Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order grants to Coplans's account over Bochner's. Unlike Bochner, Coplans places no emphasis on the idea that a serial artwork ought to be self-exhausting. On the contrary, for Coplans, 'serial Images are ... capable of infinite expansion. There

is no limit to the quantity of works in a Series other than what is determined by the artist'.³⁴ Making the point that Serial Images are akin to 'continuum or constellations', Coplans asserts that contrary to Bochner's position, 'once established, a Series may be kept open and added to periodically in the future'. This idea of open-endedness might strike us as strange when placed in relation to Coplans's previous emphasis on the importance of macro-structure, for how are we to make sense of the idea of their being a macro-structure to a given series, if such a series is (in theory at least) potentially infinite in size? Coplans does not address this question directly. For the sake of argument we might assume that the answer to it is rather complex, related as it must be to the intricate mathematical workings of Dedekind-Cantor's theory. However, we do find something of an indirect response in the discussion which Coplans directs towards the concept of serial forms. In turning to discuss this topic, Coplans makes direct reference to Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order via the mathematically inspired work of Huntington. Here we find the clearest example of the break with Bochner's understanding of seriality, as Coplans, quoting directly from Huntington's *The Continuum and Other Types of Serial Order*, states:

With regard to the existence of first and last elements, all Series may be divided into four groups. 1) those that have neither a first nor a last element; 2) those that have a first element, but no last; 3) those that have a last element but no first; and 4) those that have both a first and a last.³⁵

To unpack this claim, Coplans uses a line from one of Gertrude Stein's poems as a means to illustrate how both the first and the fourth definitions of serial form can emerge from the same understanding. The line in question is Stein's poem: 'Rose is a rose is a rose.' The line as it appears written by Stein makes reference to only the fourth definition of serial form, wherein there is both a beginning element and an end element. However, by making reference to the circular monogram which Stein apparently produced of this poem for her own use, and by adding an extra 'a' to the beginning of the sentence, Coplans is able to demonstrate how the first definition can also come into play. For starters, seen visually, Stein's circular monogram actually presents the words 'rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose'. By adding an extra letter 'a' to the beginning, the circular monogram now reads '... a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose is ...'. In appearing limitless, or endless in this fashion, Coplans is able to demonstrate the first of Huntington's definitions of serial order: those series that have neither a first nor a last element. Of interest here is how Coplans feels that these four definitions of seriality run quite contrary to the definition of seriality set forth by Bochner,

especially as it was outlined in *The Serial Attitude*. Interestingly, we find an indication of their disagreement in the notes section of *Serial Imagery*, where Coplans goes to some length to contrast his definition of seriality with that of Bochner's. The passage is worth quoting in full, not least because of the precise way in which Coplans contrasts his own, seemingly superior understanding of seriality with Bochner's on the basis of Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order. As Coplans states:

Bochner's definition reads: 'Series – a set of sequentially ordered elements, each relating to the preceding in a specifiable way by the logical condition of a finite progression, i.e., there is a first and last member, every member except the first has a single immediate predecessor from which it is derived and every member except the last a single immediate successor'. From the illustrations accompanying the article, and from this definition, it is obvious Mr. Bochner confuses modular forms with Serial structures. He evidently is unaware of the Dedekind-Cantor theory, which is central to the mathematical concept of Serial forms.³⁶

Coplans's rather arch contention that Bochner 'confuses modular forms with Serial structures' is instructive, not least because Bochner goes to certain lengths to separate the two understandings. Indeed, if we refer back to Bochner's description of modular ideas, we find he states very clearly that such ideas 'differ considerably from serial ideas although both are types of order'.³⁷ Although the difference between seriality and modularity is cited by both Coplans and Bochner as being of importance, in light of Coplans's above critique it is useful to consider how his own analysis works: what exactly does of Coplans's focus on serial structure produce in the context of describing actual artworks within *Serial Imagery*? Coplans gives brief accounts of thirteen artists' works, ranging from Claude Monet's impressionistic series of *Haystacks* and the *Cathedral* series, through to Andy Warhol's screenprints of *Campbell's Soup Cans*, *Brillo Boxes* and the eponymously titled *Marilyn Monroe Series*. In-between these two canonical figures we find an array of serial works by figures such as Alexei Jawlensky, Marcel Duchamp, Josef Albers, Ad Reinhardt, Ellsworth Kelly, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella. By way of securing a historical comparison, we can look briefly at the earliest example which Coplans gives: Claude Monet.

Monet's earliest attempts at producing serially connected works were part of a broader strategy, one which was conceived in order to address a very particular problem related to painting, rather than seriality per se. Rather than having anything to do with visualizing serial structure, or with picturing serial order in mathematically rigorous terms, Monet's series were initially formed in order to

surmount certain difficulties which had arisen within his effort to capture the impression of ‘instantaneity’. Emblematic of this attempt is the *Haystacks* series, begun by Monet in 1891.³⁸ Although Monet had produced a number of earlier canvases which were closely related to one another in thematic terms, like the series of seven views of the interior of Gare-St. Lazare, begun in 1876, it was not until the *Haystacks* that a more concrete and emphatically serial structure began to emerge. As Coplans indicates, both the *Haystacks* and the closely related series *Poplars on the River Epte* (also begun in 1891) can be understood as concerted attempts by Monet to stabilize the composition of his paintings in order to more accurately ‘record the shifts and changes of his perception’.³⁹ It is this very desire for compositional stability that, according to Coplans, led Monet to search for a stable structure in which to fix the otherwise fleeting, ephemeral impressions of light. Although this structure was partly enabled by the systematic application of pigment in separate hues developed during the production of the Gare-St. Lazare paintings, its stability was enhanced within the *Haystacks* series courtesy of a fully fledged, serially constituted macro-structure. Monet worked simultaneously on both the *Haystacks* and the *Poplars*, producing the majority of them in situ before adjusting certain aspects back in his studio at Giverny. As Coplans states:

The *Haystacks*, which sequentially extend through the four seasons of the year, provide simultaneous viewings of the same subject matter from different angles and under varied conditions of light.⁴⁰

The ability for serial artworks to present a combination of simultaneity and succession is a defining hallmark of seriality, given as a quality experienced by the viewer: spatially manifest, yet durationally encountered. Described in terms of Coplans’s macro-structure, such a combination is the very thing that serial structures are able to offer to the beholder over other, superficially similar types of ordered arrangements, such as modular structures. Within the *Haystacks* series we are presented with a unity of subject matter, but where each part, stage or iteration within it – each individual painting – offers us a new and varied take on that very same subject matter. However, in Monet’s case this latter concern proved to be the issue at stake. In seeking to capture ‘instantaneity’ through the changing impression of light, too much variation between each successive stage was to be avoided. Working within a challenging, changing landscape environment, various forces are observed to be at work in the *Haystacks*: (1) the changing impression of light and the movement of the shadows which the stacks cast as the sun changes position; (2) other kinds of environmental dynamics

which are pictured therein, such as the wind rippling the grass, the hay and the foliage in the trees; and (3) the seasonal variation which is observed in the changing quantity and colour of the foliage. Taken as a whole, Coplans notes that Monet seemingly found he had too much change and variation to contend with in painting this scene, and sought to look elsewhere: continuing his desire to capture the impression of instantaneity by consolidating the subject matter somewhat. This process led Monet to take up temporary residence in a room above a milliner's shop in the city of Rouen, with a view out of the window onto the facade of Rouen Cathedral.

The massive stone walls of this famous Cathedral presented to Monet the stable surface which he was seeking – a geometrically ordered facade that was as organic in appearance as the stacks of hay, but with a stability that made it more resistant to the myriad quirks and impulses of nature. The vertical window out of which he gazed provided a further means to stabilize his composition as it ranged repeatedly across a series of canvases. As Coplans states, Monet was enabled to record with ‘maximum freedom the polyphonic changes of light and shadow on his subject’, wherein he painted around forty canvases of the Cathedral façade, later adjusting them in his studio.⁴¹ A full set of twenty *Rouen Cathedral* canvases were exhibited at the Paris gallery of Durand-Ruel in 1895, making them one of the earliest exhibitions of serial art, at least in terms which fit Coplans's particular understanding of this genre. There have certainly been earlier examples of artists producing work in series, but not in the same sense. For example, we can think of Hogarth's series of paintings and their attendant etchings, of which *A Rake's Progress* (1732–4) and *A Harlot's Progress* (1731) are perhaps the better known. But in Hogarth's case the serial aspect is tied to the portrayal of a strictly narrative theme: in formal terms, the primary function of the series of eight paintings which make up *A Rake's Progress* is to tell a story via a consecutive sequence of images, rather than capture the changing impression of light upon the surface of a building. Indeed, given that each individual painting pictures an independent scene, each presents itself as more akin to the individual pages of a comic or a graphic novel, with shared characters and a developing plot. In the case of Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series, we are presented with none of these things. Instead, what we appear to see presented is more or less the same scene presented slightly differently.

In Coplans's analysis of Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series, it is precisely the sum of small differences observed between each of the canvases that brings the work to life whilst simultaneously indicating the performative role of the viewer. The majority of the canvases depict the same frontal area of the Cathedral facade,

yet they each differ from one another quite dramatically when inspected more closely: not only in terms of how the paint is handled, or how various hues of colour are used to depict the changing of the light, but also in terms of the angle at which the facade appears, with some canvases showing it tilting forwards while others reveal it titled backwards. Taken together, these differences reveal how the surfeit of decisions which Monet took in his effort to capture the dynamic, transitory quality of light resulted in a shimmering, fluxing surface – one that is seen serially, given that it only presents itself across the spectrum of the series observed as a whole, when the effects of one canvas are compared against another. As Coplans indicates, the beholder's recognition of the divergent effects upon the same structure is brought together via their activity of seeing in this serial manner, where 'under the viewer's gaze the identical facade painted in divergent light appears to shift, to shimmer, to dissolve and to reform.'⁴² Indeed, it is precisely the bodily movement of the viewer before this array of canvases, coupled with their physical act of differing the viewing distance from the surface of each painting, that causes the impression of the facade to become irradiated, whereupon it 'dissolves and reformulates under the viewer's eyes.'⁴³

Finally, there is a pertinent observation by Coplans in reference to the manner in which time is presented in these works, albeit obliquely. Considered as a sequence of views of the same solid and immovable Cathedral facade, Coplans describes how their simultaneous presentation alters the perception of time initially encountered by Monet, wherein the initial 'time-spread – its sequence and duration – is compressed and magnified.'⁴⁴ Although there are a number of ways to interpret this intriguing comment, we can think of it as another way to describe temporality, wherein the phenomenon of simultaneity and succession is reimagined as a compression and a magnification of time. As Coplans states, 'The normal sequence of time collapses: it becomes encapsulated by Monet's and the observer's constant shift of perception.'⁴⁵ On this topic there is a final word from Coplans regarding the original exhibition of the *Rouen Cathedral* series at the Durand-Ruel gallery in Paris. It concerns the description given by Georges Clemenceau in 1895, regarding the order in which the twenty canvases were originally hung within the four walls of the exhibition space. As Clemenceau describes, the twenty canvases of Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series were ordered according to their 'function.'⁴⁶ By function, Clemenceau is apparently referring to the impressionistic purpose of the work, wherein Monet's aim was to present to the viewer the dynamic, fluxing quality of light upon the Cathedral facade as it altered from pre-dawn darkness to the twilight of dusk. However, there is no extant listing available (Daniel Wildenstein's catalogue raisonné having never

been found) which indicates which of the original canvases that Monet painted of the Cathedral were exhibited. Given that the full *Rouen Cathedral* series have long since been separated as a group, Clemenceau's description of them is all we have to go on, and hence his observation is worth repeating in full:

Imagine them lined upon the four walls in a series of light transitions: the great black bulk at the beginning of the *grey series* which lightens as it goes along, the *white series* going from melting light to the brilliant precisions which continue and terminate in fire in the *iridescent series*, which subside in the calm of the *blue series*, and vanish in the fading and divine darkness.⁴⁷

While this description by Clemenceau is revealing on a number of levels, the way in which Coplans reinterprets it according to his understanding of serial art is even more intriguing. From Clemenceau's description, we can ascertain that the twenty paintings were arranged around the four walls of the space according to both the progressive shifts in colour and the gradations of light. With this in mind, Coplans asserts that 'the darkest painting in the *grey Series* comes to meet the darkest painting in the *blue Series*. Thus there is no beginning or end to the cycle, which is continuous'.⁴⁸ If we refer back to Coplans's four possible understandings of serial order cited earlier, we see that this description maps onto option 1: 'those that have neither a first nor a last element'.⁴⁹ However, this analysis is based upon the shared quality of darkness which the *blue* and *grey series* share, where each series proceeds from darker to lighter in ordinal gradations, meaning the first and last members of these two groups can be deduced. But what about the first and last members of the *white* and *iridescent series*? In asking this question, Coplans refers again to the Dedekind-Cantor theorem, and finds another axis: that which holds between ordinal and non-ordinal numbers, wherein it is suggested that 'Monet created two distinct pairs of Series, one with ordinal sequence and the other without'.⁵⁰ In other words, being non-ordinal, *white* and *iridescent series* are interchangeable, meaning they are without a first and a last number, making them another example of option 1.

Christy Mag Uidhir

In *How to Frame Serial Art*, Christy Mag Uidhir approaches the task of defining serial art in quite a comprehensive fashion.⁵¹ As an associate professor in philosophy at the University of Houston, Mag Uidhir specializes in questions related to the philosophy of art and aesthetics, and to questions relating to seriality

as it is understood within the context of art and comics. This short article, initially presented as part of a conference on the theme of Serial Art, offers us a quite singular take on the topic, given that Mag Uidhir is concerned with defining in rather precise analytical terms what the idea of 'serial artwork' requires in order to be understood as such. In this sense, Mag Uidhir's text operates in exactly the way the title suggests: it stands as a framing device – a means to try and define what constitutes serial art over and above other, superficially similar types of work – and therefore occupies a position not dissimilar to both Bochner's and Coplans's earlier written attempts (although for reasons which are not altogether clear, Mag Uidhir makes no explicit reference to either author in this piece).

In claiming that 'despite the prevalence of serial works, there has been little to no serious philosophical inquiry into the nature of serial art', Mag Uidhir senses a philosophical remit for seeking to clarify the understanding of serial artwork.⁵² As it is steadily unpacked within the article, the process of philosophical inquiry that Mag Uidhir engages in produces four basic understandings of serial artworks. In the order in which they appear, these are: (1) serial artworks, (2) homogeneously serial artworks, (3) strictly serial artworks and (4) loosely serial artworks. Mag Uidhir begins by outlining the conditions under which a consideration of serial artwork first emerges. For him, while the majority of artworks which are subject to philosophical scrutiny appear to be singular, 'stand-alone works', there are also another group of artworks that appear to be quite the opposite, certainly in terms of how they are viewed.⁵³ He describes these as *serial artworks*, meaning works which are 'best viewed in terms of some larger grouping or ordering of artworks, specifically as either the parts of the sum thereof'.⁵⁴ This is clearly quite a broad understanding, given that it includes within its remit all sorts of works that appear in serial form across the full range of the arts, including the literary, the plastic and the visual. As a guide to revealing just how wide this initial net ought to be cast, Mag Uidhir presents us with a list of twelve works to consider as examples of serial artwork, of which the following are examples: John Updike's *Rabbit*, a series of four novels, Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant*, a comic strip which Foster began in 1937, and which tells a continuous story across more than 4,000 individual strips, Sean Scully's *Catherine* series, a collection of stripe painting's (each titled Catherine) which Scully and his then wife Catherine Lee assembled between 1979 and 1996, Sol LeWitt's *Drawing Series A + B*, a series of fourteen wall drawings devised during the period 1968–75, and Marina Abramovic's *Seven Easy Pieces*, a performance art piece in which Abramovic recreates seven canonical performance works from five other artists (plus two from herself) over seven consecutive nights.

As can be seen from the above, what Mag Uidhir ostensibly has in mind as representative examples of serial artwork is quite a broad canon, to say the least. What is required therefore, is some means of sorting them – a method of critical enquiry that would engage in their ‘description, classification, ontology, interpretation, appreciation and evaluation.’⁵⁵ To begin this process, Mag Uidhir marks an essential difference in how we are to understand the term *series*. On the one hand, the term ‘series’ can indicate a unified ordering or grouping of individual works within an artist’s overall oeuvre of work, wherein such a grouping is considered ‘art-historically informative or art-critically productive thematically, stylistically, or formally unified.’⁵⁶ The examples given here include Kiki Smith’s *Blue Print* series, Jeff Koon’s *Made in Heaven* series and Dan Flavin’s *Monuments to V. Tatlin* series. But on the other hand, series denotes, ‘an individual and distinct artwork that is itself so composed’, as evidenced by the examples of Walter de Maria’s *Statement Series* and Krzysztof Kieslowski’s *Three Colours* trilogy, where the title refers to a collective of three films.⁵⁷ However, while Mag Uidhir recognizes the potential value of inquiring into the first understanding of series on the basis it would serve as a useful preliminary exercise, it is the second understanding of series which Mag Uidhir considers critical for elucidating what the term ‘serial art’ means. In other words, there needs to be something unique, singular and distinctively individual about an artwork that is itself composed as serial in order for it to be considered as serial art. While this point might appear to beg the question slightly – what further criteria would need to be supplied in order to determine whether an artwork is ‘individual and distinct’ if that same work has already been designated as *an* artwork – it does indicate that more work is needed to bring such clarifications to light.

Interestingly, before Mag Uidhir proceeds with the task of unpacking how serial art is to be understood, he flags a note to the reader that stands out somewhat for its boldness. Unlike Coplans’s earlier rather diligent effort to squarely link the artistic understanding of series with Dedekind-Cantor’s mathematical theory of serial order, Mag Uidhir’s position is that none of the claims which follow require any form of concrete mathematical knowledge of either series or sequence. Without seeking recourse to citation, Mag Uidhir confidently asserts that, in mathematical terms, sequence means a ‘linearly ordered collection of elements’, while series is understood as ‘the sum of the elements of a sequence.’⁵⁸ Although this rather slim description makes no particular reference to the importance of ordinal numbers for establishing the order of elements within a given set, Mag Uidhir does clarify that the question of ordering is one where the ‘art-theoretic’ sense of series roughly mirrors the mathematical understanding. Despite the fact that no mathematical

arguments are offered up by Mag Uidhir in order to understand what is meant by the idea of series, there is still a strong similarity to Coplans's earlier effort. In both cases, it seems a discursive preamble on the nature of series is required – one which makes at least a nod towards the domain of mathematics, different in each case – before any concrete clarification of serial art can emerge.

With the foregoing in place, Mag Uidhir proceeds by defining what is meant by *serial artworks*. This begins with the recognition that, in order for an artwork to be designated a serial artwork, it must be composed of a sequence of things. So far, so expected. Added to this axiom however, comes the recognition that such an understanding of serial art may also be simply 'trivial'.⁵⁹ The term 'trivial' is used in recognition that, while a work of art might be composed of a sequence of things, objects, events, units and so on, it does not necessarily follow that cognition of this facet adds anything substantial to the understanding of the work. As an example, Mag Uidhir refers us to the novel *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas, and the eighteen parts in which it was originally published. One can of course consider this book to be coherently composed of the eighteen separate parts in which it was first published, and perhaps also the numerically ascending sequence of chapters that compose it. But as Mag Uidhir indicates, doing so, 'fails to add anything of substance to the analysis of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, as its being so composed would fail to be constitutive of the work qua art'.⁶⁰ This is actually quite a significant point, immersed as it is in the idea of relevancy.

In short, what relevance does the serial composition of the artwork have on the works appreciation by a reader or viewer? If it has little to no relevance, then Mag Uidhir claims we can still call it a serial artwork but only in the trivial sense. The opposite case to this is where the work *must* be serially composed in order for it to be the artwork that it is. In terms of analysis, the question which follows concerns the means by which one is to establish whether the serial composition of a given work is trivial or non-trivial. To clarify this, Mag Uidhir provides a written formula for comprehending the minimal terms necessary for defining a work of art as a serial artwork. Such formulaic, deductive methods are strongly redolent of the critical processes deployed in analytic philosophy, but they present themselves as useful in this context. The first of these reads as follows:

W is a *serial artwork* if and only if:

1. *W* is itself an artwork
2. *W* is wholly (non-trivially) composed of some (non-trivial) sequence {w1, w2, ... wn}

3. Properly attending to (engaging with) *W* qua artwork – that is, access to any and all of the constitutive art-relevant features for that *W* – requires properly attending to each element in that sequence (in the order/arrangement prescribed by that *W*).⁶¹

The use of the phrase ‘properly attending to’ appears particularly pertinent. Although the role of the spectator is not explicitly referred to, this phrase places implicit emphasis on such in constituting meaning – it is the viewer/spectator who must properly attend to each element of the sequence, with consequences for the serial understanding of the work if they do not. However, Mag Uidhir does not provide a clear example for what is meant by the phrase ‘properly attending to’. In other words, how might one define ‘properly’ attending to something, rather than ‘simply’ or ‘merely’ attending? We can assume from the formula above that a non-trivial understanding of serial artwork must be produced by the viewer, based on their efforts to attend in a proper manner to the sequence in question. We might also suggest this implies that an active effort of seeing serially is required on the part of the viewer, given such an effort would mark the work in question out as being a non-trivial example of serial art, rather than a trivial one. This position also suggests that the decision over whether a work is non-trivial ultimately rests with the viewer’s interpretation of the way the work is composed, rather than with the artwork itself. However, as Mag Uidhir declines to say exactly how it is that a viewer is encouraged to attend properly to the seriality of such works, we are also left to hypothesize that ‘properly attending to’ refers to a willed act of seeing – a product of deliberate effort on the part of the viewer.

As is indicated in the example of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, it seems there must be a degree of deliberate intention of the part of the artist/author evident within the work itself – an intention which makes it clear that the serial composition is to be interpreted as integral to the works reception, and which can also be appreciated in terms of perception, conception or the imagination, depending on one’s conceptual approach.⁶² While there is no explicit clarification given at this stage for what the phrase ‘properly attending to’ implies with respect to the viewer, there are a selection of points provided by Mag Uidhir that indicate what further determinations ought to be made in order to designate an artwork as non-trivially serial. Rather than point to trivial things like the initial, serialized publication format of Dumas’s *The Count of Monte Cristo*, or Dicken’s *Bleak House*, Mag Uidhir suggests that we pay attention to the following three points instead:

(i) To what extent, if any, serialization figures in the artwork's production or prescription of its reception conditions, (ii) how, if at all, serialization connects to the artwork's narrative structure or audience appreciation thereof, and (iii) whether each element within that series is itself an individual and distinct work.⁶³

What we have here is an example of how the viewer/spectator/reader is invited to properly attend to the non-trivial status of the artwork. The first point asks us to consider the prior method which produced the work, in terms of deciding whether or not it is serial in nature. Although the term 'method' is not used, it is implied by the emphasis which Mag Uidhir places upon the (prior) mode of serialized production. The second point asks us to consider whether and how such serialization 'connects' to either the narrative structure of the work or the audience's appreciation thereof. It is not altogether clear here how such a connection is to be determined by the viewer. That being said, we can assume that if the artwork in question is decided as being serial on the basis of the method which is looked for in (i), then we can also assume this mode of production will have an impact (will connect) to the structure of the work which is produced as a result.

The third point is perhaps the most intriguing of the three. Here Mag Uidhir confidently asserts that, in order for an artwork to be serial in the non-trivial sense, each element within the overall artwork ought to be 'an individual and distinct work'. This is where the difference with Coplans's approach to seriality is most clearly felt. Unlike Coplans, Mag Uidhir places no special emphasis on the relationship between the micro- and the macro-structure of a serial artwork. One result of this stance is that the emphasis which is now placed on each element's distinctive individuality makes no reference as to whether or not this allows each element to operate *productively* as a part of the overall (macro) structure to which it belongs. On this topic, Mag Uidhir is silent. Not that the emphasis on individuality is necessarily negative: as the individual elements of a series simply are parts within the same series, we are left to assume that their distinctive status as individual works does not interfere with the larger sequence to which they belong. It is not made clear why this is the case: the position put forward by Mag Uidhir is simply that it ought to be the case. However, as a result of the emphasis placed on the unique individuality of each element within a series, a question mark remains over whether each element ought to also be productive in that capacity, or merely passive: operational or non-operational. By operational we are referring to the idea of each element working with the other elements to enable the macro-structure (i.e. the serial artwork) to be greater than the sum of the parts which constitute it. This is a complex question, and one to which we will return.

Mag Uidhir continues his analysis by providing a definition of what he calls *homogenously serial artworks*. Rather than being concerned with the relationship between serial artworks and the elements which compose them, this definition seeks to resolve what sort of things serial artworks are, understood in terms of the media or form in which they appear. As a way to clarify what is meant by the term 'homogenously serial' over the implied opposite (i.e. heterogeneously serial) Mag Uidhir states that the kind of serial artwork which is being referred to here 'is a series of works of some such form or medium that is itself a work of that very form or medium'.⁶⁴ This understanding refers to a series of drawings, photographs, comics, sculptures that is itself a drawing, photograph, comic or sculpture. It is this homogenous understanding which would be applied to the idea of serial drawing, given the fact that the term 'drawing' applies to both the form and the media in which such artworks appear, rather than simply the composition of such. In order to provide a means of assessing whether or not a serial artwork is homogenously serial on this account, Mag Uidhir again utilizes a deductive process to provide us with the following set of conditions:

W is a *homogenously serial artwork* iff *W* is a *serial artwork* composed of $\{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$ and there is some artform/medium *F* such that:

1. *W* is itself a work of/in that *F*.
2. For each $pm \in \{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$, *pm* is also a work of/in that *F*.⁶⁵

Described in other terms, we can say that a serial drawing (*W*) is defined as a homogenously serial artwork on the basis that: drawing counts as both an artform and a medium (*F*). Assuming this to be the case, a *serial drawing* is defined as a serial artwork (*W*) composed of a set $\{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$ of individual works $pm \in \{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$, that are also drawings. So far, so clear. However, while this statement captures the distinction between an artwork that is composed of the same form/medium as the elements which compose it and one that is not, this is insufficient to exhaust the understanding of serial art. What is missing, according to Mag Uidhir, is the ability to distinguish between artworks which are non-trivially composed of a sequence of things, and artworks which are non-trivially composed of a sequence of artworks. This latter understanding is labelled by Mag Uidhir as *strictly serial art*. This definition is not without certain difficulties of interpretation. It refers back to his earlier statement concerning the importance of each element within a series constituting 'an individual and unique work'. Assuming that each element of a series is considered to be a distinct, individual and therefore potentially stand-alone artwork, then the issue becomes – how is that same element supposed to retain the autonomy which comes with

such a singular understanding, while at the same time remaining part of the series to which it belongs? In other words, if each individual element within a series is a standalone artwork, then how does a sequence of such elements appear as a standalone (serial) artwork, and not a mere collection of the same?

In order to clarify an understanding of this knotty issue, Mag Uidhir refers us to the example of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and the literary debate over whether this consists of a collection of five poems, or a single poem in five sections. For him, the issue here is not simply concerned with deciding *The Wasteland's* fundamental (i.e. non-trivial) composition as a poem, but with the status of its parts as poems. The question mark which arises is one that concerns the topic of whether or not the various parts constitute individual and distinct poems in their own right. One might argue that an ability to decide on the second issue ought necessarily to require a decision on the first, given that one seems to be dependent on the other. Given that Mag Uidhir introduces the term 'dependence relation' to explore the relationship of the parts to the whole – in terms of one (parts) being dependant on the other (whole) – this does indeed appear to be the case.⁶⁶ Unlike Coplans's earlier effort however, Mag Uidhir makes no specific reference here to the importance of structure in determining the status of serial artwork. This lack means that Mag Uidhir cannot describe the idea of dependence relation in terms of Coplans's distinction between the micro- and macro-structure of serial artwork, where one (micro-structure) is necessarily dependant on, and described in relation to, the other (macro-structure). Instead, Mag Uidhir seeks to explain what constitutes *strictly serial art* in terms of another idea: the notion that the serial artwork must have some 'art-relevant feature' above and beyond that which the individual parts possess. To explain how this notion is understood, we are presented with another propositional statement:

W is a strictly serial artwork iff *W* is a *serial artwork* composed of non-trivial sequence $\{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$ and:

1. For each $pm \in \{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$, pm is an artwork.
2. There is some art-relevant feature Φ (for example, some intentional relation, aesthetic property, artworld function, semantic content, narrative uptake, and so on) such that *W* has Φ but no $pm \in \{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$ has that Φ (for example, stands in that particular intentional relation, instances that particular aesthetic property, serves that particular artworld function, conveys that particular semantic content, facilitates that particular narrative uptake ... in that particular way).⁶⁷

From the list of examples which are given, we can see that Mag Uidhir's idea of what constitutes an 'art-relevant feature' is quite broad, to say the least. Given the sheer variety of contemporary artworks, coupled with the enormous range of potential interpretations which terms like 'relation', 'function', 'content', 'narrative uptake' and so on all permit, we might pause to consider what kind of creative work could possibly be ruled out of such a deductive description. Indeed, we wonder if it might not have been more worthwhile for Mag Uidhir to identify what kind of work would *not* fit the category of 'art-relevant', rather than what does. That being said, the idea to which the definition *strictly serial art* aims towards articulating on the basis of this deductive statement is useful: the goal of the definition is to distinguish between the whole and the parts when considering whether an artwork is properly serial, however hard that may be to do in practice.

To help us clarify what is meant by this definition, Mag Uidhir offers us the example of Marina Abramovic's *Seven Easy Pieces*. This work constitutes a series – or as Mag Uidhir describes it, a sequence – of seven performances which Abramovic gave to audiences over seven consecutive nights at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2005. The work itself consists of re-creating the works of five other artist's: performance pieces plus two of her own, selected according to those which Abramovic decided were canonical to her own development as a performance artist, and which she felt ought to be archived by being re-created in this particular fashion. The seven works consisted of Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* (1974), Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972), Valie Export's *Action Pants: Genital Panic* (1969), Gina Pane's *The Conditioning* (1973), Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), plus two of Abramovic's own works – *Lips of Thomas* (1975) and *Entering the Other Side* (2005). As Mag Uidhir describes it, what makes this piece strictly serial is the fact that 'presumably, each of Abramovic's performance re-creations was an individual and distinct artwork', coupled with the fact that this is the case 'so too, presumably, for *Seven Easy Pieces* itself'.⁶⁸

The issue with this statement is found in the use of the word *presumably*. For example, while we can perhaps presume that Abramovic considered each of the seven performances to be 'unique and individual works' on the patently physical basis that each was performed separately from the others, it is not so easy to presume the same holds for the understanding of the series, at least not in the same way. The spatio-temporal distinction that grants each of the seven elements of this series its own individuality due to each being performed on a different night is far from being a marginal concern, especially given the context: it is what literally keeps one performance separate from the others, and able to

stand apart as a result. On the other hand, it would appear that the title of the series, *Seven Easy Pieces*, is all we have to assign a distinctive individuality to the group of works when they are taken together as a whole: that is of course, until a suitable 'art-relevant feature' (Φ) can be found. At which point the question arises: what can we presume this art-relevant to be exactly? On this point Mag Uidhir is vague, if not exactly unclear. In the case of Abramovic's *Seven Easy Pieces* it seems that the art-relevant feature is the fact that the series of seven performances is presented as a single artwork, and is therefore presumed to be ... a serial artwork. No further insight into the nature of what the series as a whole is able (or not) to offer up beyond being so composed is presented by Mag Uidhir. Indeed, it is the fact that *Seven Easy Pieces* is 'wholly composed of the non-trivially ordered sequence' of the performances which Abramovic re-created which allows Mag Uidhir to state:

The particular way in which *Seven Easy Pieces* is an artwork is distinct from that which makes any of the elements in its sequence artworks. Moreover, it follows then that at least when construed as a work of performance art, *Seven Easy Pieces* is both *strictly serial* and *homogenously serial*.⁶⁹

Unlike Bochner's unambiguous stipulation for a work to be understood as self-exhausting in order to be classified a serial artwork, Mag Uidhir's careful process of deductive reasoning results in a surprisingly banal recommendation: namely that an artwork be designated as 'strictly serial' on the basis that it presents itself as a series of (homogenously) similar pieces, where an art-relevant feature is presumed – but not actually specified – to be present. This criticism is not made in order to ignore Mag Uidhir's claim that some art-relevant feature (Φ) is required in order for *W* to be considered as greater than the sum of its parts. On the contrary, the purpose is to point out the difficulties in adequately clarifying what such an 'art relevant feature' might be. In the case of Abramovic's *Seven Easy Pieces*, Mag Uidhir merely 'presumes' there is an art-relevant feature which makes *Seven Easy Pieces* distinctive as an artwork over and above the seven performances which constitute it. But without giving a concrete example, all we are left with is the bare fact of the title as a means to distinguish this work as serial, plus the seven performances which compose it. Looking again at what evidence there is to support the idea of an art-relevant feature, we find that 'strictly serial' designates a serial work to be an artwork where the ordering and arrangement of the individual elements is perceived to be serial. Putting aside for a moment the tautological mystery of Φ , what stands out most clearly from the statement defining strictly serial art is not the requirement to include some art-relevant

feature (Φ), but rather the ordering of the works. Unlike Bochner's emphasis on the self-exhausting property to seriality, and unlike Coplans's efforts to parse the distinction between macro- and micro-structures, Mag Uidhir's emphasis for what counts as a strictly serial work appears to rest with the non-trivial ordering of the sequence in which the elements of the work appear.

We find evidence for this claim in the clarification of *loosely serial artworks*, the last of the four propositions that Mag Uidhir puts forward. The idea of loosely serial is based on Mag Uidhir's recognition that there is an 'artworld-entrenched' usage of serial art, one which recognizes the existence of serial artworks which are composed of trivially ordered elements – where the ordering of the elements in the sequence which composes them is not deemed to be proscriptive or deliberate in the manner stipulated by the term non-trivial.⁷⁰ As an example of what is being referred to here, Mag Uidhir refers us to Walter de Maria's *Statement Series* (2011). Shown within the *Trilogies* exhibition held at the Menil Collection in Houston, this work is composed of three large monochrome paintings, one painted in red, one in yellow and one in blue. *Statement Series* is described by Mag Uidhir as 'a strictly serial artwork composed of three paintings (which are also themselves artworks)'.⁷¹ Two of the paintings, *Red Painting* and *Blue Painting* (2011) were created for the *Trilogies* exhibition while the third, *Yellow Painting* (*The Color Men Choose When They Attack the Earth*) was produced in 1968.⁷² The shade of yellow oil paint used to produce this earlier painting is that of the John Deere brand of earth moving equipment – not in itself an unimportant fact, given it aids comprehension of the original title: *The Color Men Choose When They Attack the Earth*. When it was first exhibited at the Dwan Gallery in 1968, both the title and the industrial shade of yellow had a resonance with the concept of Land Art then in vogue, and of which de Maria was a strong proponent. In regard to what makes this work a loosely serial work for Mag Uidhir, we find that the issue resides not so much with anything conceptually understood, but with the order in which the three paintings which compose *Statement Series* are perceived to be displayed. As Mag Uidhir describes it:

Although proper reception of *Statement Series* looks to require that the constitutive works within the series be displayed in some close lateral proximity to one another, it appears as if the order in those works are so displayed is not itself constitutive of *Statement Series* qua artwork.⁷³

In short, although *Statement Series* appears as a strictly serial artwork to Mag Uidhir, the lack of any perceived order to the arrangement of the parts renders it a troubling variety of such. Although the work is non-trivially serial, the fact it

operates with a 'trivial symmetric relation of co-exhibition' – that is, the fact the three paintings which compose the series seem only to require that they be hung near each other, in no particular order – means the understanding of 'loosely serial' requires a re-written proposition of its own in order to be understood. Mag Uidhir duly supplies this as follows:

W is a *loosely serial artwork* iff:

1. *W* is an artwork
2. *W* is composed (in a non-trivial way) of a (trivial) sequence or a (non-trivial yet non-ordered) set $\{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$.
3. There is some art-relevant feature Φ such that *W* has Φ but no $pm \in \{p1, p2, \dots pn\}$ has that Φ .
4. Properly attending to (engaging with) *W* qua artwork requires properly attending to each element in that sequence or member of that set (in the non-ordered manner prescribed by *W*)

However, we might take a moment to query the idea that the arrangement of a work like *Statement Series* is 'trivial' in the sense of being non-ordered. To recap: this piece by de Maria is labelled as being loosely serial on the basis that there appears to be a clear lack of a defined order to the manner in which the three paintings composing *Statement Series* are hung. But on closer inspection, does this turn out to be the case? Not necessarily. When the work itself is looked at, a couple of further features stand out which serve to complicate this claim. In the first instance we note that one of the three works, *Yellow Painting*, stands out in historical terms, having been produced some forty-three years prior to the other two pieces: *Red Painting* and *Blue Painting*. While this fact might not ordinarily present itself as being overly significant, if we pay attention to how *Statement Series* was installed at the Menil Collection in 2011, we notice that the placement of this same painting stands out somewhat in relation to the placement of the other two.

The exhibition catalogue reveals that *Statement Series* occupied the museum's entire foyer area: a large rectangular room with walls on three sides, with a row of windows occupying the fourth. *Yellow Painting* occupies the central wall, whereupon it faces the row of gallery windows, looking outwards. *Red Painting* and *Blue Painting* are hung upon each of the end walls of the foyer, one to either side of *Yellow Painting*, whereupon they face each other across opposite walls. While such a simple curatorial decision might easily go unnoticed, given we are querying the presumed lack of order in which these three works appear, their particular spatial relationship to one another takes on another hue. In short, their tripartite arrangement seems both thought through and deliberate: at the

very least the placement of the earliest of the three works (*Yellow Painting*) in a central position relative to the other two is prominent enough to stand out when the order of these three works is contemplated. This makes Mag Uidhir's claim that *Statement Series* is loosely serial on the basis it 'fails to identify one particular painting as first, last, or otherwise order-theoretically distinguished'⁷⁴ all the more puzzling. The issue at stake here is not so much with Mag Uidhir's classification of *Statement Series* as being loosely serial, but with the seeming lack of attention paid the way in which such a series of work is actually installed within an exhibition space, given as prerequisite for producing such a claim.

In the case of determining whether or not a given series entails a particular ordering to the sequence of its constituent parts, the question of how the work is installed is of crucial importance. As with all nearly all the other examples of serial artworks, we are not dealing here with an abstract mathematical idea of series, but with an actual series of artworks that are found installed according to a particular order. Given that curatorial decisions related to hanging works in gallery spaces are seldom taken lightly, we can safely assume that the ordering of de Marias's *Statement Series* is both careful and deliberate. With this in mind, we ought to take the central prominence of *Yellow Painting* seriously, and with it, the manner in which the arrangement of *Blue Painting* and *Red Painting* appears somewhat secondary to that, understood in terms of their arrangement rather than execution. With these observations in mind, a further observation follows. In noting the placement of *Yellow Painting* at the centre of the set, both conceptually and physically, we are left with the thought that the set could be open ended: meaning it could well be extended out in either direction beyond the present (and quite possibly arbitrary) limits signified by the *Blue Painting* and *Red Painting*, respectively. This would allow us to designate *Statement Series* as an example of the first of the four types of series that Coplans earlier identified: 'those that have neither a first nor a last element'.⁷⁵ Should it prove to be the case that this is true, then it follows that the mathematically inspired understanding of series provided by Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order renders *Statement Series* as a precise, rather than loose, example of serial artwork. Whether or not this is the mathematically correct understanding of series that ought to be applied in this context is a concern for debate elsewhere. The point is: if we are to take Mag Uidhir's own, earlier comment seriously, where it was recognized that the 'issues surrounding *series* in the art-theoretic sense ... roughly mirror those similar surrounding issues for *series* in its more precise mathematical sense',⁷⁶ then we have every reason to take Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order seriously, which means seeking to apply it in this context accordingly.

Mag Uidhir concludes *How to Frame Serial Art* by outlining certain questions which arise once a set of attempted definitions are laid out in this fashion. Chief among these is the question concerning the supposed thingliness of serial artwork. In assuming there is such a thing as a *strictly* serial artwork over and above the individual works which compose it, Mag Uidhir wonders what kind of 'ontic thing' it must be. In the context of our object-oriented discussion of serial drawing, this ontologically framed question regarding the status of serial artworks approaches the heart of the matter. What exactly is a serial art object if we consider it to be something above and beyond a mere assemblage composed of constituent parts? For Mag Uidhir, this is the philosophical question that arises once the idea of homogenously serial, strictly serial and loosely serial artworks are put forward as possible forms of serial art. In asking what sort of ontic thing a strictly serial artwork is – where each element within *W* is considered to be a discrete artwork, but where *W* also has an art-relevant feature Φ that none of the individual artworks composing it has – Mag Uidhir ends by describing the issue thus:

Assuming there is such a thing as a strictly serial artwork over and above the individual and distinct artworks comprising it, what (ontic) kind of thing must it be? A standard set-theoretic object? A nonstandard sort of (impure) abstractum? A spatially dislocated concretum composed of all and only those individual and distinct artworks that stand in certain relevant intentional, behavioural, epistemic, attitudinal, conventional, or relations to that artwork, its artist, or the surrounding artworld institutions, conventions and practices? Perhaps the mereological sum thereof?⁷⁷

Jennifer Dyer

Jennifer Dyer's *Serial Images: The Modern Art of Iteration* presents an in-depth scholarly analysis of the relationship between modern painting and seriality. In pursuing this aim, Dyer offers us a highly erudite definition of seriality described in terms of serial iteration, alongside highlighting the importance of serial imagery within the development of modernist aesthetics. Presented in the form of a hermeneutical study, Dyer emphasizes the importance of seriality for gauging the meaning of modernist art, using the work of five major artists – Edgar Degas, Piet Mondrian, Francis Bacon, Egon Schiele and Andy Warhol – to clarify how the theme of seriality operates within the context of modernism, and the effect it has on the reception of their work by viewers.

Chief among Dyer's concerns is providing evidence to support her claim that the topic of seriality remains crucial for ascertaining the meaning of the images which appear serially in these selected works. However, there is a related contention which Dyer puts forward and which stands out somewhat in the context of our discussion: the notion that seriality defines the 'structure of reality as it is presented in their work'.⁷⁸ On the one hand, this claim is predicated on a number of general statements on art, drawn from the likes of Mondrian, Degas and Bacon, concerning the way in which each aspires to explore the idea of the real through their work. But it also proceeds in more precise terms, given that Dyer puts forward the idea that seriality is itself an understanding which allows a very distinctive conception of the real to shine through. This serialized conception of reality is enabled via Dyer's understanding of serial iteration, which is carefully described as a structure of 'becoming and novelty' – a process of actualization wherein the construction of meaning by a viewer is held to be an 'active, irreducible event in the becoming of the series'.⁷⁹ Indeed, it is via the process of unpacking seriality in terms of serial iteration that Dyer provides us with a highly useful description of serial art to add to the others so far assembled.

Although the range of historical and theoretical relationships which Dyer considers is quite broad, the conception of seriality which she actively deploys to assess the work of these five artists appears remarkably singular in both its outlook and its underpinnings. Unlike Mag Uidhir, Dyer opts not to walk the reader in deductive fashion through a number of connected understandings of seriality in order to arrive at one particular conception, be it 'strictly' serial or otherwise. On the contrary, Dyer begins the text with what is effectively an already-decided conception: for Dyer, seriality is firmly understood in terms of serial iteration. Dyer's positioning in regard to this understanding refers back to Coplans's earlier thoughts on the topic, in particular Coplans's claim that seriality is 'identified by a particular inter-relationship, rigorously consistent, of structure and syntax ... that links the internal structure to that of other works within a differentiated whole'.⁸⁰ As Dyer confirms, the particular interrelation which is central to her group of five artists is 'that of iteration, where the result of each stage in a series is the basis of the next stage'.⁸¹ We see here the foundational cornerstone upon which the definition of Dyer's seriality is built. Rather than offering a range of possible options to choose from, Dyer offers us one option: iteration. From looking at the list of artist names which Dyer selects, it might be argued that this singular decision reflects Dyer's own interests in seriality, and which is consequently applied back to the work of Degas, Mondrian, Bacon, Schiele and Warhol. Indeed, with one or two

exceptions, none of these artists are particularly explicit or even vocal about the serial aspect of their work. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that serial art is a label which is appended to artists' works only from the 1960s onward, concurrent with the time that Warhol is active, the most recent of the five.

In setting the scene for utilizing serial iteration as the tool to analyse these five artists, Dyer offers the reader a summary overview of how the term 'series' is defined within the context of the argument. We find this material included a footnote: a decision which is quite common within the context of discussing serial art, as indicated by Coplans's earlier efforts. While we might assume that the purpose of putting such definitions into notes is to avoid distracting the reader from what is being presented in the body of the text (or possibly to avoid boring them with overly specific or superfluous details), it is still instructive to examine which elements of seriality are considered elemental by Dyer. This is all the more the case when the definition of series provides such a major impact on the analysis of seriality which follows, as is the case with Dyer. Influenced in part by the mathematical position of Bertrand Russell,⁸² Dyer defines a series as that which is 'minimally defined as asymmetrical, transitive, connected, and irreflexive.'⁸³ We can interpret this definition as follows. Firstly, a relation is considered to be asymmetrical when we understand that *a* coming prior to *b* means that *b* is also not earlier than *a*. Secondly, a relation is considered to be transitive on the basis that if it holds between *a* and *b*, and also between *b* and *c*, it must also hold between *a* and *c*. Thirdly, a relation is considered to be connected if, within the context of any two given terms, there must be one which precedes and one which follows 'in a single unified chain'.⁸⁴ And fourthly, a relation is considered to be irreflexive when no term within a series has 'those relations to itself which it has to other terms of the series'.⁸⁵ Dyer adds a last point to this conception of series which is of key interest here, given it sheds light on understanding the idea of serial iteration as a process of becoming. As Dyer says, 'When a series of events is understood as a series of distinct, dynamical acts, then each event is unique.'⁸⁶ For example, a relation is held to be intransitive when the relation of *a* to *b* is not the same as that of *b* to *c*.

Taken in its entirety, what this summary definition of series provided by Dyer indicates is that there is clearly something of a directional flow to the conception of seriality it engenders, and consequently, to the appreciation of serial artwork which follows. By directional flow we mean that, as an iterative process, each stage within a given series provides the concrete basis for the next. Yet although each element of a series is held to be an iteration of the previous, all elements remain linked together courtesy of the structural unity of the series. The means that the series

is understood to be progressive to some degree: in short, it *develops*. This claim is further supported if we add to it Dyer's point above concerning the fact that such a series is also intransitive that is, unable to go back on itself. It is worth noting that Dyer's conception of seriality appears to be heavily influenced by Russell's mathematical philosophy, along with the philosophy of Henri Bergson. As Dyer indicates, Russell characterizes the definition of series as a type of order wherein 'any two terms in the class which is to be ordered ... one 'precedes' and the other 'follows'.⁸⁷ Hence the rationale for serial iteration, given as that which constitutes the basic, underlying form of interrelation particular to Dyer's conception of seriality over other possible forms. Given the various implications which Dyer's understanding has for comprehending seriality as a process of becoming however, the details of Dyer's conception of serial iteration are worth discussing further.

In the first instance, we ought not to confuse iteration with repetition. True, repetition is similar to iteration in that the antecedent terms in a series play a part in establishing new ones. But as Dyer indicates, repetition is normally associated with pure numerical difference: it defines any form of visual or structural duplication wherein one element differs from the previous element only in virtue of being the second when the previous is considered to be the first. But for Dyer, the serial iteration at work in the work of Degas, Mondrian, Bacon, Schiele and Warhol involves much more than mere numerical difference. What we see presented in the works of these five artists ought to be interpreted according to what Dyer terms an '*activity of construction*'.⁸⁸ The idea that a series is capable of engendering new forms of understanding via the iterative structure of itself is what Dyer means by '*activity of construction*': a process which is linked to something Dyer calls the activity of actualization, wherein both ideas link to the idea of freedom in modern art. As an idea, this has links with the concept of emergence, given that both are predicated on the notion that new terms in the series give rise to new understandings which are not exhaustively traceable to their antecedent terms: when interpreted, they appear to be something more than the sum of their parts. Understanding iteration as an activity of construction leads Dyer towards the idea that serial iteration is itself a matter of '*iterative acts of construction which are free*'.⁸⁹ It is the activity which makes such serially iterative elements free that describes the activity of actualization as an idea. Dyer summarizes this process in the following way:

As a free activity of actualization, serial iteration is intrinsically a structure of becoming and novelty, a process in which the free construction of new terms is the very actualization of order and each serially iterative act of construction is a free event of construction, an active, irreducible event in the becoming of the series.⁹⁰

We can see here the outlines of what Dyer believes seriality is capable of doing when considered as an iterative process. This emphasis on action, on active construction, means that serial iteration is considered by Dyer to be a fundamentally structuring process, albeit not one that involves any form of teleological development, hierarchy or any kind of cumulative sequence which unfolds in the manner which a series of episodes unpacks a storyline. Indeed, there are no narrative elements implied in this understanding of seriality at all. What's more, no single element within a given series has any special status within the series. On the contrary, considered as an antecedent element within the series, each individual element offers itself as nothing more or less than the conditions for the next element. While on the surface it might appear that thinking of each individual element in this way would potentially rob such elements of whatever individuality and freedom they may otherwise have had, the inverse appears to be the case for Dyer. Hence, the process of differentiation from one element to the next renders serial iteration as historical, in the sense that this process 'involves the reception of antecedent structures in the active construction of present structures, and the open possibility of constructing future structures out of the present'.⁹¹ Thus for Dyer, serial iteration becomes a very particular kind of process that illuminates not only the nature of difference and continuity but also the interrelation of freedom and activity in modern art.

Considered as a process of active construction on the part of the viewer, the 'activity of actualization' which Dyer refers to is a concept worth examining further. As a constituent part of Dyer's description of serial iteration, activity of actualization refers to the fact that, for Dyer, the serially iterative structures of the artworks under consideration are taken to be a fundamental feature of those works, given in the context of which those works are seen (i.e. when they are viewed as a serial whole). In semiotic terms, iterative structure is for Dyer considered to be as important a feature as anything formally or theoretically understood, such as medium specificity, autonomy, contingency. As a fundamental feature of artworks, 'serial iteration is treated as another sign or meaning-producing feature of them' and 'whatever else they may be, the serially iterative artworks ... are propositional in the sense they articulate specific ideas about the activity of actualization'.⁹² The activity of ordering which underpins serial iteration does not presume a 'distinction between the metaphysical and the mundane'.⁹³ On the contrary, for Dyer, seriality conceived as an activity of actualization retains distinct ties to the idea of infinity and the sublime, yet where such notions also remain inseparable from the mundane structure of

the artwork which gives rise to them. Perhaps most importantly, serial iteration prioritizes the activity of ordering. Whether it be the strict use of geometry found in Mondrian's work, or the inexact use of repetition found across Warhol's silkscreens, Dyer characterizes the activity of ordering as articulating 'the ordination of itself as that which makes things continually what they are while making them different'.⁹⁴

The 'ordination of itself' is a notion which gets the heart of what Dyer's 'activity of actualization' means as an idea. In short, the set of relations which serially iterative art manifests are made evident through the viewers' perception of the mundane: the physical, material, formal and spatially ordered arrangements that make such serial works what they are in terms of being serial. As Dyer indicates, serial works are therefore 'fundamentally mimetic' in the sense that they realize (enact) their own processes of realization, understood in both mundane and metaphysical terms.⁹⁵ Such works of serially iterative art not only mimetically represent the durational, serially iterative processes which construct them, and which – following Bergson's philosophy of *la durée* – underpin their reception, but also 'mimetically thematize those processes as representing a universal order of actualization'.⁹⁶ The logic of these works is not a formal logic, but a logic of the 'order of actualization, a logic of the real'.⁹⁷ Serially iterative works of this kind install within themselves their own activity of seriality: they realize (actualize) the kind of artworks that they themselves are for the discerning viewer. In short, Dyer's analysis aims to demonstrate how serial iteration 'presents itself as a mimetic instance of the universal exchange of differentiating serial order that it articulates'.⁹⁸

What we seem to be presented with here is a description of serial art as a self-affirming artwork, one that is responsible for creating a new reality via the iterative actuality of actualization that underpins it. Described in terms of the mechanics of representation, on Dyer's account the serial artwork is perceived to be nothing more or less than a mimetically representative account of its own seriality, especially when given in relation to those who would view it as such. Support for this interpretation is located in the preface, where we find a passage from series editor André Wiercinski outlining the ideas found within Dyer's book. In referring to the seriality of the works which are analysed, Wiercinski observes that seriality is not simply considered to be an essential component of these artists' own understanding of their works, but also stands as a crucial aspect to ascertaining the function of such works, in the sense that these works are deemed responsible for creating 'a new reality on the canvas'.⁹⁹ In elaborating on this idea, Wiercinski makes the following point:

It is not the subjectivity of the recipient or creator of art which is the 'subject' of the experience of art: it is the work of art itself. When we allow a painting to speak to us, we acknowledge the inaccessibility of the artist's original interpretation. What amazes us is the fact that the painting enthralls us as recipient or creator; it is the genuine origin of the work of art.¹⁰⁰

With this in mind, it is worth briefly considering the way in which freedom is conceived by Dyer within the context of seriality, and how it relates to the dynamics of serially iterative artwork, understood in terms of the 'activity of actualization'. Dyer's conception of freedom as a 'free activity' given in relation to the viewers' appreciation of serial artwork is important because it situates the viewer as the active beholder of such works. Rather than stand as a passive receiver, the beholder is called upon by the serial, repetitive nature of the work to engage in the free constitution of meaning, wherein the structure of seriality is realized as a structure of becoming. This is why freedom for Dyer is manifested through the very rule-following mechanisms which underpin serial order. In response to the question, 'what follows the rule?', Dyer responds:

The artworks themselves, in various ways, suggest that a principle of freedom or free activity is fundamental to these matrices. The type of freedom they articulate is not one of gaps or fissures, as is often thought, but is the freedom of the activity of actualization itself.¹⁰¹

According to Dyer, when considered in terms of being a free activity, the idea of rule-following is not to be interpreted as anything slavish or blindly obedient. The freedom which is posited as being an inherent condition of serial iteration is not that of an 'algorithmic mechanism' which would relieve the viewing subject 'of the responsibility of making a decision'.¹⁰² On the contrary, as a dynamical, ongoing process which takes place in time, serial iteration is a process which reveals that free activity is as much a condition of the subject themselves as it is the result of their rule-following activity. On the related question of whether there is organizing telos in this conception of seriality as the activity of actualization, Dyer is equally clear: 'the structures of the artworks ... reject the claim that subjectivity constitutes a direct, mastering subject that follows a pre-ordained telos.'¹⁰³ The only telos that is articulated is the realization of free activity itself, and which serial artworks present themselves as examples of. Although the foregoing provides only a summary overview of Dyer's understanding of serial iteration, the question now arises as to how this theoretical understanding is actually put into practice. Unlike the competing definitions put forward by Mag Uidhir, Bochner and Coplans,

Dyer's definition of seriality is specifically geared towards analysing the serial artworks of just five artists, suggesting it is worth briefly examining how Dyer's particular understanding of serial iteration (understood through the lens of the 'activity of actualization') is actually applied to them. For the sake of brevity, we can select two examples, Degas and Warhol, given they represent the earliest and the most recent of the five, respectively. Of particular interest is the attention which Dyer directs towards the role of the viewer in constituting meaning via their active appreciation of Degas's and Warhol's work. This aspect is all the more important given the weight which is accorded to the viewer/beholder in our object-oriented discussion of serial drawing which is to come.

In the case of Degas, Dyer elects to examine Degas's series of bathers and dancers: an image-making pursuit which Degas began in the late 1880s, placing them towards the beginning of the modernist period to which Dyer refers. Dyer uses the understanding of seriality as serial iteration just outlined to offer an account of how Degas's series of female figures presents a specific account of the activity of actualization through the serially iterative structure of this series. That is, the active quality found in each charcoal drawing or oil painting presents the bathing figure(s) in a process of 'continual, iterative actualization', one which is responsible for differentiating the figure within each image and across the series as a whole.¹⁰⁴ Hence the performative role of the viewer is held to be key in comprehending how such a process of actualization is actually made manifest. Treated as both an active and engaged beholder of Degas's series of female figures, the viewer is invited to move through each individual image and across the series as a whole, whereupon they 'iteratively enact the activity of actualization which continually shapes and differentiates the figure'.¹⁰⁵ Key to this understanding for Dyer is Bergson's philosophy of *la durée*: the metaphysics of duration as becoming which underpins Bergson's entire philosophical output. As far as Dyer is concerned, the manner in which the Bergsonian theory of duration metaphysically fuses the concept of time and existence together renders the activity of actualization as a continuous, intransitive process, wherein actualization is understood to refer to the 'continual construction of the past out of the present'.¹⁰⁶ Unlike the temporal narrative which defines Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series, wherein the impression of light upon the cathedral façade is captured at different times of the day, there is no narrative structure at work in Degas's series of bathers. Instead, for Dyer it is both the form and the content of Degas's images which presents the activity of existence 'as continually differentiating in its own order'.¹⁰⁷

In the case of Warhol's serialized screenprints, things are a little different. In examining a body of work which appears at the tail end of the modernist period under consideration, Dyer claims that the serially iterative structure of Warhol's screenprints is responsible for making manifest the activity of actualization via a process of 'spontaneously free differentiation'.¹⁰⁸ As Dyer says, the key to understanding the activity of actualization in this instance is found by examining Warhol's mistakes. While Warhol's screenprints have long lent themselves to a range of materialist readings – due in no small part to the way in which the mundane subject matter of soup cans and car crashes are repeated courtesy of a serial structure which itself is redolent of industrial mass production – Dyer uses the concept of seriality as serial iteration to reach entirely different ends. In Dyer's thesis, the serially iterative structure of Warhol's images is both 'an ironic comment on the modernist principles of authenticity, novelty, and autonomy and reinterpretation of those principles'.¹⁰⁹ The reinterpretation is found by examining the way in which Warhol actively sought to introduce and utilize printing imperfections within the serially produced screenprints. It is the set of slight differences found between duplicates which look almost exact that excites Dyer's interest: indeed, it is these differences which allow Warhol's mundane and otherwise flat images to appear interesting. As Dyer states:

When surface, ground, and image are united, the difference of the imperfection is foregrounded as the only engaging aspect of the work. I argue that the meaning of his serially iterative images lies in their differences.

Warhol's series of *Brillo Boxes* are given as a paradigmatic example of how the serially iterative screening process which underpins this work realizes the activity of actualization as a process of differentiation. For Dyer, rather than represent a wry analysis regarding the notion of authenticity or provide a pictorial comment on the idea of extreme representation, the significance of Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* is found in the minor differences, mistakes and variations which make themselves quietly evident between each of the boxes within the series. The array of minor surface differences formed through the imperfect silkscreen production process is the site where *Brillo Boxes* are observed to tell the viewer something new about the relationship between sameness and difference. We might even say that the activity of actualization is made manifest in the performance of the viewer seeing serially, wherein the process of differentiation is only revealed when the boxes are seen in series. The array of small differences which are evident across the various *Brillo Boxes* are fundamental to the series,

yet they are also spontaneous, relational and individuating whilst remaining (as pictures of mass-produced items), thoroughly mundane. In making this claim, Dyer takes a last step and indicates that Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* drive home the 'Deleuzian point that in serial actualization the only sameness is difference'.¹¹⁰ In Dyer's Deleuzian serially iterative conception of difference we observe how Warhol's boxes become artworks, in the sense that they are considered to be statements that tell us something about the world itself. Described in terms of seriality understood as a process of serial iteration, Warhol's screenprinting practice presents the activity of actualization as both a mundane and a spontaneously free activity. In Dyer's words, it is the 'actualizing activity of the mundane which, continually the same, is always different'.¹¹¹

Iris Marion Young

In presenting the set of foregoing accounts, we have identified a variety of competing, albeit overlapping, definitions of serial art. However, despite their various differences, we notice something that strongly links these accounts together: the fact that they all seek to find ways of articulating the idea of seriality, serial imagery or serial artwork in clearly perceptible terms. In short, each of these commentators seeks to define ways in which the idea of series appears boldly 'present' within the work. Likewise, although the mathematical understanding of seriality is recognized by most of these commentators as being an important piece of conceptual criteria underpinning the visual nature of serial art, there are two aspects to this understanding which escape the discussion so far outlined. The first concerns the fact that the majority of serial artworks are seldom either presented or received as purely mathematical constructs. As works of art, they do more than merely demonstrate a theoretical proof concerning the logical ordering of a serial structure. As artworks, they are fundamentally aesthetic, visual forms of understanding; wherein a set, sequence or group of images that make up a series are what is literally seen by the beholder, while the ordered underpinnings that enable one to decide upon such in conceptual terms are in fact deduced. In phenomenological terms, we do not see either mathematics or concepts relating to order. What we literally perceive are individual works of art arranged alongside one another in some sort of linear sequence.

The second aspect follows directly from this. It concerns the question of what remains withdrawn within the viewers aesthetic and conceptual appreciation of the row of individual works treated as a serial art object, meaning an artwork

which is held to be somehow above and beyond the sum of individual parts which compose it. For what is literally perceived on or across the surface of the constituent elements that make up a serial artwork is only half of the story: aside from whatever marks or images visibly appear on each of these separate elements, we must also stand back and take note of the underlying structure of the series. This act involves noting the set of formal differences which manifest themselves between each element, coupled with perceiving the spatial gaps which appear between each element when the series is exhibited. Indeed, the space which literally appears between each element of a serial artwork constitutes the means by which the very ordering and arrangement of the series is perceived: we only comprehend that the work is a serial work by perceiving the sequence of elements that comprise it, which means implicitly registering the space in-between each as well. But this empty space is not normally considered to be part of the serial artwork, at least not in quite the same literal way as the series of physical, component parts which make up the sequence. It withdraws somewhat, yet remains present in the background. This literal, spatial interpretation of how seriality withdraws somewhat suggests that there might be other conceptual ways of appreciating this same idea: wherein seriality indicates a kind of veiled background to the serial art object – one which unifies the series as a whole, yet which remains distinct and withdrawn from the actual sequence of drawings, paintings or photographs that visibly appear. It is on the basis of trying to understand the idea of the series as a background that we turn to examine Young's pivotal text, *Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective*, and the Sartrean difference between the series and the group to which it refers.¹¹²

As is evident from the title, Young's article is not directly concerned with problems connected to either art or artworks. Unlike the respective efforts of Bochner, Coplans, Mag Uidhir and Dyer, we are not presented here with a clear and unambiguous way to think seriality in terms of the art object. Instead, what we are presented with is a clear and emphatically non-mathematical way to understand how the idea of the serial collective forms a background to the idea of the group, especially when approached from a Sartrean perspective, and it is this which causes us to look hard at what Young has to say. In brief, Young's thesis is concerned with overcoming certain issues which arise within the feminist critique of whether (and how) women might be understood to constitute a definable group. Young eruditely clarifies the nature of this problem at the start of the piece, posing it in relation to an experience which she once encountered while canvassing for a female political candidate. The issue is

that, while it can be commonplace to encounter a situation where women feel solidarity and affinity for one another as women, the actual project of seeking to conceptualize women as a coherent group is fraught with difficulties, given that the 'search for the common characteristics of women or of women's oppression leads to normalizations and exclusions.'¹¹³

Taken together, these two issues present a dilemma for feminist theory. As Young describes it, on the one hand, we have a situation where 'without some sense in which "woman" is the name of a social collective, there is nothing specific to feminist politics,' while on the other hand, 'any effort to identify the attributes of that collective appears to underline feminist politics by leaving out some women whom feminists ought to include.'¹¹⁴ At the core of this debate is the question of how are we supposed to make sense of the idea that groups of individuals can belong together given there are always ways to find exclusions and exceptions to such groupings? We cannot simply banish the idea of groups, be they social groups, groups of women, or groups of individual artworks that together comprise a serial artwork. Yet, as identified in the context of Young's argument, given the number of exceptions that can always be found, the very idea of groups continually risks being dissolved either because a number of individuals do not wish to be labelled as belonging to such, or because the act of labelling itself is deemed too problematic to be coherently maintained. It might be argued here that we are in danger of mixing the terms of our argument somewhat. After all, a feminist critique which pertains to the manner in which a group of individual women can be thought to comprise a serial collective ought not to be confused with a discussion of how a sequence of inanimate art objects like drawings are understood to belong together in a series. At the risk of stating the patently obvious, there is the question of individual agency which is granted in the first instance, but which we cannot possibly grant in the same way in the second. A serial artwork is made, in the sense it is intentionally created by an artist, meaning the group of individual artworks that so compose it are prior designated as belonging together in a way that does not map back easily across to the domain of human individuals who maintain their individual agency regardless.

And yet, the manner in which Young continues this critique in Sartrean terms does present us with a highly interesting way in which to think through the idea of agency in the context of seriality, and with it, the question of what remains withdrawn within the concept of series from which it springs. Drawing on material found in Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Young picks up on the idea that there is a difference between groups, understood as entities

comprised of individuals that consciously organize themselves into such, and the phenomenon of serial collectivity. It is this latter understanding which withdraws, as it were, in order to provide a silent and inexpressive background from which such groups can emerge. As Young describes:

In Sartre's conceptualization, a group is a collection of persons who do mutually identify, who recognize one another as belonging to the group with a common project that defines their collective action. A series, on the other hand, is not a mutually acknowledging identity with any common project or shared experience.¹¹⁵

In other words, for Sartre, a group constitutes a collection of persons who on an individual level consciously recognize both themselves and the others in the group as being in a unified relation with one another. Members of such a group are then able to mutually acknowledge that they are part of a common project with the others: they are united in whatever mode of action the group elects to undertake. Acknowledging oneself as a member of a such a group means acknowledging that one is putatively oriented towards the same ends as the other members of that group: whatever is decided as the common or collective project of the group becomes the individual project, in terms of the action which the individuals in the group take towards achieving that end. Of course, the Sartrean conception of the term 'group' is quite specific, and appears somewhat different from the everyday understanding, wherein the term is often used to identify any loose collection of people without one needing to actively reflect on why it is they belong together. As Young indicates, Sartre's concept of the group is focused on the idea of the 'self-consciously, mutually acknowledging collective with a self-conscious purpose', on the basis that a large proportion of an individual's active life is structured around a multitude of such.¹¹⁶

However, not all forms of social action occur in groups. This is where Sartre's particular and rather intriguing conception of series comes in. As Young states, for Sartre, 'Groups arise from and often fall back into a less organised and unselfconscious collective unity, which he calls series.'¹¹⁷ The origin for this claim is found in the manner in which Sartre characterizes the concept of human freedom, wherein all social actions are understood as the product of action. Unlike a group, which is actively organized around a common or collective project, a series for Sartre forms a 'social collective whose members are unified passively by the objects around which their actions are oriented or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of the others.'¹¹⁸ Although the Sartrean origins of this understanding refer to the manner in

which individual people are understood to form serial collectives, we take note of the manner in which the unity of the series is conceived and understood. By positing the series as a withdrawn or background condition, the individual members which constitute it are unified passively 'by the objects around which their actions are oriented' or by the 'objectified results of the material effects' of the actions of others. We can already see how this conception of seriality can relate to the artistic understanding, wherein the term 'serial drawing' denotes a structural unity: a singular, unified art object, composed of a sequence of separate drawings, each one appearing as a unit (and also a discrete art object) within the series to which it belongs. In clarifying how the unity of the series is understood in Sartrean terms, Young adds:

The unity of the series derives from the way that individuals pursue their own individual ends with respect to the same objects conditioned by a continuous material environment, in response to structures that have been created by the unintended collective result of past actions.¹¹⁹

Looked at in the context of serial art, the phrase 'continuous material environment' is revealing. It describes the background manner in which the underlying structural cohesion of a serial collective is found in the material environment which gives rise to it. Described in terms of serial artwork, we might suggest that continuous material environment could refer the underlying material considerations of the work: the medium which supplies the artwork with its given condition, for example, serial drawing, serial painting or serial photography. On this basis, 'continuous material environment' could quite easily be thought to refer to what Mag Uidhir earlier termed 'homogenously serial' artwork.¹²⁰ However, given this idea relates to a structural rather than a formal or aesthetic understanding of seriality, it is not necessarily clear this analogy holds. Indeed, the second part of the quote refers to structures which have been 'created by the unintended collective result of past actions', which seems to point beyond materiality, towards the Sartrean conception(s) of social action and human freedom.

As a way of further clarifying how the structural aspect of this conception of series is understood, we can look briefly at a couple of examples of series which Sartre provides, both of which are referred to by Young. The first example is that of people waiting for a bus. These people form a serial collective in that they all elect to obey the rules of bus waiting and minimally relate to one another as a result. As Young says, in being this kind of collective they are 'brought together by their relation to a material object, the bus, and the social practices of public

transportation.’¹²¹ Here the material focus of the collective is the physicality of the bus itself, while the relations between the individual people who are waiting for it – plus the relationship of them all to the absent bus – defines the way in which the serial collective is constituted. The people waiting for the bus are, as Young says, ‘united only by their desire to ride on that route.’¹²² Considered as a social collective they do not otherwise need to identify with one another, recognize themselves as sharing mutual experiences, or even explicitly register the fact that they are all engaged in the joint enterprise of waiting for the bus. Things become rather different however, should the bus fail to arrive. At this point the ‘latent potential of this series to organise itself as a group will become manifest’, wherein they may begin to complain to each other about the shoddy bus service, swap stories of lateness and possibly even discuss the idea of sharing a taxi.¹²³

An important feature to note here is the constant which remains in this description of the Sartrean series, namely the absence of the bus itself. It seems as though the absence of the material object (the bus) is required for the series to hold. In other words, a key element of the serial collective must remain withdrawn if the series is to remain a series, and not become an explicit group. We can test this idea by thinking of what happens when the bus arrives. Do the group of people waiting for it remain a passive collective? No, because with its arrival they are spurred into action, and promptly disengage from their passive act of waiting in order to actively board the bus, whereupon the series is dispersed. Seeking to continue the earlier analogy between Sartre’s example and serial artwork, we might like to suggest that the material focus of serial art is the artwork itself: the physical object which is arrayed serially, and likewise perceived by the viewer. But this analogy does not hold, because in Sartre’s example, the bus is absent. We are therefore led to question what the absent object might be in the case of serial art: What is the thing that ties the collective of individual elements together in a passive sense? We might opt to suggest that this object is the viewer themselves. After all, it is they who bestow sense upon the serial artwork, in terms of appreciating it as such. But at the point at which the viewer is engaged in viewing the artwork, they are not absent. Quite the opposite in fact. However, it seems as if something always needs to remain withdrawn, or withheld, within the Sartrean understanding of series in order for it to remain obliquely construed beyond the idea of the group. Yet the task remains to identify what this something is. It seems likely that the answer ought to be context specific, wherein we need recourse to the actual example being referred to in order to decide what element lies in the background.

We find evidence of this in the second example of Sartre which Young refers to – that of radio listeners. Used to illustrate some of the characteristics of Sartrean seriality, radio listeners constitute a collective of people actively engaged in listening to their radios simultaneously, albeit at disparate locations. This collective is comprised of individuals who are oriented towards material objects, which in this case means their radios and the ‘material possibilities of sound transmission’ which such devices entail.¹²⁴ As listeners they are spatially isolated from each other, yet they each remain aware of being:

Part of a series of radio listeners, of others listening simultaneously linked to them indirectly through broadcasting. One’s experience of radio listening is partly conditioned by the awareness of being linked to others from whom one is separated and of serving as Other for them. Frequently the radio announcer explicitly refers to the serialized being of the listeners.¹²⁵

However, we notice that the question of what is considered to be materially absent in this example (where absent is understood to indicate the element which is perceived to remain in the background) differs slightly from that of the previous example. Unlike the absent bus, it is not the material object – the radio set – which is located in the background of this scene. Instead, each of the individual listeners is backgrounded in relation to each of the other listeners. In the previous example, the series of individuals waiting for the material object (the bus) are by definition gathered at the same spatial location (the bus stop), whereas the series of radio listeners are distributed far and wide across a number of possible geographic locations. These individuals are all simultaneously listening to the same radio station but at different locations relative to one another. This means they are unified, serialized, only in an immaterial sense, courtesy of the coverage provided by the radio signal. Interestingly, this key material difference does not seem to affect Sartre’s conception of seriality. In both cases we have a perfectly lucid example of what is meant by the serial collective, wherein the series is posited as that which forms the unconscious or indirectly perceived background, while the idea of the group is that which emerges from this background in order to form an explicitly organized body present in the foreground. This distinction has important ramifications for how Sartre’s conception of seriality can be employed in the case of serially arranged art objects.

One point which the difference between the two examples does highlight is that it is social objects, rather than material objects, which form the locus of interest within Sartre’s conception of seriality. As Young identifies, Sartre calls the series a ‘practico-inert reality’, wherein the series is that which is structured on

the basis of actions which are linked to 'practico-inert objects'.¹²⁶ Understood in this way, social objects and their effects are the result of human action that is, they are resolutely practical. But the material, physical underpinnings of such objects means that they constitute a set of real constraints upon the very actions which produced them, leading them to be experienced as inert. According to Young, a good example of a practico-inert reality would be the built environment, wherein the 'product of human decisions and action daily used by and dwelt in by people ... are inert' and 'their material qualities enable and constrain many aspects of action'.¹²⁷ Sartre calls the system of practico-inert objects plus the material results of the actions which take place among them the 'milieu of action'.¹²⁸ This milieu is the background against which any form of collective, serialized action occurs.

Of especial interest is the way in which the Sartrean milieu, formed as it is from the totality of structured relations that both govern and hinder the domain of action, creates a sense in which the individuals within it feel constrained, unable to alter the material circumstances in which they find themselves operating. As Sartre points out (quoted by Young), 'A series reveals itself to everyone when they perceive in themselves and Others their common inability to eliminate their material differences'.¹²⁹ Members of a series, whether they are waiting for a bus or listening to the radio, are equally aware of the limitations placed upon them via their membership of the series. Taken as individuals, they are as unlikely to be able to forcibly make the bus arrive as they are to cancel the radio broadcast for all the other listeners of it. In both instances, 'the collective otherness of serialized existence is ... often experienced as a constraint, as felt necessities that often are experienced felt as given or natural'.¹³⁰ At the same time, such constraints provide the very ground for action: the objectives towards which groups are explicitly aimed are themselves only enabled via mediation of the social and material objects which are found to be already there.

In short, for Young, membership of a serial collective defines an individual's being, in the sense that one 'is' a radio listener, a commuter, a person waiting along with others for a bus and so on. But on the other hand, the unity of the series is hard to clarify and remains to some degree amorphous. This is the critical aspect of Young's discussion as far as serial art is concerned: the fact that while the concept of seriality is recognized, it quickly recedes into the background whenever concrete attempts are made to define it in exhaustive terms, yet without disappearing entirely. As Young says, serial unity for Sartre is 'a unity "in flight," a collective gathering that slips away at the edges'.¹³¹ As a practico-inert reality, the serial collective is an inert result of a confluence of actions, meaning the characteristics and qualities which belong to it are impossible to

define. The result of this is that 'there is no concept of the series, no specific set of attributes that form the sufficient conditions for membership in it.'¹³² This last point is of critical interest to our discussion. While it might be argued that much of the preceding information relates to a socio-political understanding of how individuals gather and interact, we can also argue that the slippery, fleeting, practico-inert character of the Sartrean series pertains to the domain of serial artworks too. For while the sequence of material, physical and individual artworks are what the viewer explicitly concentrates their attention upon, it is the conceptual notion of series which forms a silently withdrawn underpinning to the array of objects commanding their visual field and serves to structure it accordingly. Indeed, without the passive unity which the topic of series presents, the individually active units which compose a serial artwork would cease to be considered as serial, and the meaning of artwork qua seriality would dissolve.

In thinking of the series in Sartrean terms as a practico-inert reality, Young emphasizes that there is 'no concept of the series within attributes that clearly demarcate what about individuals makes them belong' and 'the series is a blurry, shifting unity, an amorphous collective.'¹³³ Eschewing a clear sense of belonging on the part of the serialized elements, it might be thought that this conception of seriality differs markedly from the artistic kind – after all, a series of drawings which are observed to compose a serial drawing are understood to belong together in a manner which is quite unlike the individual women referred to in Young's thesis. The fact that individual artworks within a series are intended to belong together by the artist who produced them looks to make such works more akin to a Sartrean group than a passively inert collective. But this finding would not be strictly accurate. In the first instance, the Sartrean group is a self-reflective entity, meaning self-conscious in a way that individual artworks cannot be. In Young's description, the Sartrean group is a 'collection of persons who do mutually identify, who recognize one another as belonging to the group with a common project that defines their collective action.'¹³⁴ The Sartrean notion of series sits opposite this understanding, given that is 'not a mutually acknowledging entity', although as a passive entity it is still partly responsible for the groups which emerge from it, and therefore remains active in some way. With such a slippery, ambiguous role, it might be suggested that the concept of series comprises a potentially undifferentiated, indirectly appreciated understanding within the context of serial art. In passively conferring a structural unity on any and all artworks which are deemed to belong to a particular series, seriality is no more or less than a silent and inexpressive background condition, yet one which is nevertheless as real and as active as it can be once it is conceptually located within the work.

An object-oriented approach

As can be seen from the range of descriptions outlined in the previous chapter, what we appear to have in place of a unified understanding of serial art is a range of interpretations, all of which differ according to the various definitions of series/seriality which these authors employ. To be sure, there is a considerable degree of overlap within their respective understandings, especially in relation to the prominence which is accorded to the idea of serial structure, along with recognizing the sense of temporality inherent to the beholders performative experience of viewing serial art. However, given the rather unambiguous and altogether precise mathematical understanding of series which most of these commentators allude to in one form or another, we can be forgiven for wondering why there is not far more cohesiveness with regard to what they all mean by *serial art*. Instead, what we see occurring within these various descriptions is how each commentator privileges their own interpretation of seriality in some way, which then influences the manner in which they interpret the works they select and analyse as paradigmatic examples of serial art.

In the case of Bochner, for example, we see how concepts like serial methodology and the fundamentally parsimonious, self-exhausting element to seriality are privileged over and above the question of what is pictured. For Coplans on the other hand, the importance of the self-exhausting element is removed, and replaced with the importance of the relationship between micro- and macro-structures for defining serial art: understandings which relate to 'a single indivisible process that links the internal structure of the work to that of other works within a differentiated whole'.¹ While there is undoubtedly a crossover between Coplans's 'single indivisible process' and Bochner's 'serial methodology', the ends towards which each is aimed differ quite considerably. Hence we have the explicit rebuke to Bochner from Coplans regarding the former's apparent lack of mathematical knowledge concerning Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order, while on the other hand the emphasis which

Bochner places upon the self-exhausting element can be seen as a brave attempt to formalize what he means by serial methodology: an act which also serves to reveal Coplans' decided lack of clarity in defining what a single indivisible process ought to look like.

For Mag Uidhir, the case is different again. Courtesy of a highly systematic and deductive process of analytical reasoning that works in part by simply disregarding all prior efforts, the focus moves from deciding what constitutes 'homogeneously serial' artworks to what constitutes 'strictly serial' artworks. In place of Bochner's and Coplans's interest in serial methodologies and serial structure, we find Mag Uidhir's gaze is directed firmly towards analysing what role a somewhat broadly defined 'art-relevant feature Φ ' might play in the constitution of serial meaning. Again, this approach contrasts somewhat with Dyer's interpretation, whereupon we observe how the conception of 'serial iteration' takes centre stage. Rather than focus on the underlying element of serial structure, Dyer's focus on iteration as a process of actualization is something which is alluded to in the other author's descriptions, yet without being unpacked by any of them to the same extent.

While there are many links across all of these attempted definitions of serial art, and while all are useful in different ways, there is nevertheless a feature of the discussion which appears to be unnoticed by all – all except for Young that is. What is passed over for comment by all except Young is the manner in which the concept of series constitutes a silent and withdrawn *background* condition, underpinning the beholders' direct aesthetic appreciation of the array of works they see before them. On Young's account, that which is explicitly foregrounded is the particular arrangement/sequence of works: the visible group of individual artworks that make up the serial artwork. But given as such a grouping, this array of elements appears in the structural form they do courtesy of the serial background: the rules or definitions of series which are silently implied and obliquely realized via the sense of seriality this unified art object conveys. In order to establish the conceptual nature of series which underpins the visible arrangement of individual works, we need to work backwards, as it were, and try to theoretically reverse engineer the structure of the serial object we perceive before us. In Young's Sartrean-inspired text, this idea is hinted at. Hence for Young, the concept of series comprises a withdrawn understanding: unlike the visible presence of the self-affirming group, Sartre's conception of the series as a 'practico-inert reality'² provides the structurally unified background from which different groupings of works can emerge. In this sense, seriality is not a completely visible condition: what is visible, understood in terms of what we are physically presented with, is an explicit sequence of works that mutually identify

with, and yet are differentiated from one another courtesy of the formal decisions which the artist has made. With the exception of Young, who unfortunately does not refer to either art or artworks, none of the other commentators outlined in the previous chapter explicitly recognize this withdrawn condition to either series or seriality. We on the other hand, very much wish to, not least because of the object-oriented approach that we elect to take.

With this in mind, the question which now arises is: How we are to proceed with analysing the notion of serial drawing if we adopt the idea that the concept of series constitutes a veiled and somewhat background condition underpinning the sense of seriality which a serial artwork conveys? In asking this question, we are aware of two things. First, we have to take account of the fact that, although the concept of series might silently withdraw behind whichever visible manifestation of serial art object is presented to the viewer, it is still able to affect that same viewers' understanding of the (serial) composition they behold, courtesy of the manifold structural possibilities which the very idea of series permits. And second, in view of the complex yet unified object which this description creates, we realize we are dealing with a type of art object that presents itself as a somewhat ontologically distributed understanding: one which is deeper than surface appearances alone would suggest, and so quite unlike any of the previous definitions of serial art so far offered. To be clear, in thinking of the serial art object in these terms we are thinking of an object which is spread out in time and distributed across space. The sense of seriality which is conveyed by this phenomenon indirectly reveals series to be a withdrawn background condition, yet one which has important work to do in simultaneously unifying and separating the visible, pluralized arrangement of units we see before us. Taking all this in hand, we realize we require a critical, object-oriented framework in order to help bring our thoughts together and think the nature of serial art object through, considering it in relation to drawing.

Object-oriented seriality

And so it is that we turn to examine Graham Harman's object-oriented philosophy, better known as object-oriented ontology, or OOO for short. Beginning life as a branch of the contemporary philosophical tradition known as Speculative Realism, OOO is now a philosophical movement much broader than Harman's initial manifestation, counting the likes of Timothy Morton, Levi Bryant and Jane Bennett as notable adherents. However, in philosophical terms,

Harman's OOO is the first and, arguably, the most worked out position among this group, with a lengthy publication output that discusses a range of topics within the aesthetically focused framework of OOO, and within which the topic of art stands out quite prominently. With this in mind, Harman's somewhat modular, multi-part framework underpinning the theoretical argument of OOO offers quite a number of conceptual tools for analysing serial drawing in the distributed, yet unified manner just outlined.

In the first instance there is a crossover of interest to both camps, wherein the object under consideration is conceived in fundamentally ontological terms, meaning as real as real can be. Within this conception, we find that the 'object' for OOO exists on the basis it is composed of two axes that overlap, where the overlap concerns the nature of the relationship between objects and their various qualities, coupled with the question of what appears as present and what remains withdrawn. Conceived in diagrammatic terms, each axis is given as an imaginary line that runs through the middle of two connected ideas, which Harman called poles within the context of OOO. Consequently, the two overlapping axes connect up to a total of four poles, thus producing the fourfold or 'quadruple object' which gives OOO both its framework and its name.³ The first axis operates according to a relationship which holds between the veiled (withdrawn) and the unveiled (visible). The second axis operates according to a relationship which holds between the singular and the plural, the one and the many. In the case of OOO, the first axis separates the real from the sensual, wherein the real concerns the manner in which the object is held to be fundamentally withdrawn from any form of direct access, while the sensual concerns those aspects of it which appear perceptible, understood in a more straightforwardly phenomenological sense. The second axis for OOO, between the singular and the plural, concerns the split between an object and its various qualities. On this account the object is understood to be a unified understanding, yet one that remains withdrawn from the numerous qualities which present it in visible terms, albeit in a rather distinctive fashion. In view of the crossover which is being suggested between the context of Harman's OOO and that of serial art/serial drawing, we will be analysing the serial art object according to a new interpretation of OOO, put together here. For the purposes of simplicity, we will name this understanding *object-oriented seriality*, or OOS for short. In producing this practical reinterpretation of Harman's philosophy, our object-oriented approach will use a modified version of the fourfold framework of OOO to actively reflect upon the nature of the serial art object, given in relation to drawing. To be even more specific, our approach will use this framework to

reflect upon the (serial) nature of the serial art object according to three tensions – *time*, *space* and *seriality*. These three tensions are produced via the interaction of the two axes just mentioned, plus the four poles which they contain.

However, as is perhaps already clear, there are layers of complexity to the philosophical framework of OOO, and they must be outlined properly before the kind of modification we are suggesting can stand any chance of making sense. Given it represents a conceptual framework for using the context of serial drawing to think through the nature of serial artworks as stand-alone art objects, OOS can only begin to sound coherent once the relevant aspects of Harman's argument are properly positioned in relation to our own. As a result, we will use this whole chapter to give a precis of the relevant features of Harman's OOO before showing how they have been modified to become OOS. More importantly, this process will show how treating an individual serial artwork as an 'object' in the manner allowed by OOO allows us to perform a number of tasks related to the above aims. In the first instance it will permit us to coherently discuss the withdrawn concept of series as an intrinsically real element of serial art, given it is partly responsible for the sense of seriality which the artwork engenders, yet without ever being explicitly seen as such. Although the conceptual understanding of how series constitutes a passive background condition is a Sartrean-inspired notion, emphasizing the withdrawn reality of this idea within the context of the serial art object is something that Harman's OOO can help to clarify further. Neither Young's thesis on gender as a social series nor Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason* is concerned with the discussion of art objects, much less in the serial manner we are interested in. While they both provide the starting point, we need to look towards Harman's philosophy to take things further.

To begin, we can look at an example of how the idea of withdrawal is discussed within the context of Harman's object-oriented philosophy, especially as it appears in relation to art. We are speaking here of the concept of *allure*. As we will see, allure is a term which Harman gives to the tension he elsewhere names space: this being just one example of the complexity which OOO contains. Allure is described by Steven Shaviro as 'the attraction of something that has retreated into its own depths.'⁴ It occurs when an object, such as an artwork, does not simply display particular qualities, but goes further, insinuating the existence of something deeper, hidden and unreachable – something which cannot be directly displayed, only indirectly implied. In the terminology of OOO, allure is involved in the relationship between the real object and its sensual qualities. Crucially, allure only occurs occasionally, courtesy of a process which Harman

calls fusion, on the basis that what is produced from their encounter is a new object. In *Guerrilla Metaphysics*, Harman states that allure 'occurs only in special experiences and seems to have something to do with separating the agent from its specific qualities'.⁵ For Harman, allure is related to both Kant's understanding of the sublime and the Kantian understanding of beauty. Although OOO appears to many (Shaviri included) to have a stronger affinity with the Kantian sublime, OOO does not actually distinguish between them: as Harman says, 'the alluring real object always has features of both'.⁶

So, in broad terms, what has the OOO understanding of allure got to do with serial drawing? In short, some types of serial drawing, chiefly the non-pictorial, minimalist-themed variety, represent art objects which combine two unique features: the visible material and formal qualities inherent to drawing, coupled with a conceptual underpinning inherent to serial structure and order. The former is directly presented courtesy of the material choices which the artist makes and creates on the various surfaces that compose the serial artwork, while the latter is also decided by the artist, but as a conceptual understanding appears indirectly appreciated, meaning veiled or withdrawn. As we have seen from the descriptions in the previous chapter, both serial order and serial structure are generally appreciated in terms of being a method rather than a style.⁷ When considered as a method, we realize the understanding of such needs to be actively drawn out – interpreted – by the interested viewer, based on their direct aesthetic appreciation of the choices the artist has made. When it works, this combination is not only able to draw attention to the intriguingly distributed objecthood of the serial artwork, but also serves to introduce a sense of the infinite, or the sublime into the viewers appreciation of the arrangement they perceive, aided in no small part by the lack of anything which is pictured in clearly mimetic or representative terms. In other words, the infinite is not explicitly 'seen' or perceived in the group of abstract drawings which compose McClure's *The Simpsons: The Complete First Season*, but it is able to be intuited courtesy of the manner in which such works permit the withdrawn concept of series to be obliquely realized.

As we shall return to discuss, serial drawings which rely upon the stringent minimalist palette of repetitive linear forms reveal themselves to be the perfect vehicle to draw the viewers' attention towards ideas about the infinite or the sublime, courtesy of the sense of mathematical order which the structure of seriality alludes to, and the sense of linear and endless precision which the drawn line evokes. Unlike the serial silkscreens of Warhol, or Monet's serial paintings of Haystacks or Cathedrals, minimalist-inspired serial drawings

produced by the likes of Jill Baroff, Hanne Darboven or Ellsworth Kelly present themselves as quite particular combinations of formally restricted, cleanly arranged foreground and conceptually withdrawn, yet resoundingly deep background. This combination serves to present an uncanny suggestion of situated vastness to the viewer. Whether or not the beholder of such works is in possession of a working mathematical knowledge of Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order is beside the point: when successful, what certain serial drawings are capable of achieving is to translate alluring ideas about time and space across to the beholder via the sublime performance which the act of seeing serially involves.

Undermining and overmining

In order to proceed with shaping the tools of OOO to fit our demands vis-à-vis the development of OOS, we require a preliminary understanding of the relevant elements of Harman's OOO. This effort will serve as a brief introduction for the reader who is unfamiliar with OOO, but more importantly, it will lay out exactly how the fourfold framework of OOS is developed, and how this maps across to the domain of serial drawing, treated as a particular example of serial art. In the first instance, we need a more precise understanding of how the serial art object qualifies as being an 'object' according to the terms of OOO. As physical structures which are quite often observed to hang in a row upon a gallery wall, the unified 'thingliness' of serial artworks can be hard for viewers to quantify, even without taking an explicitly metaphysical approach. For example, one question which often comes up in the case of serially developed works is: Where exactly is *the* work? In other words, where exactly does a serial artwork begin and end, especially if the series of elements which compose it are described as being unfinished or open-ended somehow? Does the empty space between each individual canvas, drawing or photograph within a series of works count as part of the artwork? What about the theoretical nature of series which we have just proposed: How does this concept (or concepts) manage to simultaneously remain unseen in the background of each work, yet become obliquely manifest when the visible array of artworks are perceived to be unified? Is 'background' merely a figurative term? What about 'withdrawn' or 'veiled'? We can tackle some of these questions by working through Harman's OOO in stages, starting with the question of what counts as an object for OOO. As Harman states in the opening pages of *Art and Objects*:

For the object-oriented thinker, anything – including events and performances – can count as an object as long it meets two simple criteria: (a) irreducibility downward to its components and (b) irreducibility upwards to its effects. These two types of reduction are known in OOO as ‘undermining’ and ‘overmining’, while their combination – which happens more often than not – is called ‘duomining’.⁸

Given the exceptionally large universe of things, events, beings and entities that can seemingly qualify as being an object for OOO on the basis of these two simple criteria, the problem of how to account for the serial artwork in object-oriented terms would appear to be resolved almost as soon as it had appeared. However, this is only the beginning of the story as far as the development of OOS is concerned. By paying closer attention to the specifics of these two criteria, labelled ‘undermining’ and ‘overmining’ respectively, we start to notice something else; namely how the descriptions of serial art given in the previous chapter, where each commentator tried hard to define what counts as serial art, all appear as examples of either undermining, overmining or duomining. This is less of an explicit criticism of these authors so much as an observation based upon the implications of adopting OOO’s realist stance. For OOO, objects are considered to be fundamentally withdrawn, which means they cannot be exhausted through the kind of deductive description which these commentators all adopt, or even known in any sort of literal manner. This is how the question of serial artworks will be approached from this point on.

As Harman says, when somebody asks is what something is, ‘we can answer either by telling them what the thing is made of (undermining), what it does (overmining), or both at once (duomining)’.⁹ In place of these two positions, the flat ontology which Harman presents offers something else: the hope that the reader will come to ‘recognize the parallel existence of forms of cognition *without* knowledge that somehow bring objects into focus, despite not reducing them in either of the two mining directions’.¹⁰ Although the meaning of this striking claim needs some further work in order to become better understood, it is based upon Harman’s contention that aesthetics, rather than science, is the central discipline of philosophy: a point which is in turn predicated upon Harman’s interpretation of the Socratic idea, *philosophia*, as meaning love of wisdom, not wisdom itself. As Harman says, ‘There is no passage in Plato’s Dialogues in which Socrates claims to have attained knowledge, though there are several in which he openly declares he knows nothing’.¹¹ This is a really decisive point for Harman, given that it links his philosophy with art, in the sense that both are considered to be cognitive activities without being literal forms of knowledge.

It is also why aesthetics rather than science is considered to be first philosophy for OOO,¹² wherein objects, much like artworks, are considered to be that which remain fundamentally ‘unparaphrasable in terms of qualities’.¹³

Duoming

With this in mind, we can briefly examine how undermining, overmining and duoming are applicable in some of the definitions of serial art previously outlined, before moving to indicate how the OOS approach taken here intends to be different. For example, in the case of Bochner’s analysis of serial art, we find examples of both overmining and undermining. In *The Serial Attitude*, Bochner describes how such an attitude is fundamentally a concern with ‘how order of a specific type is manifest’.¹⁴ Here we find ourselves presented with the unambiguous claim that serial ‘order’ is the central element of importance, deemed closest to the true understanding of seriality, setting it over and above the material, physical and experiential qualities of the artwork in which it appears. Indeed, when we read Bochner state that ‘order takes precedence over the execution’, we are left in no doubt that the particular way in which the serial artwork is created and brought to life is secondary to the underlying reality of the order which seemingly allows it to appear as it does in the first place. Whether or not this claim is true is beside the point: by presenting the concept of serial order rather than the art object as the basic underpinning to seriality, Bochner effectively undermines the understanding of serial art in OOO terms. If, as Harman says, undermining strategies are all ‘versions of reductionism in which objects only gain their reality from elsewhere’,¹⁵ then claiming the serial art object only gains its reality from being a type of order made manifest surely counts as a strategy which reduces the serial art object accordingly.

However, if we pay attention to the title of Bochner’s article, we realize that the opposite strategy is also in play. Taken as it appears, Bochner’s ‘serial attitude’ is an idea which is prized as being of central importance to the understanding of serial art. As used within the article, serial attitude appears to refer to the attitude of the creator of serial artworks, the beholder or both: the question of whose attitude is counted as being serial is not really clarified by Bochner. But it doesn’t need to be. Taking an OOO approach, we understand that ‘attitude’ refers to the *effect* of serial art (what something does) rather than what it is made of. This must surely count as an example of overmining, wherein the withdrawn reality of the serial art object is passed over in favour of the serial experience

which the subject encounters. Taken together, it now seems as if Bochner has taken a duoming approach. Rather than represent anything abnormal, this approach is actually surprisingly common. For example, in the case of Coplans's *Serial Imagery* we also find examples of overmining and undermining, although the elements of importance are differently arranged. Rather than emphasize the topic of serial order, Coplans counts serial structure as being of fundamental importance, with the idea of macro-structure being perhaps the most heavily prized of all. As Coplans states, 'central to Serial Imagery ... is the controlling influence of the macro-structure, within which (provided the parameters are systematically observed) a high degree of randomness in the use of infra-forms is possible'.¹⁶ While we can choose to linger on the finer points of this notion, wherein the relative utility and the perceived randomness of 'infra-forms' might come up for further discussion, what is clearly not up for debate in Coplans's assessment is the fact that all successful examples of Serial Imagery are founded upon Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order, and the notion of serial structure which it entails. As is perhaps clear by now, this strategy is one that essentially undermines the serial art object by reducing it down to a base reality that is fundamentally mathematical in scope.

Yet, as with the case of Bochner, we also find Coplans practises something of a duoming strategy, given that his discussion also pursues things in the opposite direction, emphasising the importance of temporal effects to the viewers constitution of serial meaning. Although Coplans's concerns about time are often raised in relation to the concept of the continuum, such concerns are fundamentally related to the beholders temporal experience: in other words, the durational effect which the mathematically inspired serial structure has on those who view serial works. By claiming that the structure of certain works exhibits a 'time-flow'¹⁷ which can be compressed or even reversed according to the underlying structure, Coplans pushes forward the idea that the true sense of the serial art object is grasped in the way in which the beholder's sense of time is affected by becoming relativized to some degree. While this claim is not in itself considered to be false – the viewers sense of time is indeed affected by the form of serial structures – it takes no account of the idea that there might be a veiled autonomy to the artwork: one that, in OOO terms, remains fundamentally withdrawn from both the beholder and the context in which the artwork appears.

To be precise, within the context of OOO, the understanding of the object withdraws to take up a somewhat mezzanine stance, as it were, situated somewhere between undermining and overmining as understandings. Indeed,

in Harman's writings we often find that the object locates a third position, one that is situated between the undermining stance associated with mathematical and scientific knowledge, and the overmining stance associated with knowledge as it is appreciated within the humanities. Harman describes how to understand this mid-position in *The Third Table*.¹⁸ Using the parable of the 'two tables' given by the physicist Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington,¹⁹ Harman provides a compelling account of how art and OOO are intertwined. The parable given by Eddington describes a single table according to two understandings: the table as physics understands it, composed of atomic particles and empty space, and the familiar table of everyday life. As far as Eddington the scientist is concerned, only the first table, the table for physics, is the real table, although he recognizes that the second cannot be effaced.

However, Harman takes an entirely different tack through this idea. As far as the workings of OOO are concerned, neither of Eddington's two tables are the real table. For Harman, Eddington's second table stands as an emblematic example of undermining, given it willingly reduces the reality of the table to its subatomic underpinnings, while those who remained concerned only with the everyday table present an example of overmining, whereupon the table is considered to be nothing more than the sum of its effects on those who use it. What is posited by Harman instead is a third table, one which appears at a point between these two tables, metaphorically speaking. Indeed, this third table is the only real table as far as OOO is concerned. The third table is an entity that, as Harman says, '*emerges* as something distinct from its own components and also *withdraws* behind all its external effects'.²⁰ It is neither the table we see, nor is it the table we use. Instead, for OOO the real table is that which constitutes a genuine reality deeper than any theoretical or practical encounter we can have with it, or again, any other object for that matter – the kind of interaction which humans can have with the table is not considered to be any more or less special for OOO than the interaction which any other object can have with it. This anti-anthropological stance is perhaps one of better-known tenets of OOO, although, within the context of our art-oriented discussion, the way in which OOO sets about decentring the human from the Kantian centre of proceedings is of little relevance, for the simple reason that an artwork requires a (human) beholder in order to be what it is.

However, what comes next is perhaps the most important aspect of OOO from our perspective, and which feeds into the understanding of OOS. As Harman says, by locating the third table in a, 'space between the "table" as particles and the "table" in its effects on humans, we have apparently found a table that

can be verified in no way at all'.²¹ Far from being a problem, for Harman, the apparent lack of knowledge we can have regarding this third table is precisely the issue at stake. Referring back to Socratic manner in which Harman interprets *philosophia* to mean love of wisdom rather than wisdom itself, Harman declares that the real is something which can only be loved, rather than known. This does not mean that access to the real table of OOO is impossible: quite the contrary. Rather than offer us a seemingly direct form of access to the true nature of things in the manner of the sciences, what OOO offers is the claim that there is only an indirect form of access to the withdrawn object. An indirect relation of which the serial art object is an example *par excellence*.

The quadruple object

With the foregoing outline of how undermining and overmining relate to the object-oriented approach, we now move to summarize the connected points of OOO as a philosophical argument, prior to presenting our modifications to it. First, we require an overview of how the 'quadruple object' which underpins OOO is understood as a framework for thinking about the nature of objects, and how it operates as a four-sided structural understanding which works towards that end. This preamble is required because we intend to constructively use this four-sided philosophical framework to develop a modified, OOS version: one that can examine serial artworks, and serial drawings specifically. Aside from being a novel approach in and of itself, there are a couple of further benefits to using Harman's particular toolkit as our guide. In the first instance, the quadruple structure of OOO allows us to account for the withdrawn aspect of series in a manner that none of the commentators detailed in the previous chapter manage. Harman's OOO not only clears a place at the table for such a withdrawn conception of series to function, but it does so in manner that allows further insights to be brought to bear about the nature of seriality to emerge.

For Harman, the object is what is left for philosophy to consider once strategies of undermining and overmining have been identified and found wanting. Much like the Aristotelian theory of substance which famously raised the status and importance of specific entities, Harman's object-oriented philosophy is concerned with the 'duals underway in the heart of objects themselves: between an individual cat and its fleeting accidental features, or even between that cat and its essential qualities'.²² To that end, OOO hinges on those two major axes of division we earlier introduced: the veiled and the unveiled, the singular and

the plural. The relationship of these two axes to one another is important, given they produce the four-sided structure which gives OOO its name. The first axis concerns the difference between what Harman refers to as ‘the *withdrawal* or *withholding* of objects. A hammer or candle is present to us, and yet they are also more than what is present to us.’²³ Closely related to the Kantian rift between noumena and phenomena (and also the Heideggerian division between ready-to-hand and present-at-hand), OOO extends the division far beyond the human realm to cover the way in which all things, everywhere and anywhere, are partly withdrawn from all other things. The second axis concerns the connection between objects and their qualities: a nominally tight-fitting bond that Harman treats as being unusually loose. This second axis is often forgotten by critics and adherents of OOO alike, although it is important to include if one wishes to modify the fourfold structure of OOO for one’s own purposes. It asks us to take seriously the Husserlian manner in which objects are appreciated to be unified entities, deeper than their shifting, surface attributes. When these two axes are brought together, they ‘yield a fourfold structure that OOO employs as a framework for illuminating everything that happens in the cosmos, whether in art or elsewhere.’²⁴ While a bold claim of this nature might ordinarily be considered a trifle grand, this is not the relevant forum to try and defend the veracity of it, in metaphysical terms or otherwise. Instead, we simply take note of it, given we are looking only for a coherent way to do as Harman suggests and *use* the framework of OOO in order to develop OOS as a modified version, and so illuminate how to understand the nature of serial drawing in object-oriented terms.

With the above in mind, we can now move to identifying the relevant points of the fourfold structure for OOO, according to the four poles that belong to the two axes, two poles apiece. These four poles are named, in no particular order, as sensual object, sensual qualities, real qualities, real object. Before we proceed in describing them however, it is worth emphasizing one final point, both in light of our own serially oriented argument and to clear up any potential confusion among readers not familiar with OOO: the fourfold structure of two axes that constitutes Harman’s ‘quadruple object’ refers explicitly *to one and the same object*. We are not dealing here with four different objects that join up to form a singular-looking quintet. While it can be used to reflect on all sorts of things, the quadruple framework which underpins OOO does so by referring to one thing: one object, not four. Indeed, as far as Harman’s theoretical position makes us aware, the fourfold structure of OOO is replicated in every sort of thing that can be understood as an object, including a serially produced artwork. This understanding is not the same for all object-oriented philosophers,

however. For example, the position espoused by Timothy Morton works partly by critiquing Harman's own approach, on the basis that withdrawal for Morton expressly doesn't mean 'that in every object there are, say, subsections 1, 2 and 3 and then Mystery Subsection 4 (the withdrawn section)'.²⁵ But for Harman, and by extension, for us, the fourfold structure of OOO is vitally important, which means comprehending how the terms within it interrelate in a unified manner is also important to clarify. As he says:

Given that we are talking about a fourfold structure *within* objects rather than four separate kinds of them, the four terms must be unified in the life of every object, and must therefore be related in some manner.²⁶

In describing the four poles of OOO and the four-sided structure which they produce, Harman also takes pains to describe how they interrelate: via a set of four tensions that connect the four poles together in four pairs. Although including the idea of tension as an additional conceptual layer might sound like we are making things rather unnecessarily complex, we do so partly on the basis of the evocative sounding names which Harman gives these four tensions, namely *time*, *space*, *eidos* and *essence*. In short, these names appear of great interest for us to consider in relation to the context of our own argument, and so the effort to describe how tension is understood within OOO is necessary to undertake before we migrate some of them across. As earlier indicated, within our modified version of Harman's framework (OOS) we will be looking to use the four poles of OOO to outline the nature of serial art but doing so according to only three tensions: *time*, *space* and *seriality*, the last being our replacement term for Harman's *eidos*. Without an understanding of how the four poles of OOO interrelate via the topic of tension, it will be difficult to sensibly articulate how and why Harman's philosophy has been modified according to our serially proscribed ends.

Four poles within OOO: sensual object, sensual qualities, real qualities, real object

To describe the fourfold structure of OOO, Harman often begins his books by outlining the influence of Edmund Husserl on his thinking vis-à-vis the first three poles – sensual object, sensual qualities and real qualities – before moving to outline the Heideggerian influence on the fourth, the real object, given as the most fundamentally withdrawn of them all. Without wishing to excessively

reiterate what has been said elsewhere, we will follow a similar path here, with the addition that we will describe all four poles in relation to a single artwork, in order to help the unfamiliar reader position these ideas. For no other reason than it constitutes one of the authors favourite artworks, we will use William Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea* (1819–20), to consider Harman's ideas in initial terms. Once the fourfold framework of OOO is outlined accordingly, we will move to discuss OOS, our modified version of OOO, in relation to another quite singular artwork, albeit one that appears in a rather distinctive serial form, namely William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (1734). While both artworks are used purely for illustrative purposes, aiding comprehension of what might otherwise remain a rather abstract sounding metaphysics, the ideas we unpack using them have a strong bearing on our argument related to serial drawing going forward.

Harman's idea of the sensual object emerges wholly from within the phenomenology of Husserl, wherein these objects are termed intentional objects. As with Husserl's intentional objects, Harman's sensual objects concern the phenomenological manner in which all types of object appear in the world, but whereupon especial emphasis is placed upon the unified manner in which such objects appear. Again, within OOO the term 'object' is more or less synonymous with thing and entity, on the basis these terms also denote that which is considered to be unified within itself as a discrete understanding. Like Harman, we place an emphasis on the term 'unified' because both Husserl's intentional objects and Harman's sensual objects come with a shared, defining characteristic; namely in being unified, both kinds of object exhibit a range of qualities of their own: what Harman calls sensual qualities. While such a straightforward idea may not initially raise many eyebrows, when followed through it does lead to the rather intriguing realization that such sensual qualities are somehow *not* identical with the sensual object they belong to, suggesting there exists a division of sorts between them. Harman explains this fascinating rift as follows:

The trees and blackbirds we encounter are not detailed presentations of specific bundles of qualities before the mind. Instead, intentional objects have a unified essential core surrounded by swirling surface of accidents.²⁷

As is perhaps clear for readers familiar with Husserlian phenomenology, sensual is in fact no more or less than Harman's replacement term for the 'antiseptic sterility' of Husserl's term 'intentional', which in turn indicates the concept of intentionality that underpins Husserlian philosophy.²⁸ As Dermot Moran and Joseph Cohen testify, Husserlian 'intentionality can be described as the, "aboutness" or "directedness" of our conscious states.'²⁹ As a realist,



Figure 1 William Blake, *The Ghost of a Flea*, c.1819–20 (tempera on mahogany), © Tate.

object-oriented philosopher however, Harman harbours an obvious disdain for the perceived idealism of Husserl, and so the focus on intentionality is dropped within the context of OOO, as is Husserl's focus on consciousness. Important to note within the context of our discussion is that Husserl's intentional objects are grasped via the specific profiles they present to us, a point to which

Harman emphatically agrees, despite his reluctance to discuss it by retreating within the idea of the subject. Husserl calls these specific profiles *Abschattung* (adumbration). This realization is itself the outcome of accepting the rift which lies at the heart of the phenomenal realm and observing how it can be acknowledged in almost any sort of phenomenological analysis of intentional objects, including Harman's own.

For example, let's say a keen visitor attends the recent William Blake exhibition at Tate Britain with the express aim of seeking out *The Ghost of a Flea* (1819–20), one of Blake's famous 'visionary heads'. Using the exhibition guide, the visitor threads their way through the various crowded gallery rooms until they turn a corner and spy this small work, hung across from them on an opposite wall. Painted in egg tempera and gold, *The Ghost of a Flea* depicts a nightmarish, scaly creature standing on a rudimentary stage with its tongue poking out, with what appears to be a tiny image of a flea sitting on the boards between its feet. As they can see from looking down at the image of the work printed in the exhibition guide, the creature Blake depicts also appears to be holding a bizarre-looking cup with one long fingered hand, while its other curls up behind it, all of which is surrounded by a small number of gold stars. But this level of detail is not what the visitor sees as they enter the crowded gallery space in which the work is hung. On the contrary, the painting itself is far too compact, dark and mottled in appearance for that, plus there are too many gallery visitors milling around, partially obscuring their view. Instead, the painting appears to them via a series of glimpses, each of which provides incrementally more information as they approach it. At first, they only perceive the silhouette of the painted Ghost, coupled with a quick recognition of the small size of the framed piece (38cm x 32cm). But as they move across the room towards it they perceive more details, albeit seen from a number of different angles as they weave their way through the crowd – one glance reveals the curtains which hang down to either side of the creature, while another catches a flash of gold as the gallery lights reflect gently off the oily surface. Finally they arrive in front of the work and bend down to look at it full in the face.

However, despite the fact that this painting slowly reveals itself via series of such glimpses, at no point did this viewer think that what they were presented with was a series of 'different' paintings. As a unified object, it is patently clear that this is the *same* painting seen under different profiles: different adumbrations, to use the Husserlian term. Although it might be argued that such a series of glimpses do not account for the full image of the painting, we realize that even this full-frontal view, given as an adumbration, does not conclusively exhaust the

reality of this piece. For example, the visitor could return to view this painting later that same day, perhaps deciding to return when the Tate gallery is a bit emptier, or when they are in a better mood. On this second visit they would be able to see and approach the work more quickly and have more space in which to stand and peer at it. Yet they would neither be presented with an identical view to the one they encountered earlier, nor would they be presented with a view that – although richer in some respects – definitively reveals every possible aspect of this iconic work. As every art enthusiast knows, there will always be another occasion in which to visit one of their favourite public galleries in order to see one of their favourite artworks, perhaps encountering it hanging under a new set of lights in another room, or simply while they are in a different frame of mind, talking to a friend who has not seen it before: one who might even point out another aspect to it that has hitherto remained unseen.

The point of this imaginary excursion is to illustrate the relationship between the sensual object (*The Ghost of a Flea*) and the various sensual qualities through which it presents itself to those who choose to view it, be it on one occasion or across many. Although there are any number of other ways to describe the phenomenological nature of the sensual relationship between an object and its various profiles or qualities, it is one area where Harman and Husserl share a high degree of overlap, despite their differences in terminology and philosophical approach. To that end, the manner in which Harman describes the tension that occurs between the sensual object and its sensual qualities within the context of OOO is instructive, and ought to be referred to. We find it succinctly summarized in his characteristic prose in the following passage:

In all phenomenal experience, there is a tension between sensual objects and their sensual qualities. The ocean remains the same through its successive waves advance and recede. A Caribbean parrot retains its identity no matter what curses or threats it now utters in the Spanish language. The phenomenal world is not just an idealist sanctuary from the blows of harsh reality, but an active seismic zone where intentional objects grind slowly against their own qualities.³⁰

Moving now to discuss Harman's real qualities, the third pole within the fourfold structure of OOO, we find this is a term which references yet another Husserlian idea, one which is again subtly adjusted by Harman for active inclusion within the context of OOO. It refers to second rift within the phenomenal realm which Husserl spotted and unpacked, albeit in a more complex and conceptual manner. This second rift is that which holds between an object and its underlying real qualities, rather than the sensual ones which visibly appear on the surface. In Husserlian terms these features are described as eidetic traits, on the basis they

indicate the *eidos* of an object. For Husserl, these features can be intuited via something called the method of eidetic variation. Important to note is the way that both Husserl and Harman accept that, while such eidetic traits must surely exist, they do not present themselves directly before the beholder in the manner of visible surface attributes. As Harman says, 'Husserl makes it clear that the *eidos* of an object is incapable of sensual presence; we have access to it only through so called categorical intuition, such that only the work of the intellect delivers the *eidos*.'³¹ Interestingly, Harman disagrees with Husserl that such eidetic qualities can be directly or definitively known via any form of cognitive act – a forbearance on Harman's part which seemingly goes back to the manner in which he interprets Socratic *philosophia* to mean 'love of wisdom' rather than wisdom itself.

In terms of our Blakean example, we might ask how the real (eidetic) qualities of this piece might be deduced, or at least alluded to, given they cannot be accessed directly? Unfortunately, although he appears well aware of Husserl's methods, Harman offers few clues in his writing for how one may begin to search for the *eidos* of an object, in relation to OOO or otherwise. In order to understand a bit more about how real qualities can be deduced therefore, we need to turn back to Husserl's original idea, the method of eidetic variation, for a clue on how to proceed. In brief, eidetic variation or 'imaginative free variation' is central to Husserl's methodology for proceeding from the individual instance to the acquisition of essence via the use of the imagination. As Moran and Cohen succinctly explain, this process requires one to seek 'what is invariant across all possible variation'.³² What this means in practice is that one tries to imagine a series or sequence of possible examples – possible variations – of the thing under consideration, in order to search for that which cannot be varied without the thing/object ceasing to be what it is. That which cannot be varied is understood to be invariant, meaning important or essential in some way to the object under consideration.

In regard to Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea*, we can start by thinking about what elements are vital for making this art object the artwork that it is. As with all objects, there are clearly a multitude of possible candidates to choose from: the real qualities which belong to any object are as likely to be numerous than not. However, as this small tempera painting is first and foremost a picture, we might look first towards the pictorial elements, with the aim of imagining which of those present can be removed or altered before the work becomes unrecognizable as being *The Ghost of a Flea*. For example, there are four gold stars which are clearly visible in the painting, appearing two to either side of the

creature standing in the centre. If we were to imagine removing just one of these stars, it is not clear that the substance of work has been altered in any essential way – indeed, the fact of whether there are three or four visible gold stars around the creature does not seem all that consequential to the understanding of this piece. We can test this idea further by placing a series of eight imaginary versions of *The Ghost of a Flea* mentally ‘on parade’, as it were, wherein the first version has but one gold star, the last version has eight, and in each of the iterations between them entails an incremental increase of one star apiece. Despite these varied differences, we can still imagine ourselves presented with believable versions of this painting, almost as if Blake had decided to turn this tempera piece into a serial work. However, if we were to imagine entirely removing the image of the demonic creature stood proudly upon the stage, things become rather different. Assuming for the moment that this creature painted by Blake is in fact an image of the Ghost to which the title refers, we immediately realize that such a forceful change brings to our attention the fact that something altogether vital is now missing from this work: namely the image of the Ghost itself.

Nevertheless, this example scenario is tricky, because there are countless ways in which to modify an artwork in pictorial terms and yet still not quite identify those elements or qualities which may be essential to it in eidetic terms. On this note we ought to take note of Harman’s reticence in explicitly naming such, and say that, despite the drastic alteration outlined above, it is still not possible to know with absolute surety what counts as an eidetic (real) quality of such an object, while still adhering to the idea that as an object it must have some real qualities to make it what it is and not something else. It is on this basis that, for Harman, real qualities are fundamentally withdrawn from direct access: we can intuit their existence, but knowledge concerning them is neither direct nor absolute, meaning it can only be acquired in an indirect sense. In our thought game where we imaginatively removed the painted creature from Blake’s *The Ghost of a Flea*, we seem to have hit upon a pictorial element that is essential in some way to the understanding of the work, but perhaps there are those who might feel otherwise. After all, this object is an artwork, meaning a possible version minus the painted figure can indeed be imagined, and could perhaps even be considered just another variant. But therein lies the rub: an imagined version of this work in which the painted image of the Ghost is missing only works by underscoring its relationship to the original in which the image of Ghost is *not* missing. At any rate, it would seem that the painted image of the creature is rather important after all. We will soon return to the theme of real qualities discussed in relation to seriality, but for now we need to briefly examine

Harman's idea of the real object: the last of the four poles which make up the quadruple object of OOO.

For Harman, the real object is a fundamentally withdrawn yet unified understanding, akin to the Kantian thing-in-itself, Leibniz's monad without windows or the Lacanian Real. The concept is developed via Harman's rather unique reinterpretation of Heidegger's notion of *Zuhandenheit* (handiness, or readiness-to-hand), concerning the way in which useful things present themselves to us *as* useful, that is, as somewhat handy and withdrawn. Whilst a full overview of this important aspect of OOO would involve a good deal of complementary Heideggerian analysis, we need only indicate the salient features of it here. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger presented the world with his famous and rather novel analysis of tools, whereupon the hammer is described according to the way in which it appears as a useful tool, operating as such within a system of equipment: a network of utility. Within this account Heidegger tells us how it is that, in being useful, the hammer appears as ready-at-hand (*Zuhanden*) rather than present-to-hand (*Vorhanden*). For Heidegger, the most striking thing about the manner in which the hammer appears in this ready-to-hand fashion is how it 'withdraws, so to speak, in its character of handiness in order to be really handy'.³³ This Heideggerian account includes the proviso that we only really notice the withdrawal of such equipment when it *fails*, and which Heidegger indicates by way of the hammer breaking.

While Heidegger's tool-analysis has long prompted a range of interpretations from Heideggerian scholars, the more popular of which have tended to focus on a pragmatist reading concerning the purported relationship between praxis and theory, Harman stands himself completely apart from the fray, and uses this intriguing Heideggerian idea to achieve altogether different ends. In short, the *Zuhandenheit* manner in which Heidegger describes the manner in which objects fundamentally withdraw from conscious access is retained within Harman's OOO, although the erstwhile focus on utility is removed. Instead of disagreeing with Heidegger about the manner in which things withdraw from the domain of explicit human awareness, Harman agrees to such an extent that he dramatically extends the concept of *Zuhandenheit* to cover the domain of all objects, useful or not, human or otherwise. In short, for Harman everything that can be considered as an object is also considered to fundamentally withdraw from every other thing that can be considered as an object, thus presenting us with the speculative metaphysics that gives OOO its name. By presenting the Heideggerian division between ready-to-hand and present-at-hand as two of the basic modes of being for all classes of object, Harman's claim is that neither praxis

nor theory will ever exhaust the withdrawn reality of things. On the contrary, the full reality of things is never revealed, but only alluded to, given that 'the world itself is made of realities withdrawing from all conscious access'.³⁴

So, what does this rather dense, ontological understanding of the nature of objects mean in relation to our argument? It means that we follow Harman by agreeing that objects fundamentally withdraw, including objects like a serial artwork. It also means we accept that knowledge about this facet of objects can only ever be gained in an indirect sense: obliquely, rather than directly. Rather conveniently, the arts are for Harman the paradigmatic example of how to understand this idea, given the fact that discrete art objects cannot be explained away through verbal or written description, that is, they cannot be paraphrased, or presented in literal terms. As Harman explains:

How can we paraphrase Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* in discursive terminology without losing something crucial? If the best art critics write allusively and elliptically, this is not because they are 'facile mystics' or irrational frauds, but because their subject matter demands nothing less.³⁵

Considering this idea in relation to Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea*, we realize that the ontological reality of this object vis-à-vis being a singular and independent artwork remains fundamentally withdrawn, unable to be reached via any direct form of access. We can no more exhaust the reality of Blake's demonic creature by producing a careful and extensive list of all its pictorial attributes than we can by conducting an insightful-looking survey examining just how many art historians think the creature is likely to be a faithful rendition of the 'visionary head' which Blake supposedly saw one evening with his friends and used as the original model. In the first instance we would be undermining this work by reducing the reality of it down to being a set of physical properties, while in the other instance we would be overmining it, seeking to explain it away courtesy of its wider historical context. Considered as an object in OOO terms, the reality of Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea* is neither exhausted nor dissipated by being described in either direction, and so remains withdrawn.

Although the four poles of OOO have now been identified, there is still the pragmatic question of how they interact within one another to consider, via the topic of tension we highlighted earlier. Far from being a topic of secondary importance to our argument, a cursory understanding of how these four poles relate to one another is entirely necessary if the framework of OOO is to be sensibly modified in line with our own argument, and deployed in the form of OOS. Indeed, while the four poles provide the basic building blocks upon which

the metaphysics of OOO sit, it is only via cognizance of the various tensions which hold between them that the notions of *space*, *time* and *seriality* may be understood in relation to the object-oriented analysis of serial drawings which is to follow.

Four tensions within OOO: time, space, *eidos* and essence

We have already gained some idea that the four poles of OOO must somehow interrelate with one another in order for Harman's object-oriented philosophy to operate as a conceptual framework for thinking about the nature of things, serial artworks included. Given that all four poles describe a set of relations that refer to the same object, this framework must also account for the manner in which a single object (art or otherwise) is held to exist as a unified entity, both in relation to itself and in relation to other objects. As we have noted, the manner in which these four poles relate to one another is described by Harman according to the notion of tension. Tension for Harman implies 'simultaneous closeness and separation', and this succinctly describes the manner in which the object-poles and the quality-poles meet up within the framework of OOO.³⁶

The first tension which arises within the fourfold structure of OOO is the tension that Husserl identified: that which holds between sensual objects and their sensual qualities. As Harman indicates, this tension is the major topic of Husserl's phenomenology: 'The simplest mailbox or tree remains the same unit for us over a certain period of time, despite the radiation of ever new profiles.'³⁷ This is the sensually derived tension we identified in the example of Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea*, whereupon we apprehended the artwork via series of glimpses that progressively uncovered more of it the closer we approached. The fact that this artwork constitutes a singular entity when hung upon a wall does not diminish two facts about it. First, we can never exhaust, or even apprehend, the entirety of it in one go – there always remains another angle or another side to this work that remains unseen from the angle of the present, a different mood under which we can encounter it, another light under which it can be lit and so on. Second, tacit acceptance of this fact does not mean that we are then deceived into thinking we are presented with a brand new 'object' vis-à-vis *The Ghost of a Flea* with each and every new view of it which appears. On the contrary, what the sensible viewer is aware of is that they are presented with the same object seen differently. This tension, between the sensual object and its sensual qualities, is the one that Harman labels *time*. It is worth mentioning here that the understanding of time which Harman is working with is the everyday variety,

whereupon time for OOO denotes the ‘remarkable interplay of stability and change’.³⁸ In advocating for time to be named as the tension which holds between sensual objects and their sensual qualities, Harman is asserting the durable unity of sensual objects above and beyond the plurality of sensual profiles which they sensibly present.

After this comes the second Husserlian-inspired tension: that which holds between the sensual object and the plurality of real qualities that the object needs in order to remain what it is from one moment to the next. As Harman says, real qualities are different from the shifting sensual qualities that present the current appearance of the object, because while these surface attributes can be altered, real qualities ‘cannot be stripped from the sensual object without destroying it’.³⁹ More to the point, for Harman such qualities are withdrawn ‘from all sensual access,’ which means that they are ‘limited to oblique approaches via the intellect’.⁴⁰ As posed within the context of OOO, we find that this withdrawn tension, holding between the sensual object and the real qualities, is labelled *eidos*, after Husserl’s understanding. However, while Husserl felt that such eidetic qualities could be intuited directly via the intellect, Harman disagrees, but he does so in a manner that signals some form of cognitive access to them is still possible, albeit of the theoretical, indirect variety. What does this mean in practice? Returning to consider Blake’s *The Ghost of a Flea*, Harman’s notion of *eidos* suggests that this piece must have a set of real qualities that belong to it, such that if they were to be removed the artwork would cease to be the artwork that it is. Given that such real qualities are considered to be withdrawn from direct access within the context of OOO, we simply agree with Harman for the time being that they cannot be known in a direct sense. Rather, they must be intuited, courtesy of a theoretical understanding which is retrospectively applied. It is on this basis that the concept of *series* is incorporated in OOS, as we shall see.

The third tension that Harman notes is between real objects and their sensual qualities, as identified in Heidegger’s tool-analysis. As Harman describes, in Heideggerian terms the tension between real objects and sensual qualities can be appreciated on the basis that ‘the withdrawn or subterranean hammer is a concealed unit, but one that emits sensual qualities into the phenomenal sphere’.⁴¹ Although this intriguing re-interpretation of Heidegger is Harman’s own, what appears even more fascinating from our angle is the name which Harman gives this tension: *space*. How is space conceived within the context of OOO according to this Heideggerian re-reading? To begin with, Harman sets himself quite apart from the philosophical debate over whether space ought to be construed as a set of relations between things (relational), or whether it

constitutes an absolute container (non-relational). Instead, for Harman space is both relational and non-relational. Giving the example of sitting in his office in Cairo, Harman claims that, while he is not completely without relation to the Japanese city of Osaka – since in principle he can travel there any time he chooses – even if he did, and duly arrived to stand in its centre, he would not exhaust the reality of Osaka. Whatever set of sensual profiles/qualities/features the city displays during such a visit, even from up close, these will always differ from the real Osaka ‘that forever withdraws into the shadows of being.’ Harman describes this intriguing notion as follows:

This interplay of relation and non-relation is precisely what we mean when we speak of space, and in this respect Heidegger’s tool-analysis is actually about space, not about time as he wrongly contends. Space is the tension between concealed real objects and the sensual qualities associated with them.⁴²

Putting aside the details of this somewhat contentious claim concerning Heidegger, one of the things which is interesting from our perspective is the fact that Harman elects to disagree with Heidegger – one of Harman’s key intellectual guiding lights – and on a point related to Heidegger’s own basic philosophical reasoning no less. This is interesting because we also intend to behave in a similar manner to Harman by modifying certain elements within the framework of Harman’s OOO, in order to better fit the ideas of our own argument; namely by forging a link between the topic of seriality and that of *eidos* considered as tensions, replacing one term with the other. Before then, it is useful to clarify how this conception of space is understood in relation to *The Ghost of a Flea*. Proceeding on the aforementioned basis that space for OOO means that which is both relational and non-relational, we can suggest that space in the context of Blake’s piece refers to both the pictorial (metaphorical) illusion of space depicted within the work itself, coupled with the literal spatial limitations which are presented by the physical construction of the work. For the purposes of our argument, we can consider the pictorial illusion of space as the relational, while the second, physical understanding of space represents the non-relational.

To which comes the inevitable question: Why is the non-literal/metaphorical understanding of space given as relational, while the literal is given as non-relational? Well, in the first instance, described in pictorial terms what we see in Blake’s painting is the image of a scaly creature stood upon a rudimentary stage, with a set of curtains hanging down to either side. Although we can clearly see this peculiar scene, we cannot interact with the illusion of space it depicts in any sort of literal manner: we cannot physically ‘enter’ the canvas

and stride across the length of stage seen supporting the creature, for the simple reason that the space depicted therein is purely metaphorical. As a picture, it simply provides us with the representation of space, formed via the conjunction of certain rules of perspective with egg tempera, plus a number of fantasy elements drawn from Blake's rather active imagination. Given the evident lack of literal access, why is this understanding of space posited as the relational? Because of what is presented by this imagined scene as being the relation, albeit obliquely: namely the withdrawn real object, meaning the sunken reality of the artwork entitled *The Ghost of a Flea*. Just because we cannot find a direct route of access to this hidden real object does not mean we are not provided with an indirect relationship to it courtesy of the painted image which appears. On the contrary, as we the visitor have come to the Tate to view an iconic artwork and not simply a carefully arranged conglomeration of paint marks daubed upon a canvas, it is arguable that this withdrawn object is the only real thing we seek from our encounter. It is for this reason that interested visitors elect to peer within the image that Blake presents, hoping to gather a deeper understanding than that which appears upon the surface. Hence, the pictorial understanding of space indicates the relational aspect, because it denotes the oblique relationship that we the viewer have to the withdrawn reality of *The Ghost of a Flea*.

On the other hand, we can also step back to reflect on the physical properties of the work: an egg tempera covered structure upon which this invented scene appears as depicted, and whose spatial configurations can be measured exactly according to things like height, width, length and depth. Yet this physical understanding constitutes nothing more or less than the set of sensual qualities through which the sensual object presents itself to different viewers at different times. The nature of space which is entailed by this second, literal understanding is of the non-relational variety. Why is this? Because even if an enthusiastic Tate curator were to decide to don a pair of white cotton gloves and pick up the artwork in order to carefully inspect it right up close, thus considerably closing down the physical space between them, they would in fact get no closer to exhausting the withdrawn reality of Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea* than Harman would get to exhausting the reality of Osaka by taking a trip to Osaka Castle and sitting himself down on the castle garden steps.

There is one final tension within the fourfold structure of OOO which needs briefly mentioning before we proceed, although we only do so in an effort to be thorough, given that its conceptual scope lies somewhat outside the context of our human-oriented enquiry. This is the tension which Harman labels *essence*,

and which holds between the real object and its real qualities. Essence is that which Harman describes as constituting the ‘duel, underway in hidden real things, between the unified hidden real object and its multitude of hidden real features.’⁴³ While this sounds exciting enough, essence understood in OOO terms bears the unfortunate trait of ‘never being accessible to human experience’. We say unfortunate but that appellation is merely given from our art-oriented perspective, which requires a viewer. With this in mind, we elect to leave essence behind at the point it entered our discussion, and carry only three tensions – *time*, *space* and *eidos* – over into the next section. There they will emerge again from a modified understanding of Harman’s four poles, wherein each is tailored to better fit our argument, and so present us with the object-oriented approach towards seriality that gives OOS its name.

The serial object

Although the preceding account gives an overview of how Harman’s quadruple framework of OOO can be understood in relation to a clearly non-serial artwork, there remains the question of how this philosophy can be better applied to the discussion of a deliberately serial art object. In particular, what is required is a manner of repurposing Harman’s philosophy in such a way that the serial form of a singular artwork can be properly accounted for and analysed. In achieving this aim, the fourfold framework of OOS needs to do three things. First, it needs to be clear and consistent enough to be applied across a number of different serial drawings discussed in the following chapter. Second, it needs to be able to perform this task in such a way that not only remains consistent, but also flexible enough to allow for the different interpretations outlined in Chapter 1 to all play a part. Although each of these interpretations was found wanting in some way when considered as exhaustive definitions of series/seriality/serial art, this does not mean they cannot still be referred to at relevant points. And lastly, the framework of OOS needs to be able to operate in accordance with the withdrawn conception of series as it is identified in Young’s critical reappraisal of Sartre’s thesis.

Although this task may appear complex, there is in fact only one standout area of difference between the framework of Harman’s OOO and that of OOS which we ought to note briefly at this juncture, given we will return to unpack it in more detail. This concerns our decision to swap Harman’s term *eidos* for our own term ‘seriality’, used to describe the tension between the visible serial

art object and its withdrawn real qualities. This substitution means that, for OOS, seriality names the tension which holds between the unified serial art object the viewer perceives arrayed before them, and the underlying concept(s) of series which structure the serial understanding of the work, appreciated in an indirect, cognitive manner, yet without ever becoming nakedly present. By prising the terms seriality and series apart slightly, we are claiming that seriality names the way in which a set of underlying serial qualities are theoretically appreciated by the interested beholder as belonging to the serial artwork in question. Serial qualities are therefore considered to be real elements of the work, yet are impossible to pin down with absolute certainty. They are not visible in the same manner which pencil marks drawn upon a sheet of paper are perceived, nor do they appear in the same manner as that which a row or sequence of works literally appear, as counterintuitive as that sounds. However, while we agree with Harman that the real/eidetic qualities of an object can be never be known in either exhaustive or literal terms, we do wish to emphasize that the eidetic serial qualities of a serial artwork can at least be cognitively deduced to some extent, courtesy of whichever concept of series the beholder elects to apply.

And finally, an important point to note before we proceed: to say that seriality constitutes the tension between the visibility of the serial artwork and its real serial qualities is not to say that one understanding or another of series constitutes the only kind of real quality to such work. On the contrary, there must be many other kinds of real qualities which belong to an individual serial artwork in the withdrawn manner detailed by OOO. However, as we are focused upon understanding the veiled nature of series vis-à-vis the example of serial drawing, then we choose to set aside consideration of whatever other sorts of other real qualities may be inherent to a serial artwork other than those which are serially manifest.

Four poles within OOS: sensual object, sensual qualities, real qualities, real object

William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (1734) is perhaps one of the most widely known and admired of all Hogarth's works. Aside from the thematic subject which is indicated by the title, one of the reasons for its fame lies in the manner in which it appears: as a single artwork comprised of eight individual paintings, all which literally belong together, and all of which all relate in narrative terms to



Figure 2 William Hogarth, *The Heir*, 1734–5 (engraving), © Courtesy of the McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives.

the theme indicated by the title. Painted as a series of preparatory works with a view to becoming a set of eight engravings published in 1735, *A Rake's Progress* is the second *Progress* which Hogarth painted depicting 'modern moral subjects', coming directly after the success of *A Harlot's Progress* published a year earlier. The eight original paintings tell the story of Tom Rakewell, aka 'the rake', who is presented by Hogarth as a symbol for the loose morals and wayward depravity so beloved of eighteenth-century London. Indeed, the figure of the rake was linked firmly in the popular imagination of the time with the dissolute behaviour common to certain members of the gentry, and so the narrative connections which bound this series of eight works together would have been appreciated by all those who saw it upon its initial release, as was clearly Hogarth's intention.

However, although this serial artwork appears presented as a single work, each of the eight separate paintings which compose has in fact a separate title. Each of the eight titles accords in some way with what is pictured in each painting, on

the basis that each one depicts a different instance from the rake's progress. As one of Hogarth's moral modern subjects, what viewers are treated to in each step of this serial story is the passage of Tom Rakewell from riches to rags ... or more specifically, from riches to the madhouse, as Hogarth deftly indicates in painting number eight. According to the catalogue entry of Sir John Soane's Museum collection, which owns the series of eight paintings as a complete work, the full title of this eighth piece is *A Rake's Progress VIII: The Madhouse*. This work plus the other seven paintings which compose *A Rake's Progress* were bought in their entirety by Sir John Soane in 1802. Clearly, the intention has never been to break up the series, for the widespread recognition of it as a complete, unified and uniquely singular artwork has remained in place since the works initial reception. Although they are produced in order to enable widespread dissemination of the painted originals, the same goes for the engraved version of *A Rake's Progress*, especially when the series of eight engravings are exhibited together. Indeed, although there are now multiple versions of the engraved series in both the public and the private domain, when a set of them appear exhibited as a single series, they produce a sensual object: a unity of eight engravings which are perceived to belong together. We recall that, for both Harman and Husserl, sensual object describes the phenomenological manner in which objects appear in a distinctly unified manner within the world, albeit in a manner which is not simultaneously identical with any of the individual sensual qualities they exhibit. Hence the term 'unified' is just as important to understand in the context of OOS as it is in the context of OOO. The sensual unity of serial objects describes a way to both emphasize and distinguish the serial unity of *A Rake's Progress* over and above the unity which each of the eight individual works which compose it exhibit within themselves. While the individual unities of the eight works which make up *A Rake's Progress* are important to consider, within the context of OOS the term 'sensual object' refers only to the perceived unity of this larger object – the series of eight works taken as a whole, and from which the singular idea of the serial artwork is derived.

With this in mind, we make now a recommendation which is a bit more specific to the context of OOS, rather than Harman's OOO. When considering the serial art object as a distinct entity, the series of individual works which compose the serial artwork (the sensual object) are primarily considered in terms of their being the sensual qualities of that larger work. In other words, within the context of OOS, each of the eight works which make up *A Rake's Progress* is not considered in terms of being individual objects, but in terms of their being sensual qualities which belong to the sensual object known as

A Rake's Progress. Put into Husserlian terms, it means we are considering each of the eight works which makes up *A Rake's Progress* in terms of being a specific visible profile which reveals part of *A Rake's Progress*: an adumbration, each of which presents a side or profile of the intentional object named *A Rake's Progress*. Rather than present further problems, this modification actually aligns quite closely with the Husserlian rift between sensual objects and sensual qualities which Harman duly notes, and which underpins the visible elements of OOO. In short, what is being emphasised here is Husserl's/Harman's joint realization that sensual qualities are somehow not identical with the sensual object they belong to. This realization is vital for helping us to account for the way in which the eight individual works both belong to and yet are not identical with the serial art object named *A Rake's Progress*.

In experiential terms, we can try to understand the connection between these two poles – sensual object and sensual qualities – by describing another



Figure 3 William Hogarth, *The Orgy*, 1734–5 (engraving), © Courtesy of the McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives.

imaginary scenario involving a viewer and Hogarth's work. A visitor to the latest Hogarth exhibition at Sir John Soane's Museum in London arrives seeking to view *A Rake's Progress*. Upon entering the museum, they proceed upstairs to the Rear Gallery, where they are informed the work is installed, albeit in the form of the eight engravings, rather than the series of eight paintings, which are currently on loan elsewhere. Striding into this small room they find it mostly empty, and so congratulate themselves with the fact they are about to achieve a seemingly full and unobstructed view of the work, something which was denied the visitor to the Blake show at the Tate. However, the full work does not actually appear visible all in one go: far from it. Instead, what this intrepid visitor observes on their initial entry to this room is only the first two engravings of the series of eight, plus a glimpse of the third. The reason for this is simple enough – the eight framed works which compose the engraved version of *A Rake's Progress* are found to be hung along both sides of a mounted screen, erected in the centre of the room for this curatorially inspired purpose. Only by walking slowly around this screen and along each side is it revealed to the visitor that all eight engravings are hung one after the other, meaning that the full version of *A Rake's Progress* is indeed present in this room. In a not dissimilar manner to which Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea* was progressively uncovered via a series of glimpses, what the interested beholder of *A Rake's Progress* is presented with is also only a series of glimpses of the entire work, but where the glimpses take on a very different form: that of a number of individual engravings progressively uncovered upon entering a room, rather than parts of a single engraving seen all in one go.

To note this phenomenological difference is not to say that examining only one of the eight engravings would produce a substantively different analysis from the one generated by Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea*. On the contrary, in one sense, it would yield highly similar results, given that in both instances the individual engravings being considered are in fact only progressively encountered via a series of profiles seen in and over time. But in another, serially understood sense, things are very different. For even if we were somehow able to take in the entirety of just one of these eight engravings in a single glance – say, *A Rake's Progress I: The Heir* – we would in fact be no closer to comprehending the entirety of *A Rake's Progress* than if we had just seen a part of one of the eight works. An analogy for this would be like trying to comprehend the whole of *A Rake's Progress I: The Heir* if we had only noticed the particular manner in which Tom's leg is being measured up for a suit, all the while having totally omitted the weeping and angry women standing forlornly by his side. However, there is another point to add to this topic before we move on, and which sits somewhat

opposite to the one we have just made. When considering the eight individual engravings as a set of sensual qualities that both belong to, and also present, the serial art object named *A Rake's Progress*, we realize something else. Namely, that we do not need to see every single detail in each of these eight engravings, nor perhaps even to see all eight engravings, in order for us to grasp the identity of this particular serial art object. This realization takes us back to a point which Harman's makes about Husserl's intentional objects:

Intentional objects always appear in more specific fashion than necessary, frosted over with accidental features that can be removed without the object itself changing identity for us ... just as an apple is not the sum total of its red, slippery, cold, hard, and sweet features in any given moment, it is also not the sum total of angles and distances from which can be perceived.⁴⁴

As is perhaps also clear, another difference between OOO and OOS is that we do not follow Harman in claiming that the eight individual engravings which make up *A Rake's Progress* are somehow 'accidental features' of the serial art object. Indeed, it is not at all clear that sensual qualities of a sensual object ought to be described as accidental, given at the time of their appearing they are simply the qualities through which a thing is presented to our gaze. But this is a side issue: what matters is that we accept Harman's point that elements within each of the eight engravings can be changed or altered to some degree without affecting the identity of this serial work (vis-à-vis being *A Rake's Progress*), whilst denying the idea that they are somehow accidental, at least in terms of how they were conceived.

Also interesting to consider is the idea that some of the engravings which make up the series may be omitted entirely from the viewer's experience without destroying the perceived unity of *A Rake's Progress*. For example, we might suppose that the visitor to Sir John Soane's Museum does not manage to see engraving number seven, *The Prison*, as they wander around. Perhaps a group of other people was standing in front of this work at the moment they passed, blocking their view. Or perhaps they simply ran out of time and hurried by too quickly. Regardless of the reason, the question which can be asked is: Would they subsequently claim not to have seen *A Rake's Progress* because of this single omission? Whether the answer to this question is affirmative or not is beside the point. The fact that it can be sensibly asked is the issue at stake, for it points to the specific nature of serial art objects over non-serial ones. If the viewer to the Tate had not managed to actually see Blake's *The Ghost of a Flea*, or even a substantial part of it, then it is highly unlikely they would come away having felt that they had indeed seen this work. But the same is not quite the case for serial objects,

depending of course on the number of individual elements which make up a given series. For example, it is perfectly possible to imagine that the visitor to Sir John Soane's Museum could have been prevented from seeing *A Rake's Progress VII: The Prison*, and yet still feel that they had definitely seen *A Rake's Progress*, or at least enough of the series to confirm its identity in a multitude of ways.

Moving now to consider how real qualities are understood within the context of OOS, things shift again, although this time towards the background. As we previously outlined, within the context of OOS real qualities indicates the underlying concept of series, meaning series names the theoretically withdrawn eidos of a serial artwork. Indicating a set of real qualities that the serial artwork needs to possess in order to remain serial, series describes the way in which a serial work is structured in strictly serial terms. Most importantly, although these qualities are veiled somewhat, they remain underpinning the visible serial form in which the work appears even if they aren't properly understood by the viewer at that time. As Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order makes perfectly clear, the concept of series articulates numerical volumes far larger than the average viewer of artworks can sensibly entertain. But even without possession of such knowledge, what the interested viewer of Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* observes is a sequence of eight engravings hung in a row, each of which functions as belonging to the series as a whole. The sense of the whole (the sensual object) which the viewer detects is not derived solely from adding up the visible array of individual works which sustain it, but also by cognitively appreciating the underlying serial structure (real qualities) which unites them as a group – a task which is indirect and allusive, yet aided by having a viable conception of series to hand.

Hence our modification of Harman's OOO, object-oriented seriality (OOS): we are thinking of seriality in an object-oriented way, which is not quite the same way in which the topics of series, seriality and serial art are conceived elsewhere. That being said, this conception does accord with both Young's thinking on the topic of series, coupled with Harman's thoughts vis-à-vis the withdrawn status of real qualities. As Harman indicates, real qualities are those qualities which, although withdrawn, still concretely belong *to* the object in question: not in the swirling, encrusted sense in which surface qualities belong, but in an allusive manner which Harman describes by way of the term 'submergence'.⁴⁵ Like the way in which the submerged hull of a ship not only keeps the visible form of the ship afloat, but does so a manner that allows those on deck with the requisite knowledge to indirectly appreciate how the hull is configured, the submergence of series suggests a fully incorporated, yet withdrawn, set of serial qualities to the serial artwork. Presenting the idea of series as a set of real qualities not only



means such qualities quietly configure the visible form of the serial artwork, but that they do so in a manner that if they were removed, seriality would also dissipate as a tension evident within the work, meaning the artwork would cease to be the serial object that it is.

Note that using the term indirect or allusive means we do not need to specify in advance what definition of series the serial artwork ought to be fitted towards, especially when doing so means having to choose one overarching conception of series over others. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, doing so risks either undermining or overmining the serial artwork by seeking to explain it away based on a prior definition of what a series is, or what a series does. By contrast, putting series into the conceptual slot provided by Harman's real qualities means we render the topic as but one pole out of four: it fits into the fourfold framework we are calling OOS. This framework means we no longer need to try and explain the nature of serial artwork by recourse to the concept of series alone. Instead,

the serial artwork becomes an entity made up of the interaction between of these four poles that generates the three tensions *time*, *space* and *seriality*. Although Harman indicates real qualities cannot be known in any concrete sense, he does allow that they can be obliquely revealed to some limited extent via the work of theory. As he says:

To articulate what makes this particular parrot be what it is requires an analysis of real qualities that can only be hinted at allusively or obliquely by the intellect without ever becoming nakedly present.⁴⁶

Placed into our context, we interpret this statement to mean that (a) we do not require a prior definition of series to be decided upon in any indubitable or apodictic sense, but also (b) an appreciation of the real, serial qualities which underpin a particular work can still be alluded to courtesy of whichever theoretical conception of series seems to accord best with the work, decided according to the viewer's own sensibilities at the time in which it is viewed. Indeed, there is much to gain by interpreting a serial artwork according to aspects of the theories espoused by Bochner, Coplans, Mag Uidhir and Dyer, yet without needing to completely sign up to the positions espoused by any one of them to the exclusion of the others. For example, while it is true that, in Bochner's case, the idea of serial artwork is reduced to being fully synonymous with how various types of order are made manifest, or in Coplans's case, where serial art is reduced to being synonymous with a single indivisible structure/process that links together various other works within a differentiated whole, it is also true that both theories have valid applications in thinking about the serial nature of particular works. So too with Mag Uidhir's take on the topic, where the otherwise rather remorseless programme of deductive reasoning does provide a way to include works that might not fit too well into Bochner's and Coplans's remits. Likewise, with Dyer's emphasis upon serial iteration, and her concomitant decision to place series/seriality firmly in the role of being an experience for the viewer to engage with – a process of actualization without end.

With this in mind, we are moved to ask which of these conceptions might best accord with our current example, Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress*? Given the clearly narrative structure of this piece, not to mention the unashamedly pictorial attributes which Hogarth develops scene by scene, it is not clear that it would fit all too well into Bochner's conceptually oriented, minimalist-themed notion of serial art. But this seeming lack makes Bochner's stance all the more attractive to use, for no other reason than to reveal how slippery and indirect such sure-seeming definitions of series really are when inspected. As a reminder,

we can list again the three main points which Bochner put forward in *The Serial Attitude* as a means to define serial art:

1. The derivation of the terms or interior divisions of the work is by means of a numerical or otherwise systematically predetermined process (permutation, progression, rotation, reversal).
2. The order takes precedence over the execution.
3. The completed work is fundamentally parsimonious and systematically self-exhausting.⁴⁷

From this list, we could argue that Hogarth's piece is found wanting for inclusion in a number of ways. For example, Bochner's second point in particular stands out: it is far from clear that the order of eight individual engravings takes any sort of precedence over the manner in which Hogarth masterfully executes the tale of Tom Rakewell's demise with the aid of etching plate and needle. So too with the first point: it is far from clear that there ought to be only eight plates,



Figure 5 William Hogarth, *The Marriage*, 1734–5 (engraving), © Courtesy of the McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives.

eight scenes, in this series. It could perhaps have been twelve in number or even four. There is indeed a progression of sorts and some indication of a systematic or interior division to the piece. But we certainly cannot pretend to derive the precise origins of these in any sort of numerical sense from the work in the form in which it appears.

But then we pay attention to Bochner's third point and things change somewhat. At first, it seems as though this work is doomed to fall again outside Bochner's rather proscriptive definition of serial art, given the edict that the completed work ought to be 'fundamentally parsimonious and systematically self-exhausting'. But if we pay attention to the content of what is presented within *A Rake's Progress*, we can start to see the particular kind of seriality which emerges courtesy of the way in which Bochner's definition of series is deployed. In short, what we see pictured across these eight engravings is a sequence of events telling the story of a man's dissolute life, charting a moral arc from the point at which he inherits his fortune, and seems all set to enter the splendidly wealthy world of the aristocracy (*I: The Heir*), through to the point at which he has gambled it all away and finds himself locked up in the madhouse, serving as a source of pity and even entertainment to those same aristocrats he had hoped to emulate (*VIII: The Madhouse*). If the purpose of Hogarth's work was to serve as a modern moral subject, whereupon the very point of this tale is to chart the path of a man's destruction as he passes from riches to rags, then we have to ask: What sort of narrative sequence or series of events could be more self-exhausting than that? There is no avoiding the end result of this particular tale of woe for Tom Rakewell: he and his dependants are doomed to misery. Even if we were to alter some of the sensual qualities through which the sensual object is presented, the submerged serial framework would need to retain a similarly self-exhausting quality in order for this work to remain true to itself.

For example, we could replace the tavern in which Tom is seen carousing while drunk (*III: The Orgy*) with a similarly debauched scene in an opium den. Or we could opt to omit altogether his sham marriage to the heiress (*V: The Marriage*) and replace it with another invented scene, albeit one where he still ignores faithful Sarah, the mother of his child, in some other dreadful way. But in the process of imagining such changes, what becomes evident the longer one looks at Hogarth's serial artwork is just how essential the underlying points of the story arc are to the structure of the series, yet how the precise nature of these narrative points simultaneously withdraws from direct view. We can change or modify the current pictorial form and even the number of etchings (sensual qualities) through which this tale of woe is told, and through which *A Rake's*

Progress (sensual object) appears in the manner in which it does, but what we cannot alter without destroying the piece is the serialized arc of despair which underpins the work: those real qualities which make the work the artwork that it is. Although they are obliquely appreciated, they remain absolutely integral to preserving the moral of the story as it is told.

Finally we turn to examine how the real object is understood within the context of OOS. This pole is understood in much the same way as it was described in the previous section, albeit with some small modifications relevant to our enquiry, aided by way of Harman's recent discussion of art and OOO. To recap: the real object is considered to be fundamentally withdrawn within the context of OOO and also within OOS. As the real object is considered to be essentially absent from the scene, it means there is no form of direct or literal access to it. While Heidegger's *Zuhandenheit* provides Harman with the initial ontological framework for developing this idea, it doesn't on its own provide those of us who are looking to use this concept in relation to art with much in the way of guidance. After all, what can one do with an element which is considered to be fundamentally withdrawn from all forms of access? Fortunately, this is precisely the area where Harman offers a helpful degree of development in *Art and Objects*, pursuing the topic of the real object as it is understood in relation to art via a discourse on the topic of metaphor. As a full discussion of the role of metaphor within the context of art would take us too far from our path at this point, we need only give a brief account of Harman's use of it here.

In short, we find that within the context of thinking about how artworks are appreciated, Harman posits it is the viewer of artworks who steps in to replace the missing real object, given that, as human beholders, they also constitute being a form of real object within themselves. As viewers of artworks, they manage to achieve this feat courtesy of the performative manner in which Harman holds metaphor to operate. The thinking goes that they, as beholders of the artwork, are in effect called upon to join (fuse) with the artwork, and so perform the role of the missing real object, thereby creating a third and higher object, formed from the fusing of the two.⁴⁸ While we can put aside the rather sparkling Husserlian-inspired metaphysics of this idea, we note that this performance is understood by Harman in an aesthetic sense, akin to the manner in which a method actor steps forward to play out the role which they are assigned.⁴⁹ In more general terms, we can say that all forms of non-literal representation work as forms of metaphor. Taken in a literal sense, etching lines appear to be just that: lines etched in ink which sit upon a paper surface. Only in metaphorical terms do they 'stand in' for figures like Tom Rakewell by portraying the likeness of such, accurately or

otherwise. Within the context of OOO, the viewer is invited to step forward and performatively replace the missing real object precisely on the basis of how Harman feels metaphors work; that is, by deliberately leaving something out, but done in such a way that the nature of what is missing invites the reader/viewer/ beholder in. While there may be those who disagree with this interpretation of metaphor, we can certainly say that drawing, famed for the manner in which it combines the act of selection with the art of omission, works in a similar way.

It is this performative role granted to the topic of metaphor by Harman which points to how allure is understood within the context of OOO, building upon the way in which the real object is conceived as withdrawn in Heideggerian terms. Intriguingly, allure is held by Harman to be the basis of all art, given it concerns the tension which occurs between a missing real object and its sensual qualities.⁵⁰ As observant readers will perhaps now realize, this tension is in fact the same one that Harman also labels space. The reasons for why they both name the same tension are complex, but for the purposes of our argument we can clarify it



Figure 6 William Hogarth, *The Madhouse*, 1734–5 (engraving), © Courtesy of the McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives.

is connected with another pair of concepts used within the framework of OOO, namely fission and fusion. Harman names allure as being the general term for 'the fusion of withdrawn real objects with accessible surface qualities', and which occurs in 'artworks of every sort'.⁵¹ To give a brief synopsis of how space and fusion are linked in this context, we can refer to another rather succinct quote from Harman:

Space was described as the tension between real objects that lie beyond access, and their sensual qualities which exist only when encountered. Whereas sensual objects are conjoined with their qualities in advance, such that fission between the poles is required, the real object is absent from the sensual field; hence, real object and sensual qualities will only meet when *fused*.⁵²

The performative role of metaphor, where the beholder replaces the absent real object by fusing with the sensual qualities they see presented, can be understood as the mechanics of how allure operates, wherein the visible surface attributes (sensual qualities) of the artwork indicate the presence of something deeper, and can only be alluded to: the missing real object. For OOO, 'all aesthetics is theatrical'⁵³ meaning the beholder of the artwork is called upon to step in and 'replace the vanished real object'⁵⁴ via the mechanism of metaphor, understood in the manner outlined above. Furthermore, art for OOO is always non-literal, or as Harman says, 'an artwork, of no matter what genre, is unparaphrasable'.⁵⁵ This is why the beholders aesthetic appreciation of an artwork involves an awareness that there is indeed a missing real object within their encounter with the work. Rather than lie withdrawn in a completely absent fashion however, Harman indicates that the missing real object has a role to play in guiding the manner in which the work is appreciated: one which he suggests is akin to the role which the title of the work plays.⁵⁶ After all, we tend not to think that the title of an artwork simply is the artwork itself, as if hearing the former were utterly synonymous with comprehending the latter. Instead, we instinctively recognize that the title alludes to another, deeper aspect of the work: an aspect which remains veiled and unseen, rather than inexistent.

Three tensions within OOS: time, space and seriality

As with the earlier section covering the four tensions of Harman's OOO, the three tensions which occur within the fourfold framework of OOS are devised according to the way in which the four poles of OOS are held to interact. These tensions are named *time*, *space* and *seriality*, respectively, where *seriality*

constitutes the replacement term within OOS for Harman's *eidōs*. As stated earlier, we are electing to leave out the fourth OOO tension, *essence*, given as that which holds between the real object and its real qualities, on account there is no human observer implicated within it: something which is of little use within the context of our artistically framed discussion. Perhaps most importantly, these three tensions form the basic manner in which a selection of serial drawings discussed in the next chapter are analysed. Considering each of the four poles on their own is cumbersome and does not in itself yield a manageable way to deploy OOS as a consistent framework for examining different serial artworks. While a set of OOS relevant understandings for how each of the four poles can be interpreted in relation to serial art is required, what we really need is to understand how these poles interact with one another as a unified understanding. It is this which provides a cohesive, conceptual framework within which the topics of time, space and seriality can be discussed in relation to analysing a set of individual artworks.

The first tension to outline is *time*. As we recall, time is the name for the tension between a unified sensual object and its various sensual qualities. Again, for OOS, sensual object means the unified, visible serial artwork, while sensual qualities indicate the visible array of individual works (drawings/etchings/paintings) through which the serial artwork is constituted and so appears in the form in which it does. Some of these sensual qualities can be altered, changed or possibly even omitted without the unity of the artwork in question being destroyed. Of course, seen from one angle, omission of part of a serial artwork is not likely to happen on purpose: it would constitute a rather unlikely and quite brave curatorial decision for a gallery to leave out just one of Sol LeWitt's *Variations on Incomplete Open Cubes* (1974) from an exhibition of the same, despite the fact there are no less than 122 cubes for the interested viewer to ponder over. But this is not to say that, from the perspective of the less-interested viewer, such an omission might not occur by accident. If they were in hurry, or bored, or simply put off by the sheer sight of 122 almost-identical-looking cubes laid out across the gallery floor, they might choose to move past them without having seen or even properly noticed them all, yet without suffering any difficulty in identifying the piece vis-à-vis being Sol LeWitt's *Variations on Incomplete Open Cubes*. In this respect a serial artwork is much like any other installation piece, where the unity of the artwork qua sensual object is not necessarily destroyed by only a partial encounter with the work. Indeed, if the lessons of OOO are correct, then a partial encounter with any kind of object is about the best we can hope for anyway.

Considering how the sense of how time is bound up with friction and movement on the part of the beholder brings us close to the crux of this tension: the durational element. Looking at serial artwork involves an active performance of seeing on the part of the beholder: an act which takes place in and over time. There is rarely anything passive or instant about looking at serial artworks, in any form or medium. While the number of individual works that compose a serial work can vary, the fact that the unity of the work is distributed, as it were, across space and time often adds to the sense of strife or resistance which the beholder who is trying to take in the serial artwork ‘in one go’ can experience. Interestingly, akin to the manner in which Harman proposes the name of allure for the tension, which is otherwise named space, Harman also proposes another term for the tension named time: *confrontation*. The way in which time is understood according to the idea of confrontation is intriguing, for it includes within itself a sense of the ongoing fission between parts and wholes: where the awareness of various splits and divisions in the perceptual field is activated by a shift in attention caused through movement on the part of the observer. As Harman says:

When this happens, there is a momentary breakdown in the former balance between sensual objects and their qualities; the object is briefly exposed as a unified kernel dangling its qualities like marionettes.⁵⁷

For use within our context, OOS, the suggestion that there is a form of temporally experienced confrontation between the unified sensual object and its various shifting, sensual qualities represents a wholly agreeable idea, for it allows the quite specific being of serial artworks to come shining through. By this we are referring to the particular nature of serial artworks as being a form of sensual object which is held to be both distinct *from*, and yet simultaneously composed *of*, the series of individual art works which constitute it. The momentary breakdown in the balance of such objects encountered by the beholder’s performative mobility is to be celebrated, for it delivers forth the idea of time as a productive tension encountered through the work. It is this confrontational aspect that we will consider when reflecting on the temporal element of serial drawings in the next chapter.

Before we proceed, there is one rather famous, albeit somewhat dissenting voice on the topic of temporality and the performance involved in viewing minimalist-themed artworks who ought to be included at this juncture, not least because he features rather heavily in Harman’s own discourse on art. We are speaking here of Michael Fried, and his pivotal text *Art and Objecthood*.⁵⁸

Originally appearing in *Artforum* in 1967, at a time when minimalist art (or literalist art, as Fried calls it) was all the rage, the critical ire of this text was largely directed at what Fried felt was the impending clash between theatre and the arts that was then arriving, and which was aided in no small part by the minimalist/literalist approach taken by artists like Donald Judd, Tony Smith and Robert Morris. Without wishing to overly summarize this canonical text, we can assert that the basis of Fried's issue is found in his claim that 'art degenerates as it approaches the conditions of theatre'.⁵⁹ In making this claim, Fried is essentially taking issue with the extended, performative nature of looking which he felt a good deal of minimalist-themed work seems to entail. Aside from the aesthetic link, the relevance for our enquiry is that a substantial portion of the minimalist-themed work which Fried has in mind is serial in scope, wherein the use of serial strategies results in multi-part sculptural works, and in the extended, durational encounters which such works demand of the viewer. The real issue for Fried, and which the discussion of theatre led towards, is that the experience of viewing literalist work is found to be an experience which '*persists in time*', and so presents the beholder with a sense of endlessness or indefinite duration.⁶⁰ For Fried, this means that the minimalist preoccupation with time is guilty of prioritizing this durational aspect of experience over and above the static, modernist encounter with the work. This modernist encounter is one which Fried feels positively about, in the sense it is held to be paradigmatically instantaneous, involving as it does the manifestation of a 'continuous and perpetual *present*'.⁶¹ In opposition to this stands the minimalist (literalist) concerns, and the way in which the durational sense of time is manifest within such works. Fried describes the issues he has with these concerns in the following memorable passage:

The literalist preoccupation with time – more precisely, with the *duration of the experience* – is, I suggest, paradigmatically theatrical, as though theatre confronts the beholder, and thereby isolates him, with the endlessness not just of objecthood but of *time*; or as though the sense which, at bottom, theatre addresses is a sense of temporality, of time both passing and to come, *simultaneously approaching and receding*, as if apprehended in an infinite perspective.

Far from being a negative issue, this durational aspect to serial artwork is to be celebrated within the context of OOS. Indeed, the serial form is one that quite readily allows the viewer to contemplate the manner in which unified objects simultaneously approach and recede in temporal terms, providing a way to reflect upon the way in which serial structures are able to present ideas about infinity, endlessness and the sublime. Rather than recommending the beholder

seek access to any sort of instantaneous meeting with the work – as if, like Fried suggests, one were only a trifle more mentally acute it might be possible to ‘see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness’⁶² – we are suggesting the opposite: within the fourfold framework of OOS it is not possible to experience everything in connection with a serial artwork simultaneously for the simple reason that the part of the artwork (the real object) will always remain fundamentally withdrawn. Accordingly, it is on this same point that Harman takes pains to point out the difference between the object as is understood within the context of OOO and Fried’s idea of objecthood, stating:

Our respective uses of the word ‘object’ have precisely the opposite meaning. For Fried, ‘object’ means a physical obstacle literally present in our path, as he famously complains in the case of minimalist sculpture. For OOO, by contrast, objects are always absent rather than present.⁶³

Within the context of our object-oriented discussion, analysing the temporal element of various works will often entail discussing the durational aspect, for the simple reason that looking at the distributed form of a serial artwork engenders an event which takes place in and over time. The manner in which the temporality of a serial work manifests itself is of course different depending on the specifics of the work, although there are commonalities shared by all. We will return in the next chapter to decide how to celebrate this temporal aspect more fully, according to the specifics of each.

The next tension for our consideration is *space*: that which holds between the withdrawn real object and its sensual qualities. As earlier indicated, in the case of OOS, real object indicates the withdrawn reality of the artwork, while sensual qualities indicate the multiple surface qualities literally perceived by the viewer: the series of drawings/etchings/paintings through which the work appears as it does. As we described in relation to Blake’s *The Ghost of a Flea*, there are two understandings of space at work here: the relational and the non-relational. Within the context of OOS we are mapping the pictorial (non-literal) understanding of space to the relational, while the literal is mapped onto the non-relational. The non-literal understanding of space as it appears pictured via the surface attributes of the work is that which presents the viewer’s indirect relation to the withdrawn real object, while the physical dimensions of the work presents the non-relational understanding of space. We cannot hope to reach the withdrawn reality of the artwork by simply measuring and totting up its various physical dimensions, any more than we can by trying to paraphrase it in written terms. As we will see in the next chapter, there are a multitude of ways to

conceive how space is understood in relation to serial artwork, especially when the relational and the non-relational understandings of space are considered separately and together. In the case of minimalist-themed serial drawings, the relational understanding of space is often created as a synthesis of lines, planes and the structure of the series rather than via the rules of perspective alone, while the non-relational appears within the context of considering the size, number and physical dimensions of the individual works that compose the series.

As a reminder, the alluring tension that occurs between a withdrawn real object and its various sensual qualities is the one that Harman feels is the most important for art. In the context of art, allure describes the fusion between the withdrawn real object, absent from the sensual field, and those sensual qualities that serve to indirectly allude to it in visual terms. As we noted, Harman suggests it is the title of the artwork which guides a particular (alluring) interpretation of the sensual qualities encountered by the viewer, and helps them fuse with the work, thereby performing the role of the missing real object. In *The Quadruple Object*, Harman allows that all art presents itself as sufficient conditions for such to occur: indeed, rather than anything occasional, the fusion which occurs between the real object and its sensual qualities is found to occur ‘in artworks of every sort’.⁶⁴ This idea is nuanced slightly in *Art and Objects*, whereupon we find Harman tying the Kantian concept of beauty to the manner in which art objects are able to achieve this form of fusion by enacting a rift that the beholder becomes performatively involved in:

While the meaning of beauty is often left hopelessly vague, OOO defines it very precisely: as a RO – SQ split, the opening of a fissure between a real thing and its sensual qualities.⁶⁵

While the topic of allure is interesting to consider in relation to OOO’s dualistic idea of space, we are not here seeking to consider the concept of beauty on top of them both, at least not in any explicit sense. Although Harman’s idea for how to deploy the concept of beauty is intriguing, we now have more than enough to variables to consider as it is. Added to this is our concern that, in contemporary terms at least, the parameters for deciding what counts as beautiful (or not) within the context of art remains rather too vague and subjective – if not hopelessly so, then certainly without sufficient rigour to provide a sensible path to using it here. Somewhat revealingly, Harman himself never identifies what he thinks counts as beautiful, in artistic terms or otherwise. In many ways this is not unlike the manner in which the real qualities of an object within OOO

are never identified in specific terms, or even sought: for Harman (unlike Husserl, who actively hunts for them) it is simply the case that objects must have eidetic qualities in order to be what they are and not something else. What we can take away from this is the lesson that, in seeking to practically apply Harman's theoretically posed ideas, some discretion is required.

Returning to the context of which Fried is a part, we include the thoughts of another commentator at this juncture, as a means to bolster our understanding of the topic at hand. We are speaking here of Rosalind Krauss, whose pivotal essay 'Grids' offers much to think about in regard to the modernist concern with this particular structure.⁶⁶ While not exclusively bound up with the topic of series or seriality, in formal terms the overlap between the grid and the series is readily apparent. More to the point, the doubled way in which Krauss identifies how the grid can be read by the viewer does provide us with a clear path forward for thinking serially about our concerns with space, and in a similarly dualistic manner to the way in which Harman's is construed. First appearing in *October* in 1979, at a time when the modernist project was being looked back upon via an increasingly critical, post-modern gaze, Krauss sets out to use the framework of post-structuralism to demystify the allure of the grid, unpicking the peculiar power it has long exerted over modern art and the type of abstraction it engenders. While the text as a whole sets out to dispel the myths of Being and Mind and Spirit which are (in Krauss's eyes) too often presented in place of the grid's material concerns, we find some useful pointers within it regarding how Krauss feels the bifold or 'bivalent' nature of the grid operates, vis-à-vis the sense of space it engenders.⁶⁷ Krauss identifies this dualistic nature as that which holds between the centrifugal and the centripetal understanding of the grid as a structure. Krauss describes the centrifugal reading as follows:

Logically speaking the grid extends, in all directions, to infinity. And boundaries imposed on it by a given painting or sculpture can only be seen – according to this logic – as arbitrary. By virtue of the grid, the given work of art is presented as a mere fragment, a tiny piece arbitrarily cropped from an infinitely larger fabric. Thus the grid operates from the work of art outward, compelling our acknowledgment of a world beyond the frame.⁶⁸

Reflecting back to the manner in which Coplans felt a serial artwork can be understood according to Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order, we notice a striking similarity here between Krauss's centrifugal reading of the grid and the first of the four possible types of serial order detailed by Coplans. As we recall, Coplans's first possibility for describing what constitutes a series is described

as being those structures ‘that have neither a first nor a last element.’⁶⁹ What links Krauss’s and Coplans’s ideas together is the notion of infinity to which they both pertain: for while it is true that the grid might logically extend out in all directions endlessly, the same can be said for a serial work that appears structured in such a way that it has no first and last elements. However, while the basic form of the grid is able to generate a sense of receding depth and so imply the presence of an ‘infinitely larger fabric’, a serially arrayed work can only hint in the most oblique terms at the idea that it extends out in either direction endlessly. Why is this? For the simple reason that, given as a physically appearing series, it is not able to do without both a first and a last element, on the basis that one or the other must be literally perceived by the viewer in order for them to ascertain that they are in fact presented with two or more of something that is, a series of some kind. In other words, serial artworks, like all sensual objects, only appear courtesy of a set of visible sensual qualities through which they present themselves. Hence, what we see of such works in perceptual terms is either a first and a last element or both. For a series to lack either one is not logically possible at a perceptual level, but in structural terms it is theoretically possible, and hence confirms our understanding that the concept of series is indeed withdrawn to some degree.

We come now the last of the three tensions for OOS: seriality, given as that which establishes itself between the sensual object and its withdrawn real qualities. As noted earlier, the term ‘sensual object’ describes the visibly unified nature of the serial artwork. This visible object is made manifest courtesy of the series of individual works which compose it, given as an array of sensual qualities: those various profiles through which the unity of the work appears to the beholder in and over time. On the other hand, it is the concept of *series* which names the withdrawn real qualities for OOS, given as a set of underlying conditions that need to be in place in order for the work to appear in the serial form that it does. Cognition of these conditions, albeit in indirect terms, is what renders the tension of seriality to be made manifest, where this describes the intellectually conceived play between what can be seen (the serial form of the artwork) and what cannot be seen: the rules governing the series, decided upon in mathematical terms or otherwise. Similar to the manner in which Harman’s term ‘allure’ stands in for the tension named space, and confrontation for the tension named time, Harman provides the name *theory* for the tension named eidos in OOO, courtesy of the process of fission through which this tension is made manifest. For Harman, allure (space) is appreciated according to the idea of fusion, while confrontation (time) and

theory (eidos) are both appreciated according to the idea of fission. However, as indicated earlier, we are not intending to continue the discussion of either fission or fusion too far within the context of describing the workings of OOS. For the purposes of our argument, it is enough to say that seriality, like the idea of *eidos* from which it springs, is a tension which also operates according to fission: the real serial qualities which underpin serial artworks remain in the background at all times yet are able to be split off from the sensual object they underpin via the work of theory, meaning based on whatever conceptual understanding of series the beholder currently possesses. Before we proceed, it is worth looking again at exactly how Harman conceives of the fissile link between theory and *eidos*:

In Husserl's case we noticed that sensual objects not only have accidental surface profiles. They also have an *eidos*, or qualities crucial for the object to be acknowledged as what it is. These qualities do not press against us like sensual ones. Grasped only by categorial and not sensuous intuition, they are never fully present. The sensual object has a vague and unified effect on us, not usually articulated into its various eidetic features. It is always fused in advance with its own *eidos*. Only theoretical labor can disassemble or reverse-engineer the bond between them. The word *theory* can serve as our term for the fission that splits a unified sensual object from the real qualities it needs in order to be what it is.⁷⁰

If the concept of series names the set of concrete, albeit withdrawn background conditions which underpins the visible seriality of the serial artwork, then it is right and fitting that there ought to be competing conceptions of it for use within an artistic context. After all, very few interested beholders of serial artworks are turning up to view such works armed with a full-blown mathematical understanding of serial order tucked away in their back pocket, let alone the artists who produce them. But this does not mean that the rules of serial order which underpin the visible serial structure cannot be intuited by those who are keen to possess such, and to apply their knowledge accordingly. Our argument is simply that, considered as a withdrawn background condition, series constitutes a set of theoretically derived understandings which are intuited indirectly via the sense of seriality which is appreciated by the viewer. To intuit such, viewers of such works need recourse to seeing the series of physical, visible elements which make up the serial artwork, coupled with whatever conceptual understanding of series they possess. Far from being alone, this conception of how series indirectly manifests itself finds an echo in the Sartrean attitude of Young, who describes the series as, 'a blurry,

shifting unity, an amorphous collective.’⁷¹ As we earlier noted, Young’s Sartrean approach considers series as representing the background condition for the visibility of the groups which emerge from it, but what is perhaps more revealing is the way that, in the course of her own analysis, Young goes on to state quite clearly that ‘there is no concept of the series, no specific set of attributes that form the sufficient conditions for membership in it.’⁷² This idea provides us with further evidence that it is a mistake to try and pin down in advance one conception or definition of series over another, with the aim of omitting artwork that seems not to fit. Instead, we take note of all of those outlined in Chapter 1 and seek to apply aspects of them in our analysis of serial drawings which follow.

Serial drawing

Alexei Jawlensky

Jawlensky is considered by Coplans as being the first significant artist other than Monet to work in a fundamentally serial manner. Although Jawlensky's comparative fame rests largely on his so-called German Expressionist period between 1908 and 1913, it is the serially developed works conceived and produced from 1914 up until around three years before his death in 1941 which concern us here. The principal body of this serial output is comprised of three large groups of landscapes and heads, painted at various times during this period. This body of work includes the series of landscapes known as *Variations* (1914–20), a series titled *Constructivist Heads* (1916–33) and a final series of heads, titled *Meditations* (1934–38). Prior to 1914 Jawlensky had been engaged in painting expressionist portraits: complete heads, mostly of women. The earliest examples were painted in the decade directly preceding the turn of the century, and all presented the viewer with a decided visual emphasis placed upon the interaction between the frame and the edge of the canvas. But while such structuring elements appeared as a key theme of Jawlensky's art prior to beginning his first proper series, what occurred in 1914 was quite unlike anything that had come before.

Beginning in 1914, Jawlensky moved almost overnight to begin production of a series of landscape paintings known as *Variations*. While the uniqueness of the human visage was celebrated in the portraits produced prior to this date, *Variations* began to clearly and repeatedly picture the world as it was seen from a single, fixed viewpoint – that of a window opening out onto a view of some trees and shrubs – yet without providing any clear indication to the viewer as to the passing of time. Given the sudden immediacy of this change, and the rather radical implications that began to spring from it, Coplans looks for possible influences and finds the presence of Monet clearly indicated. Jawlensky was a student in Paris at Matisse's teaching studio,

and lived there for a while in 1907 before returning again in 1911, while a number of Monet's later serial works were exhibited in Paris between 1900 and 1912.¹ Of particular interest in this regard is the manner in which, after 1914, Jawlensky consistently opts to deploy a firmly fixed viewpoint using the portrait format not unlike the one which Monet adopted within the *Rouen Cathedral* series.

Three serial works: *Variations* (1914–20), *Constructivist Heads* (1916–33), *Meditations* (1934–38)

The series *Variations* was begun during a war enforced exile in St. Prex, Switzerland. Jawlensky renounced in a stroke some of the most important traits of his expressionistic period: the human figure and the deployment of vibrant, sometimes jarring combinations of colour outlined in black. In turning to the production of a single landscape view while in St. Prex, Jawlensky is observed by Coplans to repeat a 'single subject with a tenacity and consistency never before seen in his work, or in painting of the modern period.'² Measuring on average approximately 36 cm x 26 cm, each of the individual paintings which compose the *Variations* series pictures what appears to be the same scene, using the same portrait format and the same fixed viewpoint. Indeed, what stands out about this body of work is the consistently recognizable configuration of coloured elements which appear upon each canvas. These patches of colour seem synonymous with trees, bushes and other forms of vegetation, yet they are presented without the use of a horizon line or any substantial separation between object and ground. Coplans describes this series of works as follows:

Within this world of pure shape there remain three, or four consistently recognizable elements. The large torpedo-shaped tree on the left appears repeatedly, either singly or with a smaller mate. On the lower right there is sometimes a bulbous shaped tree with a curving trunk, and above it and to the right, two or three long slashes derived from cypress-type trees. The derivation of these forms is easily found in the first landscapes done in St. Prex in 1914.³

However, the 'world of pure shape' which Jawlensky presents the viewer with is far more than just a formal device for selecting and abstracting the key elements of the landscape scene he observed before him. Instead, the *Variations* series uses this restricted palette in order to present what Coplans refers to as a distinctly 'serial vision.'⁴ In contrast with the Expressionistic series of female heads which Jawlensky painted previously, all of which clearly depict a series of different

women (plus a number of inconsistencies that betray the fact that each one is painted directly from observation), the *Variations* series presents us with the opposite. Here for the first time Jawlensky uses the format of a serial structure to create a sense of distance between the original scene and what appears across the series seen as a whole. Not only is there very little individual differentiation between each *Variations* canvas, but as Coplans indicates, Jawlensky continued the same motif of the view from the St. Prex window long after he had moved to Zurich and then on to Ascona.⁵

Likewise, in contrast with Monet's thirty odd impressionistic views of Rouen Cathedral, each of which describes a particular moment through the precise handling of colour used to depict the impression of light, Jawlensky eventually produced hundreds of views of this same motif, using a colour palette that can only be described as vaguely descriptive. In addition, whereas the individual size of canvas within any given Monet series might vary quite considerably, Jawlensky was meticulous in maintaining the same size throughout. And finally, there is the intriguing use of the portrait format for what are ostensibly landscape images, whereupon the patches of bright colour gather towards the lower centre of each painting, seemingly brought together at that location in memory of the lost horizon line. Between 1916 and 1921, while the *Variations* series was ongoing, Jawlensky also submitted his images of heads of women to a process of quite radical simplification. They begin to lose their idiosyncratic, individualistic portrait qualities and, by 1918, enter a realm of structural simplification that has much in common with the landscape series. Coplans describes the *Constructivist Heads* as follows:

They are rendered in diagrammatic form; the nose becomes a line parallel to the sides of the canvas, the mouth a horizontal and the hair, eyebrows and eyes abstracted either to a like horizontal, or a diagonal. With the eyes closed, the heads become as impersonal an object as a fruit dish or a mandolin within a Cubist painting.⁶

Coplans focuses on the increasingly structural attributes of the heads series as they progress away from the confines of traditional portraiture, and on towards a more linear mode of abstraction, one that brings with it overtures of the sublime. As we saw in Chapter 1, the theme of structure is integral to the understanding of seriality which the majority of commentators subscribe to, but perhaps none more so than Coplans. Indeed, if we recall Coplans's own definition, whereupon 'seriality is identified by a particular inter-relationship, rigorously consistent, of structure and syntax',⁷ then the manner in which Jawlensky systemically develops his approach towards the production of serial

artworks appears as a paradigmatic example of this outlook. As a series, the *Constructivist Heads* manifest themselves as highly colourful body of artworks, wherein the overall structure of the head shape is retained in each. Yet the features of the face are gradually converted into geometric planes as the series progresses. As a means of systematizing the syntax of the image across a number of iterations, this development allows the series to cohere as a group in a manner not dissimilar to the *Variations* series. But it also means that the features of the face eventually begin to resemble vestigial forms, preparing the way for what comes next.

Meditations is Jawlensky's last series of heads. The image of the head in this series is reduced to the most minimal of components. The nose appears as a single black line splitting the canvas in half, running down the middle from top to bottom. The eyes and brows similarly are manifest as a pair of dark black strokes, albeit ones that serve to cut the canvas the other way, emerging at forty-five degrees to the nose. Taken as a whole, this configuration of lines presents a fixed black grid. The grid sensation is in turn aided by a series of thinner vertical marks, deployed to fill in the planes of the face. On closer inspection, these thinner lines reveal themselves to be erasure marks, rather than painterly additions. In betraying the movement of the artist's hand as it scraped paint away from the surface, they help move this series of paintings closer to the diagrammatic territory which is often occupied by drawing, especially the aesthetically pared back kind which was later to emerge within the context of minimalism. This same configuration of painted lines and erasure marks is used in each and every one of the *Meditations* heads. The same format appears courtesy of the same components, despite small changes which can be noted in the width of line, roughness of brushwork or even the axis upon which the feature lines tilt. Yet despite such repetitive, formalized similarity, the *Mediations* are not considered to be multiples in the manner of an edition of prints or a sculpture. Rather, each is both similar to, and yet different from, the other works in the series. In other words, each is resolutely unique.

Although Coplans considers Jawlensky to be a prime example of the early serial image artist, he disagrees with the idea that these works have anything to do with the concept of variations per se, at least not in the manner in which Monet's series operates. Instead of presenting a series of works that capture the varying conditions of a scene observed by the artist as it undergoes change (à la Monet), Coplans considers Jawlensky's series to be works that present a set of 'simultaneous views.'⁸ The criteria for this is linked to how Coplans understands

the idea of 'serial vision' cited earlier, and the difference between what he describes as single image painting versus serial image painting. Although both involve sequences, and although both involve the repetition of similar images of a reduced nature, the difference for Coplans lies in the idea which the serial image painter seemingly seeks to convey, albeit obliquely – the idea of boredom itself. Indeed, Coplans's description of this idea is illuminating and worth quoting in full:

The single image painter, like Monet or Mondrian, does not repeat indefinitely the same set of forms from canvas to canvas. Each painting when compared to its closest companion demonstrates a significant variation of substance. The recognition and recording of perceptual change is still central to the art of the single image painter. He does not confront the idea of what appears from a traditional point of view as visual boredom, as does the serial image painter.⁹

As far as Coplans is concerned, Jawlensky was the first artist to use the kind of highly repetitive image synonymous with the serial image painter's approach. In doing so, Coplans claims Jawlensky was able to 'confront the idea' of visual boredom as a serial image painter. Notice the careful use of the term 'confront'. It suggests that Jawlensky proactively engages in some way with the idea of boredom, but in a manner that refrains from explicitly suggesting that Jawlensky was able to directly picture it. When considering the subject matter which Coplans is referring to (the topic of boredom), it might be argued that no direct form of presentation is possible. Instead, it would seem as though Jawlensky uses the method of serial imagery to indirectly or obliquely indicate boredom as a kind of submerged condition of the work: one that only surfaces within the beholder's appreciation of a certain kind of serially, repetitive image and the emotional state this engenders.

A related area of interest within Coplans's assessment of Jawlensky's serial approach is given in relation to the topic of time: specifically, to the formalization of time as infinite or sublime duration, one which is represented via the repetition which underpins the very structure of seriality. In repeating a similar image across multiple iterations, Jawlensky's serial approach seemingly forgoes the modernist conception of the masterpiece, opting instead for an even treatment metered out to all the paintings within each series. That being said, Jawlensky is not quite ready to engage with the anonymity of hand and image in the manner of his minimalist heirs: despite their various levels of subtraction, Jawlensky's painterly works are all still quite clearly handmade. Yet as Coplans observes in relation to all three series, 'at the same time that Jawlensky bows to nature's irregularities, he strips her of her ability to change.'¹⁰ In other words, as



Figure 7 Alexei Jawlensky, *Variation: Inclination*, c.1919 (oil on canvas), © Gift from the Estate of Vance E. Kondon and Liesbeth Giesberger/Bridgeman Images.

Coplans considers Jawlensky's works to be simultaneous views of either the same landscape or the same head, rather than successive iterations, nature is no longer permitted to exist in time. For Coplans, the lack of any clear progress to time generates a kind of timelessness to each of Jawlensky's three series, and which comes down to the lack of a defined order present within each series. As he says:

There is no climatic order whatsoever within the *Variations*, the *Constructivist Heads* or the *Mediations*. There is no order in which they can be placed except the order of more exact repetition. In other words, one can group the paintings which are most nearly alike; one cannot group them according to a developmental scheme or sequence.¹¹

In line with Coplans's understanding of seriality outlined earlier, and the influence of Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order upon it, we find that this assessment of Jawlensky's work hinges upon the idea that there is an open-ended or expandable order of form contained within each of these three series. While Monet was, in the end, limited by the number of daylight hours whose impression was available to be captured in any one day, Jawlensky had freed himself of this particular anchor to nature early on. Indeed, there could have been 'twenty less or one hundred more' *Variations*, *Constructivist Heads* or *Mediations*, 'and their meaning would not be different. What is a series of individual efforts in Monet is transformed into a process by Jawlensky, and this formalization is of infinite duration.'¹²

Three tensions: time, space, seriality

We begin by examining Jawlensky's works in relation to the first of our three tensions: the one we have named time. For OOS, time is the name for that particular form of fissile confrontation which generates awareness of a sensual object (the serial artwork) by perceiving gaps and breaks in the various sensual qualities through which it is presented; namely the series of individual works which compose the serial artwork. To better understand the temporal nature of this tension, we can begin thinking about it in relation to four works taken from the *Variations* series, selected at random. As we recall, for OOS this subset of works represents only some of the sensual qualities through which the sensual object, the serial artwork named *Variations*, appears as it does. To keep things simple, given this is our initial foray into the application of tension, we can select three works to reflect upon. In no particular order they are *Variation – Snow* (1915), *Variation – Anger* (1916) and *Variation – Mourning* (1918).¹³

For an intrepid gallery visitor who arrives at The Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena hoping to view the *Variations* series as a unified work, we can imagine these three *Variations* as constituting a set of specific, visible profiles which greet them as they enter the gallery space. In other words, the visitor understands there are more individual *Variations* canvases that comprise the series, but for now they cannot be seen. Taken on their own, these three works clearly do

not present the entire series named *Variations*: rather, they present only the currently visible profile under which the serial art object appears to them. With this in mind it would be wrong to say the viewers' conception of the larger work simply disappears because there are only three iterations of it currently in view. Like the manner in which the Husserlian idea of adumbration notes that we only ever perceive objects according to the profile they currently present to us (yet without us becoming confused as to the identity of the object when we see it via another, different profile), the viewer initially perceives Jawlensky's series courtesy of these three works alone. But although they all appear together as a group, unified by virtue of both the subject matter they present and the series to which they belong, they are nevertheless still physically separate from one another, meaning they can be observed both in sequence and all in one go.

Furthermore, in gazing upon these three works the visitor realizes they are presented with multiple views of the same landscape view, albeit one which is pictured slightly differently. Should they come armed with the requisite knowledge, they will realize these three views are all of the same place, St. Prex in Switzerland. But even without this prior knowledge, the almost identical manner in which this landscape is painted means the series appears as a unified encounter, due to the extended form of looking which such seriality enables. This form of extended looking is not achieved purely due to the number of works, for there are currently only three of them to see. Rather, it occurs due to the range of subtle differences which manifest themselves across each of the three works, and which confront the viewer: not just with the bare fact of their alterity, but with the knowledge they each present a set of visual differences which relate to the same object, seen differently. By 'object', we are actually referring to two things here. In the first instance we are referring to the sensual object, meaning the full *Variations* series, albeit with the understanding that this serial art object is only presented via the number of individual works which are currently visible. In the second instance, we are referring to a particular type of object which is pictured in each canvas: namely the torpedo-shaped tree which Coplans earlier remarked upon. In the first instance, the physical differences which establish these three *Variations* as being separate from one another introduce the kind of durational experience which Fried took issue with: it literally takes time to walk past them as a group. But there is another understanding of time, one which is generated courtesy of the subtle shifts in the placement of the torpedo tree seen in each, whereupon each new version of the tree in each subsequent canvas alters its position relative to the others.

While these differences are observed to be small across the three *Variations* just given, we can add a fourth work, *Variation – Falling* (1919) to help us unpack this temporal idea in a bit more detail. As with our earlier examples, we can extend our thought game by imagining this fourth work coming into view as our visitor turns a bend inside the gallery space, and observing it hung upon another wall. This fourth *Variation* confronts them with a bigger shift vis-à-vis the placement of the large torpedo-shaped tree than that which was seen in the three earlier versions, given the fact that in this iteration it appears to be leaning much further over to the right. Although this positional shift is not huge, it is sudden enough for our visitor to perceive, and even for Jawlensky to title accordingly (*Falling*). For while it might be thought that the various sensual qualities of the *Variations* series generate the sense of what Coplans refers to as static duration, wherein the seamless repetition of forms seems to present a kind of emptiness, what we find from this sudden pictorial shift is somewhat the opposite. Rather than generate a sublime sense of endlessness of the kind which Fried associates with the seriality of works that all appear literally the same, another, more rooted kind of time is introduced via this pictorial decision. In short, when these four canvases are observed relative to one another, the same torpedo-shaped tree appears to move position, and this introduces a durational element into the static sense of time which is otherwise pictured.

We now move to consider the next of our three tensions: space. As we recall, space is given as the tension which manifests itself between the array of visible sensual qualities and the withdrawn real object which they allude to indirectly: between the series of individual works that constitute the serial art object, and whatever is held to be fundamentally withheld within that understanding, possibly indicated via the title of the work.¹⁴ As tricky as space is to comprehend on these terms, we recall that it can be understood on a more basic level as the interplay of two conceptions, the relational and the non-relational, where both understandings of space are manifest within and through the work. As we saw in the previous chapter, within the context of OOS the relational understanding of space indicates the relation between the beholder and the withdrawn real object, whereas the non-relational understanding signals the container in which both viewer and artwork find themselves, including the measurable limitations of the work as it is physically composed. Rather than continue looking at the *Variations* series to reflect on this dualistic idea, we can move to consider the later *Meditations* series, given as an example of Jawlensky's more mature work. The aim of working through these three tensions (time, space and seriality) is not simply to compare three different ways to examine only one serial artwork,



Figure 8 Alexei Jawlensky, *Large Meditation 19*, 1937 (oil on panel), © Bridgeman Images.

but rather, to reflect upon the ways in which an individual artist like Jawlensky approaches the topic by considering a variety of serial artworks they produce.

Described in terms of their pictorial form, the *Mediations* series present us with a nearly identical sequence of compositions: a set of heads we see again and again thanks to the same form which is recognizable in each. As we noted, Jawlensky uses a long black vertical line to register the shape of the nose, while a shorter horizontal line appears at the base, suggestive of a tight-lipped mouth. Towards

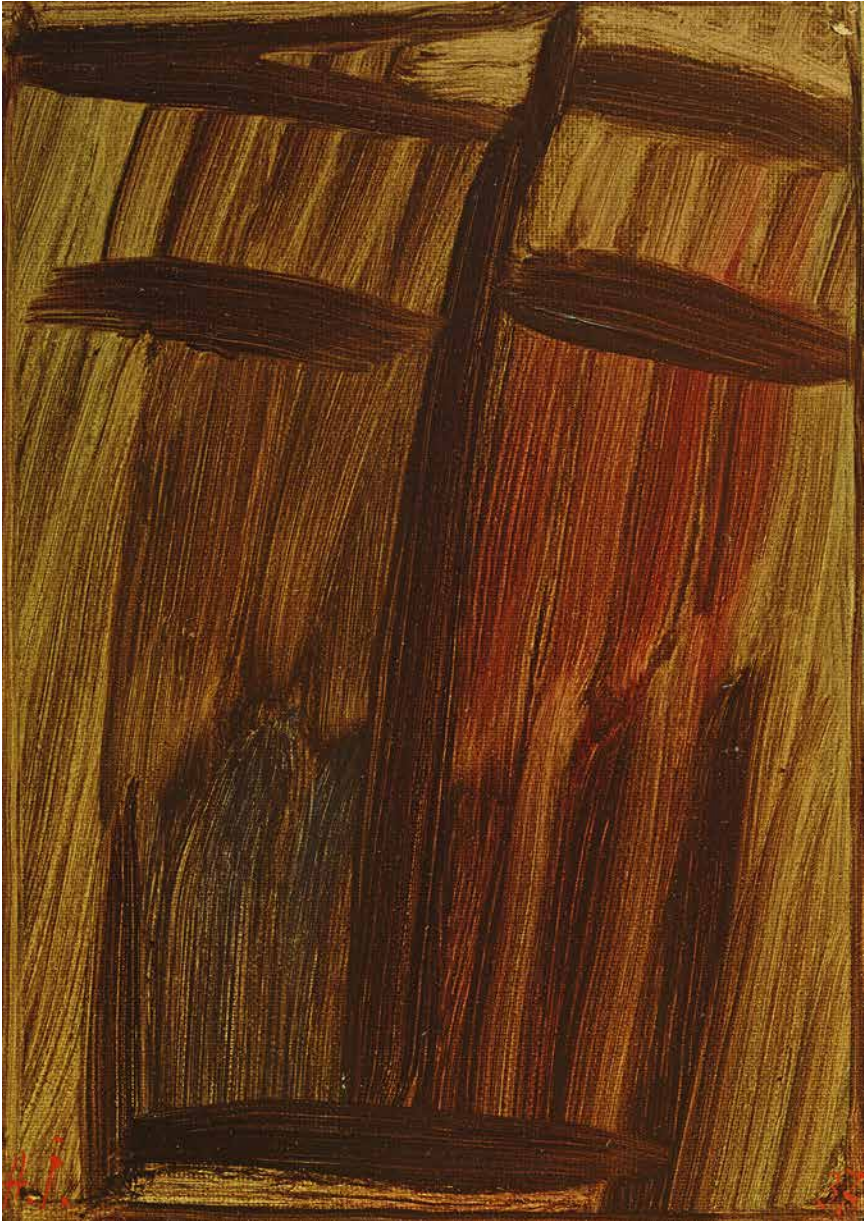


Figure 9 Alexei Jawlensky, *Large Meditation X*, 1937 (oil on panel), © Bridgeman Images.

the apex of the nose four more horizontal strokes of paint appear, two to either side, and which join up to present an eyeline and an eyebrow line, respectively. This disarmingly simple configuration of black lines generates the sense of an underlying grid, not unlike the modernist one which Krauss's reflects upon. More

important perhaps is the manner in which this shadowy, painterly framework of black lines presents a sombre mood – one that is emphasized when we realize the configuration remains essentially unchanged in picture after picture, head after head. Described in terms of the relational understanding of space, we have to ask: What exactly is being alluded to via this repetitive symbol, this blankly serious, solemn visage? Taken as a set of repetitive sensual qualities that, while static and dark, seem nevertheless to flicker slightly with brief bursts of colour, viewers are provided with the sense that something is implied to lie behind the gridded countenance, beyond the opaque surface of the picture plane. As Harman indicates, the metaphysical real object is fundamentally withdrawn. On the one hand, this means it cannot be approached directly, but on the other it also means it still exists, residing in a silently veiled fashion, vaguely fused with its sensual qualities. To more fully engage with the artwork on these terms, the beholder is required to step in, as it were, and execute the role which the work invites them to perform – a task they can only properly undertake if they are in some way actively engaged and interested in the artwork. Hence the term ‘invites’: the viewer requires an indication that something does indeed lie withdrawn beyond the sensual surface qualities which set the scene. The path towards such, as Harman suggests, is potentially signposted via the title of the work, which in this case is: *Meditations*. On this point we come back to Coplans’s analysis of this work, and note one final comment he provides concerning the sombre visage we repeatedly see:

The overall grid is suspended in front of the densely painted substance beneath. It can be read as a meditative head which projects beyond the human world to that of the divine. Often likened to icons, these last heads finally step into the realm of the sublime, a visionary aspect of Expressionism so long overlooked by Jawlensky.¹⁵

As with Krauss’s centrifugal reading of space, Jawlensky’s grid structure seems to offer to the viewer a sense of an enormous, exteriorized realm which is hidden, yet infinitely vast compared to the space that literally appears within the physical frame of the work. Although such ideas are perceived obliquely, they nevertheless describe the type of relation (fusion) which the beholder can have to the withdrawn real object, although it still cannot be explicitly named, or even accessed in any direct sense. On the other hand, both the interior and exterior measurements of each *Meditations* canvas present us with the non-relational understanding of space, and this works hand in hand with the relational. For while it is true that we need this physical framework in order to perceive the work and intuit the sense of the sublime which Coplans comments upon, it is

clearly not the case that we can get any closer to this idea by literally adding up the spatial dimensions of each of the *Meditations* heads to gain a sum total figure, or even by simply selecting only one image from the series and banishing all the rest. Rather, the sense of the sublime is achieved via a combination of relational and non-relational space: by a combination of the sombre, meditative head that Jawlensky pictures, and the sheer repetitive force of its serialization that invites the viewer to discern the similarities and differences between each.

This leads us to consider the last of our three tensions: seriality. Seriality is conceived as the tension which holds between the whole serial artwork, given in a visible sense as the sensual object, and its various withdrawn real qualities, understood in a more conceptual, strictly serial sense. Indeed, within the context of OOS seriality is given as a kind of fission which takes place between the serial art object and whatever theoretical understandings of series are thought to underpin it: understandings which can only be drawn out (deduced) by looking at the visible serial structure which the work presents. Given the broad scope of this idea, we will refrain from just picking one of Jawlensky's serial works to analyse, and endeavour instead to seek the theoretical understanding of series which might underlie them all. We do this partially on the basis of Coplans's belief that Jawlensky 'intuitively produced three large series of works which are based upon the idea of an expandable order or an open-ended extendible order of form'.¹⁶ Before considering the specifics of this reading, we note the fact that Coplans feels Jawlensky 'intuitively produced' these serial works in this open-ended serial manner. Why is this point about intuition instructive for our argument? Because in suggesting there was a lack of explicit awareness on Jawlensky's part regarding the conceptual understanding of series which underpinned his art, Coplans reaffirms our idea that such real qualities are indeed submerged and need to be retrospectively teased out by bringing in a conceptual understanding of series from elsewhere. As we recall, this theoretical way of analysing the bond between a sensual object and its various real features was referred to by Harman as akin to a process of reverse-engineering or disassembly, which, if we think about it, is another way of describing what Coplans is doing. Indeed, Coplans's point about Jawlensky's work exhibiting an expandable order is itself directly influenced by Coplans's reading of Dedekind-Cantor's theory of serial order. So, what are we to make of such a claim from looking at the work itself?

For example, described in terms of their serial structure, we observe that the *Variations* series does indeed seem to accord with this reading. However, it might be hard for it not to, given the work is clearly not made according to any sort of plan that would limit the number of individual elements to the series

and so prevent its endless repetition. There is seemingly no fundamentally parsimonious or self-exhausting element present here (à la Bochner's reading of seriality), no evidence that order takes precedence over execution, even in the *Meditations* series, arguably the most aesthetically pared back of the three. Nothing in the underlying order of *Variations* suggests that Jawlensky ought to have stopped producing works for the series after say, *Variation – Snow* (1915), or perhaps after *Variation – Festival II* (1919). The same goes for the *Constructivist Heads* and the *Meditations*. As Coplans says, even if we added twenty less or one hundred more to either series their meaning would not be different. But from the point of view of our argument, whereupon we are trying to appraise the understanding of seriality which runs through this body of work, we can agree that these numerative differences would not change the fact that open-endedness remains an eidetic quality which seemingly belongs to each series in a concrete, albeit obliquely appreciated manner. Although this underlying quality is not able to be inferred in a literal or direct fashion, we still understand it to exist as a real capacity of the work.

Ellsworth Kelly

Long associated with the development of colour field painting as it emerged in New York during the early 1950s, Ellsworth Kelly is perhaps best known for his various paintings, sculptures and prints that convey a sense of underlying tension through the brutal simplicity of shape. Kelly's method of interlocking two or three complementary forms upon a single plane is the hallmark of his work, whereupon solid-looking forms are observed to gracefully sit alongside, between or within each other. Often typified by the use of two or three bright colours, or else appearing in black and white, Kelly's work is also emblematic of a certain kind of American hard-edge abstraction that came to dominate contemporary art in the wake of European modernism. However, despite the association of such boldly simple shapes with his painting and sculpture practice, Kelly's extensive drawing and printmaking practice has never been quite so easy to categorize, as those who have paid careful attention to his altogether exquisite line drawings of plants can attest. Indeed, despite the seeming singularity of many of his well-known works, such as *Rebound* (1959), *White Angle* (1966) and *Red Curve II* (1972), there is in fact a strong serial interest which runs throughout much of Kelly's output, and which finds a particular voice within the serial drawings he produced throughout his long career. It is because the topic of

seriality manifests itself so clearly within his drawing practice, especially in view of role which both the rapid sketch and the sketchbook play, that we now turn to examine Kelly's serially arrayed drawings in detail.

Of key interest is the way in which Kelly began to develop something akin to a serial vision in many of serially presented works: a development that can be traced back not only to the prominent role of the sketchbook in his practice, but also to his time spent serving in Europe with the US 603rd Engineers Camouflage Battalion during the Second World War, coupled with his post-war years living in France courtesy of the GI Bill.¹⁷ The attraction which Kelly found in tracing, isolating and repeating certain forms observed in nature is clearly evident in his sketchbooks from this period, wherein a particular emphasis is often placed upon the interplay of light and shade, although it is also found in the serial format which emerged from the sequential page structure the sketchbooks contained. We are referring here to the shadows which Kelly observed while riding a bus shortly after his return to the United States in 1954, and which he sought to capture in the sketchbook he had on his lap, thus producing the series of twenty-five ink drawings now known as *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus* (1954).

However, Kelly's serial interests were not only inspired by the spatial structure of the sketchbook format, nor by the interplay of light and shadow discovered during his time with the 603rd Engineers, but by other, related concerns: chief among them being architecture, particularly that of the Romanesque period. While Kelly's abiding interest in architecture long predates the time he spent in France, it was enhanced by his discovery of the Romanesque churches, cathedrals and monasteries which are scattered all across that country, and which exist in various states of refurbishment and disrepair. After a long period of gestation, quite normal in Kelly's practice, this architecturally inspired interest translated itself into the series of twenty-four prints known as the *Romanesque Series* (1973–6). Such a visceral interest in the structuring of space appeared in several other serially developed works too, although not always in such a self-evident way. For example, there is the series of fourteen large-scale paintings known as the *Chatham Series* (1971–2), produced when Kelly left New York City for Spencertown, in upstate New York. Although these were produced just prior to the *Romanesque Series*, they do not concern themselves with anything which is directly perceptible, at least not in quite the same terms: the series was named in honour of Kelly's (then) new studio on Main St. Chatham.¹⁸ Although each painting in *Chatham Series* relies visually upon a single formal concept, wherein each one is constructed of two separate canvases joined together at right angles, painted in a different monochrome colour, what makes this series distinctive in

serial terms is the fact that they are all, as Eugene C. Goossen points out, ‘portions of an imaginary triangle.’¹⁹ The fact that such a serially conceived understanding is essentially withdrawn from direct perception, only able to be deduced cognitively, is a feature of all Kelly’s series, albeit manifested in different ways.

Two works: *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus* (1954) and *Romanesque Series* (1976)

During his early period in France, Kelly explored what Yves-Alain Bois describes as ‘non-compositional strategies.’²⁰ In reacting against what Kelly saw as the incessant inventiveness of Picasso, and working in tandem with a conscious desire to avoid deliberate innovation and subjective choice in his own compositions, Kelly was on the lookout to develop his works in alternative ways: a process that led to the creation of various inventive strategies for trying to avoid the topic of invention altogether. Yet, as Pamela Lee and Christine Mehring point out, despite pursuing strategies of non-composition:

Kelly has turned out to be very inventive indeed: His modular grids are deduced from the shape of their support. His monochrome panels dispense with choices regarding the division of the pictorial field. The transfer of motifs such as shadow patterns or window frames onto the canvas replaces compositional decisions with found forms.²¹

Despite the evident abstraction which characterized the look of much of Kelly’s mature work, an abiding feature of his practice has remained the sourcing of forms directly from nature. The external world of light and shadow and chance action provided Kelly with much of his visual and material inspiration, and from which he culled the wide variety of shapes that made their way into his paintings and sculptures – often via his sketchbook drawings, and often quite a long time after the initial sketches were first laid down. A prime example of this inventive, seemingly non-compositional way of working is found in the series of twenty-five ink drawings named *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus*. Richard Shiff details the underpinnings of this particular serial work, produced when Kelly had just returned to the United States in 1954. While the story behind this particular sketchbook has been explored by others elsewhere, the manner in which Shiff discusses the work in relation to the importance of drawing and chance is pertinent, especially with regard to understanding the works’ uniquely serial nature. As Shiff describes:

On a New York bus in 1954, Ellsworth Kelly was holding an open book, intending to read. Circumstances distracted him: 'I noticed that the shadows of the window frames falling across my book changed as the bus moved. With my use of drawing by chance, I quickly marked many pages with outlines of the changing shadows.' On returning to his studio, Kelly took up a different type of book, one that consisted of blank pages, a publisher's dummy. It joined a chain of shadow images, first projected by light, then recorded in contour, then transferred twice over as anamorphic shapes: 'I inked in the drawings in the sketchbook ... several of which I developed into paintings.'²²

Like many of the serially produced drawings in Kelly's extensive catalogue, the serial aspect to this work is not overly emphasized by either Kelly or his numerous commentators. This is despite the fact that this sketchbook – published in 2007 as a stand-alone work in a format which faithfully reproduces the original – effectively produces a unified serial drawing, given that it links a single continuous gesture over twenty-five pages. Despite the connections which have long been made between Kelly's work and minimalism, Kelly himself was never overly keen on either theorizing his approach or explicitly contextualizing it in alignment with the art world concerns of the day. Rather than risk becoming involved with the rise of conceptual art that was occurring in tandem with pared back, minimalist approach to art production during the early 1960s, Kelly positioned himself apart from the trends that dominated the periods in which he worked, meaning he avoided expressing an explicit interest in the concept of seriality as it occurred at that time. That being said, the manner in which *Sketchbook 23* appears as a serial artwork courtesy of its manifestation as a particular type of extended drawing can easily be gleaned both from the format of the work and from this particular excerpt by Shiff.

As Shiff describes, the original sketchbook drawings produced on the bus by Kelly were tracings, or when considered in sequence, trackings. In effect Kelly was tracking the contours of the shadows cast by the bus windows as it rolled and bounced down the road, following these solid forms as they slid seamlessly over the pages of his sketchbook, shifting position relative to the moving sunlight as it streamed through the windows. For Shiff, these images resemble the 'frames of a film or the units of an animator's flip book'.²³ However, despite this recognition, Shiff does not comment on the unified seriality which underpins this work. The underlying sense of series is found readily enough when we reflect on the fact that the original set of drawings must have captured a single span of duration: a period of time spent riding the bus which is recorded in *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus* as an unbroken gesture spanning twenty-five separate pages. Indeed,

Shiff's omission stands even further out when we realize that in order to refer to the original drawings as a series of 'trackings' rather than 'tracings', the underlying unity to the series of pages would have to have been noted, at least implicitly. In short, it is the serial unity of this piece, given as a twice-transcribed record of a single event, that provides explicit evidence of how chance functions within Kelly's non-compositional strategy. It also provides a compelling account of how seriality can obliquely emerge as an understanding from a sequence of shapes by alluding to the qualities of series that remain withdrawn within the composition of such works.

On the other hand, Kelly's *Romanesque Series* consists of a series of twenty-four black and white lithographs with embossing (including 12 with intaglio), published together as a series in 1976. To initial appearances, this series of monochrome prints presents the viewer with a series of subtle variations upon an abstract form, and a rather brutally simple one at that. Within each of the twenty-four prints we are presented with what appears to be an interlocking form composed of just two monochrome forms, and which, as a joined pair, display the shape of a graceful curve at the point where they meet. The majority of the prints within this series are composed of a single pair of interlocking black and white forms, but in six of the prints – those that include both embossing and intaglio – we observe that the paired forms consist of white coupled with off-white. However, appearances can be deceptive, and this iconic work by Kelly is no exception. What appears initially as a set of slight variations upon a simple monochrome form points towards a number of other interests within Kelly's oeuvre, and which the serial format of the work helps to convey courtesy of a beguiling process of concealing and revealing. For example, there is the visible connection between the slight curve seen within the centre of each print, where the two opposing forms interlock, coupled with the curve which is atypical of Romanesque architecture. This architectural curve is identified most explicitly in the upper arch of Romanesque windows, numerous examples of which still survive in the various Romanesque churches, abbeys and cathedrals situated in the communes and cities of France. It is towards such historical sites that the titles of the individual works in this series point, with names like *Angers*, *Brioude*, *Caen*, *Canigou*, *Montmorillon*, *Serrabone* and so on. Yet although the underlying architectural element represents an important aspect for appreciating this series, it is not visible in the literal manner which the printed curve is visible within each artwork. The formal connection between the shapes that are seen and the inspiration for their design does not appear by simply looking at this series of prints, but

by understanding something of the background context to the work. This background contains the Romanesque architectural connotations derived from the title of the series, but it also references something else: namely the appreciation of interlocking shadow and form which Kelly developed during his stint serving with his camouflage unit in France.

The years which Kelly spent in the 603rd Engineers Camouflage Battalion were a fundamentally formative aesthetic experience for the young artist in more ways than one. Of particular note is the period when Kelly's camouflage unit was attached to the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, a tactical deception unit known as The Ghost Army. As Goossen describes, this unit 'was devoted entirely to deception'.²⁴ Reversing the philosophy of concealment associated with camouflage, the mission of this newly formed outfit was actively impersonating other Allied Army units in order to deceive the enemy. This meant their remit was entirely devoted to making dummies, to making things appear rather than disappear. In producing a travelling road show of fake radio transmissions, inflatable tanks and bogus vehicles 'hidden' with specially rigged up camouflage, along with broadcasting amplified recordings of non-existent battalions on the move, this unit staged more than twenty battlefield deceptions after D-Day, often very close to the front lines. Needless to say, Kelly's time with them was fully engaged in developing the art of deception. His military task was to create a subtly confusing world of light and shadow and stands as something of a precursor for the tension between absence and presence, the visible and the unseen which Kelly created within his later artworks.

Moreover, as Goossen notes, the particular way in which Kelly recognized the 'concept of a shadow as concrete' goes back to this formative experience, although it found a fuller expression in his later works, wherein the simplicity of outline associated with the silhouette became paired with Kelly's other abiding interest: chance.²⁵ It is on this point that we revisit the importance of the curve as it is repeated within Kelly's serial works: a form which is related as much to the chance manner in which natural events occur and make themselves visible as it is to deliberate decision-making. Treated as both a formal unit of composition and a means to join one form with another across a series, the curve is a form which can make the disappeared reappear. It can stand in for the absence of another shape, like an architectural feature, or it can reveal the outline of one which is already removed, such as the line of a shadow which is cast across the rounded pages of an open sketchbook. As Goossen remarks of the initial sketchbook drawings which provided the impetus for *Sketchbook 23*:

It is apparent that the pages in the paperback were not flat when the image was recorded but swelled roundly as such books do. The curves are thus not arbitrarily designed but follow a natural cause, which endows them with vitality. The tension point, too, where the two white forms meet, at what was the seam of the book, has a rightness about it that one suspects could not have resulted simply as a matter of taste.²⁶

Three tensions: time, space, seriality

Considering Kelly's work in relation to the first of our three tensions, time, we can start by reflecting on the serial arrangement of forms as they appear in *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus*. In reflecting on this tension, we are thinking of the confrontation between the serial artwork, given as the sensual object, and the series of sensual qualities through which this unified understanding is made visibly manifest: the sequence of twenty-five drawings that make up the series, bound together as a book. However, as with Jawlensky's works, in reflecting on this serial structure in temporal terms, we are not only reflecting on the durational manner in which these twenty-five drawings are encountered as a unified, composite artwork by the beholder, but also on how the series of curved forms serve to picture time as an interlinked span of single duration: namely the bus ride that Kelly initially took, and from which this sequence of shadow forms is derived.

For example, if we consider *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus* in the physical manner in which it appears, as a book, it means we ought to treat the series of individual drawings that compose it in the manner in which they also appear, that is, as a sequence of pages within this book. Rather than claim to be able to observe the series of works all in one go, as we could if all twenty-five drawings were hung in a row upon a gallery wall, we proceed on the basis that each drawing is perceived one at a time, emerging in sequence as we flip each page. What is interesting about this process is how the various black and white forms appear interlinked to a quite remarkable degree. Although the pages of this facsimile book are not numbered, presumably to accord with the original Gideon sketchbook in which they were produced, in turning from one page to the next we are nevertheless confronted with a sensation that these images are indissolubly linked to one another. We see double page spreads, like those mentioned by Goossen, where the curve of a white shape extends across both ink black pages, almost (but not quite) meeting at the seam in the middle, itself a mirror of where the original sketchbook seam would have been. Flipping through

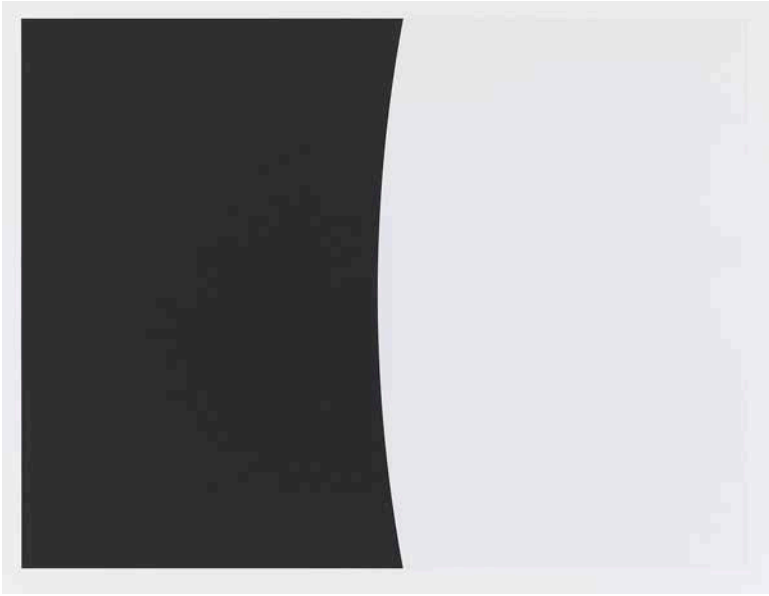


Figure 10 Ellsworth Kelly, *Serrabone* from 'Romanesque Series', 1973-6 (lithograph with intaglio and embossing from a series of twenty-four lithographs with embossing), © The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

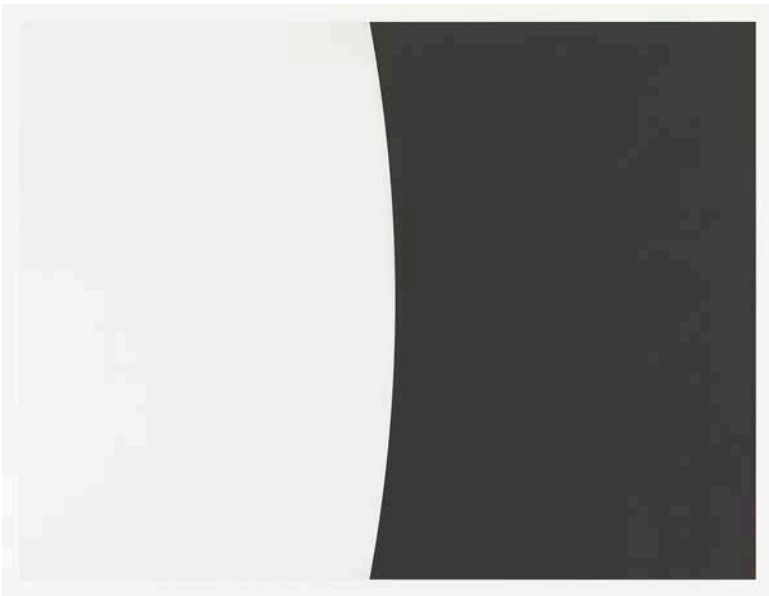


Figure 11 Ellsworth Kelly, *Senanque* from 'Romanesque Series', 1973-6 (lithograph with intaglio and embossing from a series of twenty-four lithographs with embossing), © The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence.

the book in this manner we become aware of a unified quality to this series, where form speaks to form across the spread of each page. For example, on one page we come across a rather particular composition, an F-shaped black form which sits as if propped up against the stark white background which supports it. Yet immediately upon turning the page we see this same composition repeated, although it has shifted its position somewhat, as if something, either the drawer or that which was drawn, has shifted its position in the interim.

In short, by confronting each of these drawings in turn we become attuned to the fact that we are to some degree recreating the unified, durational experience which Kelly initially encountered. We are thinking here of the artist who once took a ride on a New York bus, sketchbook precariously balanced upon one knee, observing and rapidly transcribing these shadow-forms with a flick of his pen as they played themselves out across the surface of each page. Taken individually, what we are presented with on each individual page is an abstracted form. We see monochrome shapes floating atop a blank background that make no sense on their own: sensual qualities for whom the sensual object to which they belong is veiled to some degree. But taken as whole, wherein the twenty-five drawings that constitute the sensual object *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus* are durationally experienced as a set of unified sensual qualities, we realize we are also re-experiencing time as it once unfolded for Kelly. We observe how the outline of a shadow which is seen on one page subtly anticipates the form which appears on the next, just as the shadow which Kelly observed moving slowly across the bus towards him must have loosely indicated the path that it would take as it expanded outwards across the open sketchbook, while the sense of time swelled as it passed.

Thinking of Kelly's work in terms of our second tension, space, we proceed to consider the relationship which subsists between the array of visible sensual qualities that appear before us, given as the series of individual elements which make up a series, and the withdrawn real object which is obliquely hinted at via the appearance of such. As before, this process involves us thinking about how we might discern both a relational and a non-relational understanding of space within Kelly's serial output. To give ourselves some room to reflect upon this idea, we switch works at this juncture, and imagine gazing upon Kelly's *Romanesque Series* instead. The change in format regarding how these two serial works are presented, book format versus non-book format, also provides us with a novel way to reconsider the idea of space in relation to the question of what is pictured in serial terms. As we recall, Kelly's *Romanesque Series* is composed of twenty-four monochrome lithographs. Although each lithograph in the series

appears spatially separate from the others, in formal terms they all appear very closely related to one another. So close in fact, that if one were to cast an eye over all twenty-four works hanging in a row, one could be forgiven for thinking that they simply present a set of variations on the exact same underlying form. When considering this series in terms of the relational understanding of space, meaning the relation between the beholder and the withdrawn real object, we are moved to inquire what this form might be?

We do not ask this question with the expectation that we will be able to concretely gain the real object via a knowledgeable answer to it. On the contrary, as Harman clearly indicates, the real object remains fundamentally withdrawn from all forms of direct access. But given that artworks like Kelly's *Romanesque Series* are alluring precisely because of the manner in which they intimate to the beholder that something (we do not know what precisely) remains withdrawn within them, we perhaps ought to be able to gain at least an indication of what this something might be, courtesy of the forms we are visibly presented with. In serial works like the *Romanesque Series*, this idea becomes all the more pertinent, precisely because we are looking for what might invariantly reappear across the full series, described in formal terms. Within the framework of OOS, those forms which repeatedly and persistently reappear across a series in a consistent manner act as signposts, indirectly indicating the sense of a withdrawn real object that lies beyond.

In imagining ourselves to observe the full series of twenty-four lithographs which comprise the *Romanesque Series*, we can see that eighteen of the works present an interlinking pair of black and white forms, while the remaining six present an interlinking pair of white and off-white forms. However, what appears in a persistent manner across all twenty-four lithographs is the single graceful curve that joins one form to the adjoining form within each monochrome pair. In some of the black and white works, for example, *Tournus* or *Canigou*, this curve appears vertically, wherein the black form constitutes a convex shape, while the white form constitutes a concave one. In other works this arrangement is rotated, so that we see the black form above the white form, as in *Thoronet*, or vice versa, as in *Cluny*, but where the joining curve appears as a horizontal line dividing them, rather than a vertical. Added to this is a further layer of serial permutation, whereupon these compositions are all inverted. In *Fontenay* we see the black concave form appearing on the left, white convex on the right, while in *Senanque* the reverse occurs, as black concave appears on the right, white convex on the left. As complementary pairs of convex and concave monochrome forms that appear interlinked in different configurations across the series as a whole,

each individual lithograph presents a unified shape, whereupon the single curve within it serves to both join and distinguish one form from the other.

And yet, despite all the permutational variation we can see across this series of twenty-four works, the single curve which reappears within each stands out as a feature which is strongly, if obliquely reminiscent of an architectural element. Coupled with the titles of each of these lithographs, with evocative sounding names like *Conques*, *Talmont*, *Fontenay*, *Serrabone* and so on, it does not take a great leap of the imagination, or even a great deal of historical knowledge, to appreciate that what is being alluded to in this formal feature is the graceful curve associated with Romanesque architecture. In terms of our relational understanding of space, this is where things get interesting. Described formally, the curve in each lithograph is not something which appears in the same material manner as the black and white forms which present it appear. Rather, the Romanesque curve is caused, we might say, as a result of these two paired forms meeting each other. In being so caused, it points away from itself, towards an understanding which is somewhat withdrawn. If we accept that this curve is not present in quite the same material manner in which the pair of forms which generate it appear present, then we discover the role it has in making something else appear. In tandem with the sequence of permutational variations and the shape of the Romanesque curve which hardly varies, what is being alluded to in Kelly's *Romanesque Series* is an architecturally infused memory: a sense of space that cannot be captured in literal terms, only indirectly invoked. In seeing the sequence of paired forms arrayed before us, we sense the powerful interplay of light and shadow which is cast across this series of lithographs. And from this we might also intuit something else: the manner in which a similar kind of interplay was once observed by a young Ellsworth Kelly as he stood quietly in the sunlit vault at the Abbey Church of Saint Foy, Conques, looking up at the dark slender shadows cast by the Romanesque ceiling arches that receded away from him in regular intervals, far above his head.

This brings us to the last of our three tensions to consider: seriality itself. As we recall, seriality describes the fissile link that holds between the visible sensual object and its withdrawn real qualities. In the case of OOS, it names the tension between the seriality which is perceived within the visible array of individual works that constitute the serial artwork, given as the sensual object, and the underlying concept(s) of series which allows this same understanding to be appreciated by the beholder. To reflect on this tension here means we are asking what conceptual understanding of series might underpin Kelly's work: What kind of underlying order or structural unity brings together the various

individual elements which constitute a given series, and which present the unified sensual object (the serial artwork) we see before us? For example, in *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus*, it appears that the underlying structure of this series is rather like the one that Coplans subscribes to, namely an open-ended or expandable order. Certainly, if we judge according to the abstract arrangement of shapes seen within each page, combined with the seemingly non-pictorial nature of these ink drawings, this seems to be the case. For while this series of works has a first element (the first drawing which appears in the book), the fact it has the last element that it does appear somewhat arbitrary. After all, Kelly could have continued this series if he wanted to, and simply produced a bigger book with more pages in it, thus allowing for a bigger sequence of connected works – there is nothing in the visual form of these images which suggests a self-exhausting concept is present. We might also adopt Coplans's more specific claim, that seriality constitutes 'a particular inter-relationship, rigorously consistent, of structure and syntax', within which there must be strong evidence of a 'single indivisible process that links the internal structure of a work to that of other works within a differentiated whole'.²⁷ To agree with this idea means emphasizing the importance of macro-structure to this work: one whose controlling influence over the visible unity of the work means accepting that 'a high degree of randomness in the use of infra-forms is possible'.²⁸

But this point brings us to a place where the conceptual understandings of series begin to overlap slightly, and wherein we start to find competing visions among the theorists outlined in Chapter 1, regarding how the underlying order inherent to Kelly's seriality ought to be understood. For if we take a moment to reflect upon Coplans's idea that macro-structure permits a high degree of randomness to occur, we realize that this does not provide a particularly apt reading of *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus*, despite the seemingly abstract nature of the monochrome forms. The act that Kelly was initially involved in when producing these drawings was that of precisely tracing an observed movement – tracking shadows as they moved across a bus – and during the time in which this event occurred. In this sense, there was nothing random about it. Granted, we can acknowledge that such an assessment requires a requisite sum of background historical knowledge to be in place. But as we recall, seeking to intuit what might possibly constitute the real qualities of an object is a theoretic act according to Harman, one which is retrospectively carried out, meaning such prior understandings are precisely what is needed for such concepts to be formed. Furthermore, the fact that this particular series of drawings owes both its origins and its resulting aesthetic form to the

durational encounter with moving shadows which Kelly transcribed during his initial sojourn on the bus means that the 'particular inter-relationship' that links them together as a unified whole can be approached via another idea: the concept of serial iteration.

As we recall, for Dyer, seriality is understood according to the concept of serial iteration, defined as meaning 'the result of each stage in a series is the basis of the next stage'.²⁹ Reflecting on the underlying order of *Sketchbook 23: Drawings on a Bus*, we realize that this concept neatly encapsulates the visual relationship of one drawing to the next within this particular series. Rather than anything random, we appreciate that this series of drawings are likely arranged in their particular sequence according to the initial act of drawing which produced them. Indeed, as Shiff suggests, what we perceive in this serial work is linked 'chain of shadow images', meaning that when we see a form appear across a double page spread, we can then intuit this form to be a representation of those shadows which Kelly observed passing over the pages his sketchbook.³⁰ However, it is important to note that while we think we can discern the underlying order to this serial work based on the visibility of what appears upon each page, the relationship from one to the other is oblique, rather than direct.

As Schiff notes, there was a minimum of two sketchbooks involved in the production of this one serial work: the initial sketchbook that Kelly had with him on the bus, plus the publisher's dummy which he transferred these images into when he was back in the studio. The first set of shadow images was projected by light, the second recorded through contour. Added to this is the fact that we have no way of knowing whether Kelly modified the order and arrangement of these forms when he transcribed the contents of one sketchbook to the other. Although the black and white shapes represent the recorded interplay of light and shadow and seem to offer a degree of fidelity to the original bus experience as a result, there are still layers of transcription present here. With this in mind, we can argue it is knowledge of what this book of drawings relates back to which aids the beholders' appreciation of what they see before them, rather than the need to believe we are looking at something which is exact in terms of an original. As viewers, we are able to instinctively connect the underlying sense of order seen across this series of ink drawings with the idea of interlinked shadows that, we are told, Kelly once saw and recorded in his sketchbook while sat on a moving bus, but without this link needing to be (or even able to be) made direct. Indeed, it is highly likely that most viewers of this work have taken at least one bus ride in their lives, and whereupon they, perhaps bored from being stuck in traffic too long, have found

themselves watching the curiously smooth interplay of shadows on the back of the seat opposite. Even if we include those rare souls that have not, it is a safe bet they can also relate to the effortless way in which interlinked shadows pass across a moving surface, indicating the path which they are due to take while sunlight silently refills the space behind. In short, while the precise order and arrangement of the original shadows which Kelly observed on the bus is lost to direct access, the universality of this experience remains underpinning the unity of form which this serial artwork visually presents. It is thanks to the way that Kelly's series of drawings link themselves one to the other that we sense a set of underlying eidetic qualities to the serial arrangement of this work. It is thanks to both that the work appears in the form in which it does.

Hanne Darboven

Closely aligned with the emergence of conceptual art, and renowned for the minimalist installations of serially arrayed handwritten numbers for which she is perhaps best known, Hanne Darboven's rich and varied works are formidable enterprises to behold. Whether it be the all-encompassing encyclopaedic scope presented by *Kultugeschichte 1880–1983* (*Cultural History 1880–1983*), with its sequenced and grouped series of personal effects, three-dimensional objects and multi-coloured diagrammatic panels, or the more recent *Life, living* (1997–8), which joyfully depicts the years 1990–9 as a giant mathematical representation, complete with 1,400 sheets illustrated in type and ball-point pen, each of Darboven's works presents a distinctly serial methodology for the viewer to engage with. Given the way in which this overarching methodology owes something of its origins to the influence of both Bochner and LeWitt, we note the extent to which drawing and seriality combine within Darboven's work, and provide the means through which many of her conceptual concerns are realized. Despite the broad relevance of Darboven's highly systematic practice for our discussion, wherein the early series of *Konstruktionen* drawings (1966–8) stands out as a particularly intriguing example of serially developed drawing, the conceptual demands which this work appears to place upon the viewer is worth acknowledging at the outset. In an exhibition review of Darboven's later work, Kay Whitney summarizes the varied manner in which such installations are able to be encountered by the viewer, and how the aesthetic appreciation of Darboven's beguiling use of serial repetition depends in no small part on the array of interests which they bring with them:

Viewers of her difficult and challenging works have multiple alternatives for comprehending her vision. It may be dismissed as opaque and *recherche*. It can be read as brilliant Minimalist innovation, the residue of specific conceptual choices. And her repetitive inscription of words and gestures on hundreds of sheets of paper can be seen as durational performance.³¹

While we are interested in the multifaceted manner in which the beholder encounters such works, our interest is limited to those elements of Darboven's practice that can be understood through the lens of serial drawing. Similar in many ways to Kelly, the position of drawing within Darboven's practice is that it underpins the thinking which is realized in a variety of other media: a situation not unlike how seriality operates, at least in methodological terms. Yet this area is also where one of the major differences between the two artists emerges. While Kelly developed many of his large-scale works by pairing the format of the series with the fluid effortlessness associated with the observational sketch, Darboven deploys something of the opposite approach: a densely repetitive, albeit hand-made process which deftly combines drawing, writing and various mathematically derived, algorithmic procedures. Although resolutely singular as artworks, Darboven's installations are often composed of numerous series that tessellate and overlap each other across a number of panels, systematically arranged in and around an exhibition space. And while in Kelly's work there is seldom any indication that the viewer is being presented with a set of numerical problems that need to be 'solved' as such, in Darboven's installations viewers can often encounter just the opposite. In beholding her large and formidable works, viewers often come away with the distinct feeling that something is being actively, albeit quietly worked out somewhere within the panels of the display: an idea to which the diagrammatic form of the drawings readily lend their support, in form as well as content.

The *Konstrucktionen* drawings, produced between 1966 and 1968, are an excellent example of this kind of approach, both in terms of their serial structure and the manner in which they utilize the language of drawing to develop the ideas presented within. As Dan Adler describes, this particular series features 'geometric diagrams rendered laboriously and inexpensively in pencil on green graph paper, weaving together a fabric of numbers and words according to complex permutational formulas and computations'.³² The visible results of such formulaic and computational arrangements are presented to the viewer as a distinctive type of graphical form, one that appears redolent of something being deduced, if not necessarily explained. Multiple hand-drawn lines criss-cross the gridded series of graph paper sheets, appearing as either scribbled, arranged, aligned, sequenced, permuted, repeated or iterated, depending on the viewer's particular

sensibility for appreciating for the meaning behind such forms. Less subjectively construed is what the drawings actually convey in mathematical terms, namely a set of mathematical findings which underpin Darboven's drawing performance regardless of how the marks are aesthetically interpreted. For example, the mathematical operation observed to be taking place in the *Konstrucktionen* drawings is based upon a process of calendrical computations: specifically, one where the act of adding numbers stipulates the date according to the Gregorian calendar, but where the digits indicating the millennium and century are excluded (so, for example, the date 1.1.1988 would be represented as 1.1.88).

As Adler recounts, the operation was designated by the letter 'K', meaning that 'the numbers were translated into a depiction of linked units: 1 plus 1 plus 8 plus 8 equals 18K'.³³ What emerged from this computationally derived method of working was a series of drawings that dealt with the topic of time in an entirely novel way. In displaying numerical sequences that extended their span across an entire century, a serial work by Darboven might represent the rise and fall of numbers that occur within this period as an undulating, unfolding series of rows and columns, all laid forth for the viewers aesthetic appreciation courtesy of Darboven's neat and tidy hand-drawn script. In many ways, the *Konstrucktionen* drawings are rigorous expressions of early conceptualist ideals involving repetitive modes of production. The concerns of both the era and the place in which they were executed (New York in the late 1960s) are represented in a form which deftly reflects commodity prices and industrial manufacturing practices, and which duly serve to subvert the modernist idea of the authentic and 'original' art object. Indeed, Darboven's use of a seemingly depersonalized, highly systematized drawing practice serves to emphasize the viewers awareness of the underlying conceptual framework in a way that a more deliberately pictorial strategy would possibly not have achieved.

However, although Darboven's work is deeply systematic in its underpinnings, it does not follow that there are solid answers to be found therein. Instead, the depth of complexity which is delivered via Darboven's systematic approach towards combining drawing and writing creates multiple series for the viewer to encounter within (or rather during) the time which they spend looking. As Adler observes, 'For Darboven, there is never simply one series at work, but rather an entangling of sequences and overlaid progressions.'³⁴ Hence, despite the degree to which such works appear mathematically and scientifically refined, Darboven's computations are 'ultimately inconclusive' on the basis that they seem to either exceed their projected ends, or never reach them in the first place. Such inconclusivity

appears all the more redolent when we factor in the myriad materials and texts which compose her complex installations. For Adler, this occurs in part because Darboven 'habitually disrespects the subgroups within all of her sequential arrangements'.³⁵ Sequences and structures within Darboven's work appear decentred and become entangled within one another, wherein loops and knots form endless chains of information that can be nigh on impossible for the average viewer to follow with any degree of fidelity. Adler is far from alone in recognizing this particular quality to Darboven's work, one in which both writing and drawing are revealed as forms that seem to do everything but describe. As Briony Fer eruditely notes:

The more you try to figure it out, the more the spectator becomes aware of losing the thread. The sequences are not to be understood if that suggests following its rational logic, or only up to the point where it is necessary to see its deviant meanderings departing from the system we are all familiar with. There is a deliberate opacity which calls upon a different mode of attention to the work, one which is slow and cumulative.³⁶

Fer's particular reading of the complexity which is inherent to Darboven's serially developed approach to making work is compelling, but it is far from being the only interpretation. Indeed, there are those like Vanessa Place who see the opposite understanding rendered in Darboven's serried numerals and cursive script. For Place, Darboven's intentions within the work come through as 'breathtakingly and consistently crystalline', despite the fact that many beholders clearly struggle at times to articulate what exactly it is they are being presented with.³⁷ For Place, the issue is semiotic in nature. On this particular reading, confusion occurs only if we try and seek a face value assessment of the textual and material elements to Darboven's work, rather than begin, as Place does, with the premise that all texts only occur in context and must be interpreted as such. As Place describes:

The commonplace interpretative error is to take Darboven's signifier's at face value – oddly, to make a Greenbergian assumption that they are what they materially represent, including the materiality of Time and History.³⁸

Instead of any such Greenbergian formalist reading, what Place advocates instead is treating Darboven's series of panels as akin to the pages of a book, in order that they might be literally read in some form. While Place is a little unclear on the details for how this might work in practice, her approach recommends that Darboven's serial grid is fundamentally narrative and must be recognized as such. One immediate impact of treating Darboven's serial panels in this narrative manner is that it renders the repetitive factor within it as a form of repetition that



Figure 12 Hanne Darboven, Installation view of *Wunschkonzert*, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, 15 December 2010–29 January 2011, © Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

never repeats. Instead, in a manner not dissimilar to Dyer's iterative conception of series, the repetition which appears in Darboven's work is considered to be iterative, accumulative, allegorizing and analogizing. This narrative approach towards interpreting Darboven's work also finds an important precursor in an earlier reading by Lucy Lippard, *Hanne Darboven: Deep in Numbers*.³⁹ First published in *Artforum* in 1973, Lippard promotes the idea that, while Darboven's mathematical systems are indeed decodable by the interested observer, this facet actually comprises the least interesting element to her work. Instead, for Lippard the beholder ought to concern themselves with how the various sequences are woven together in such a fashion as to make it possible for them to be read, as it were, albeit in the manner akin to the childhood act of reciting repetitive nursery rhymes ('row, row, row your boat') rather than anything which might resemble a storyline, or even a plot. In an echo of Fer and of Place, Lippard cautions that the act of reading the work in such a fashion will not bring about the kind of lucidity which is associated with an easily digested interpretation, but instead serves to affirm a kind of poetic intensity, one that borders on a form of insanity.

Two works: *Card Index: Filing Cabinet, Part 2* (1975) and *Wunschkonzert* (1984)

A close development of the earlier *Konstrucktionen* drawings, *Card Index: Filing Cabinet, Part 2* (1975) is a classic example of how Darboven's systematic approach to producing serially developed work matured during the mid-

1970s. Comprised of 600 works on paper arranged in ten framed panels, plus a framed index which consists of thirteen handwritten sections, this work is actually one half of a larger work, entitled *Card Index: Filing Cabinet*, which Darboven exhibited in two halves in New York in 1978. Part 1 of the work was shown at Leo Castelli Gallery, while Part 2, now in the Tate collection, was shown simultaneously at Sperone Westwater Fischer Gallery. The Tate labels this half of the work in their catalogue as T03410, having purchased it from Sperone Westwater Fischer Gallery in 1982. According to the Tate website, the ten panels of T03410 are numbered 10–19, whereas the first part of the work (still owned by Leo Castelli Gallery) numbers 1–9. This means that the complete work, *Card Index: Filing Cabinet*, consists of nineteen framed panels, although the full work comprising both parts has never been displayed together in one single location. The work itself is based on the filing system of the eighteenth-century German jurist, Johann Jakob Moser, and Darboven even goes so far as to dedicate it to him. Composed almost entirely of handwritten numerals and words, this serial artwork represents precisely one century of time, in the sense that the mathematical procedure underpinning the work is based upon the act of counting out a century. To achieve this feat in aesthetic terms, the work combines a series of printed graphic elements combined with Darboven's distinctive handwriting. Each of the ten framed panels which contains these elements measures 188 cm x 221 cm, and each panel is backed by an overall support of hot-pressed cartridge paper, upon which are stuck:

Sixty individually numbered sheets of yellow, lightweight wove paper, framed ten across and six down. Each of the yellow sheets in turn supports two grey sheets of medium weight wove paper. On the yellow sheets is a regular calligraphic pattern of black ink loops, resembling writing. Each of the sheets is paginated (from one to sixty), reading across from top left to bottom right, and the panel number (for example '10' or '19') is written in the centre between the two grey cards. The two smaller grey sheets within each unit are printed with a series of grids.⁴⁰

Each of the sixty yellow sheets within each framed unit has two columns that run from top to bottom, one on either side of the sheet. Appearing inside each column is Darboven's distinctive U-shaped writing, the 'calligraphic pattern of black ink loops' referred to in the quote above, running from top to bottom. Within the central column of each page appear the two grey cards, each of which shows a certain number of boxes with corresponding numerals, carefully written out by hand. These numbers represent the smallest and the

highest checksum value for each day, respectively. Also appearing in each of the ten panels is an identical sequence of numbers, seen distributed across the grids printed on the 120 grey cards, but where the first and last sequential days have been crossed out in diary fashion, thus offsetting the numbering from one panel to the next. Arranged according to frequency of occurrence, the numbers either increase or decrease until they have reached a factor of ten. As the Tate helpfully explains:

In panel 10, Seite (page) 1, the left hand top grey sheet has sixty-one squares and the right hand bottom grey sheet has two squares. In page two, the top sheet loses a square to the bottom sheet and so on. Within the main panel only forty-two units (the yellow pages) are 'active' at any one time, starting from page ten. The remaining eighteen are cancelled by x's. The active units are numbered. Thus there are three series of numbers; the main panel number, the page number and the unit number.⁴¹

A later development of the *Konstrucktionen* drawing process, *Wunschkonzert* (1984) stands as another truly monumental piece: a serially developed work composed of 1008 individual pages and one index sheet. First shown in Documenta 11 as a collection of loose pages arranged in various folders, this work has since been displayed at a number of locations, including at Regen Projects in Los Angeles. The construction of the individual pages is somewhat typical of Darboven's development up until this point, appearing as a combination of ink on paper and collaged greeting cards, produced according to a standardized paper size, each measuring 29.7 cm x 21.5 cm. What stands out within this work in relation to the earlier *Konstrucktionen* drawings is the manner in which it directly incorporates a musical element: the 1008 pages are in fact divided into four Opus's (Opus 17a and b and Opus 18a and b), making this work able to function in the manner of a musical score. In addition to the manner in which the visual elements are arranged, the musical underpinning to this piece manifests itself in other ways. The title of the work refers to the Sunday afternoon musical request programme featured on the German Norddeutscher Rundfunk radio station, while those who were able to attend the exhibition at Regen Projects were treated to a live performance by cellist Tom Peters wherein the work was literally performed, courtesy of the manner in which the hand-drawn marks were turned into a musical score.

Each of the four Opus's which comprise Darboven's *Wunschkonzert* are comprised of thirty-six poems, and each poem is composed of six pages. When the entire artwork is installed, these six pages are individually framed and arranged vertically. Each vertical column of six pages is topped off with a framed title page

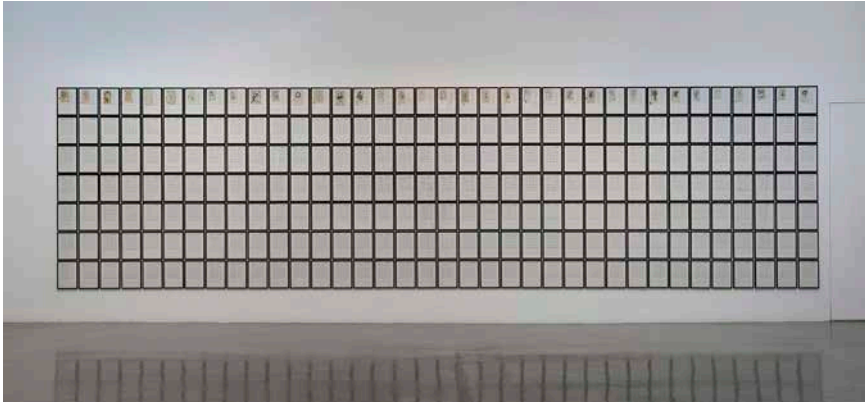


Figure 13 Hanne Darboven, Installation view of *Wunschkonzert*, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, 15 December 2010–29 January 2011, © Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

(making each column 7 pages in height), within which an antique greeting card celebrating a particular Christian conformation appears. At Regen Projects, the installation of the piece was arranged so that the four Opus's would appear one Opus per wall, thus dividing the work into four sections according to the four main walls of the gallery space. As each Opus is composed of thirty-six poems there are approximately 252 framed pages per wall, arranged in a grid format. As the press release from Regen Projects describes it, 'The poems reveal a rhythmic movement in their increasing and decreasing rows of numbers, and the checksum values are represented in digits and line-notations (17a, 18a) or by digits entered in a grid (17b, 18b).' Described in terms of being a serial drawing, what the viewer is presented with on each wall is a huge grid-like structure, wherein the thirty-six poems that comprise each Opus are arranged as a series of thirty-six columns along one wall, with each column seven pages high. Looking across the columns and rows of this work, we realize that there is a kind of flow occurring in two directions simultaneously within the grid, both down and across. Even without understanding the computational procedure underpinning this work, we can still clearly perceive this double movement courtesy of the notes carefully written by Darboven atop each page. Depending on where within the overall schema the pages appear, the note either reads 'opus 17b → opus 18a ↓' or alternatively 'opus 17a ↓ opus 18a →'. Again, on some of the pages we see the boxes of the grid structure filled in with numbers counting in succession, while on other pages we see the boxes filled in with Darboven's distinctive hand-drawn lines.

Three tensions: time, space, seriality

Reflecting on Darboven's work in relation to our first tension, time, we are moved to think about the particular manner in which the series of individual works are able to visibly manifest the serial artwork that we see before us. Described in terms of our OOS framework, this means we are looking to see how the manifold sensual qualities (the individual works which compose the series) are able to concretely present the serial artwork in visible terms, given as a unified sensual object which unfolds in and over time. As before, we realize that within the context of OOS time does not just involve the manner in which the sensual object slowly reveals itself to the beholder as a series of encountered profiles, à la Harman's OOO, but that it also involves reflecting on the way that time is serially pictured within the work, according to the specific attributes of the serial artwork in question. In short, like the tension we have named space, time appears as something of a doubled understanding for OOS, and this complex understanding is readily apparent when we consider the work of Hanne Darboven.

Taking up the first of the two works we have just outlined, *Card Index: Filing Cabinet, Part 2*, we try and imagine how this work might unfold for a viewer who arrives to find it installed within the Tate gallery. As we recall, this work is composed of ten framed panels, within each of which appears sixty graphic works on yellow paper and grey card – for our purposes, 60 drawings – making 600 drawings in total. Of course, given that each of these ten framed panels measures 188 cm x 221 cm, it is unlikely that we would encounter all ten panels hung in a single row, or even all of them upon one wall. Indeed, images from the Tate show a maximum of four framed panels on any one wall, meaning that, for the casual viewer who was passing swiftly through the exhibition space, the serial artwork would in all likelihood be appreciated courtesy of these four panels only. Whether we choose to think of the four separate panels as the sensual qualities that display this serial artwork or the 240 individual drawings they contain is an active question, and not one that is easy to answer. But however one chooses to subdivide these elements, what is appreciated by even the casual viewer is the recognition that these works are themselves part of a larger whole: the unified serial artwork named *Card Index: Filing Cabinet, Part 2*. However, the question regarding how to subdivide the sensual qualities, given as the series of adumbrations or profiles through which this minimalist piece of art visibly appears, points to a more complex issue. In view of the insistently repetitive nature of this iconic piece, it is not immediately clear what a viewer might think

they can gain from choosing to walk slowly past each of these four framed panels in turn, perhaps hoping to inspect all 240 drawings they contain, versus choosing to linger before only one panel, and glancing across but a handful of the yellow sheets and grey cards displayed within. Indeed, when seen from across the room, each of these four framed panels looks more or less identical to the next, suggesting that a few drawings seen in one might be sufficient to appreciate the highly similar-looking drawings in all the others, and so perhaps grasp the full work accordingly. After all, we know that the full work, *Card Index: Filing Cabinet*, cannot be seen in its entirety, and indeed, never was – what the Tate possesses is only the second half of this work, frames 10–19.

But this reading is not quite the full story, at least not for the more interested viewer who takes their time to look more closely at this work. For although it may have seemed initially as though each framed panel is identical to the others, suggesting the entire artwork of ten panels could perhaps have been appreciated via a single glance at only one, this reading is dissolved upon a closer examination. Zooming in to inspect a group of two or three of these yellow and grey drawings, what becomes clear is how subtly different each one is from the drawings beside it. Not only in terms of the different sets of numbers which appear, but also due to the manner in which Darboven's calligraphic script is carefully drawn, wherein each new line of U-shaped loops reveals itself to be unique, drawn slightly differently from all the rest. With this realization the viewer is encouraged to stand back a few steps, and the sense of time which had until then been compressed into one panel suddenly fragments, expanding outwards across them all. This is time understood as a fissile tension. With the realization that each of the sixty repetitive-looking drawings in each of these ten panels is in fact unique comes a set of further insights, beginning with the appreciation that this serial artwork took quite some time to make. Before the computational puzzle of this work has even been grasped – wherein another span of time, a single century, is revealed to be represented via a complex underlying mathematical procedure – the viewer who thought they could appreciate the serial artwork in one go realizes the error of their ways, and the value of inspecting other panels comes strongly to the fore. In walking past the face of each successive panel more slowly, looking across the mass of individual drawings that each one presents, the sensual object swells as a durational experience. Taken in such terms, time itself becomes realized as a motivating factor in the very substance of this work.

Thinking of the relationship between time and the other elements of this work brings us to consider our second tension, space. Given as the fusion between the visible sensual qualities and the real object which lies utterly withdrawn,

space is the dualistic tension that points to both a relational and a non-relational understanding of itself. As we have seen, when applied to the serial art object this paired understanding of space offers us a way to appreciate two separate yet connected ideas about Darboven's work. First, we get to appreciate what is potentially alluring within the work, meaning that which is obliquely alluded to via the serial array. That which appears alluring is given in the form of a tension which holds between the viewer and the absent real object: an understanding which, in this instance at least, appears connected with the topic of time. And second, we as beholders are lured into this encounter courtesy of the measurable, physical, serial manifestation of the work as it is arranged for our viewing pleasure. This space is described as a non-relational container within which the beholder and the artwork literally interact.

In the case of Darboven's practice, the dualistic interplay which takes place between these two conceptions of space is particularly intense. Not only is there a very specific set of mathematical ideas presented within each of these serial artworks, wherein a sublime sense of infinity is indicated via a rather stringent, minimalist-themed aesthetic composed of little more than ink, pencil and paper, but the numerically large format of these serial works aids this conception. The fact that there are a total of 600 drawings plus an index which compose the serial artwork named *Card Index: Filing Cabinet, Part 2* is not secondary detail to be added to our conception of how the relational understanding of space works. On the contrary, the fact that there are X number of physical parts which unite to produce this singular artwork is precisely how the sense of time which the hand-drawn computations allude to is properly understood. The two conceptions of space work together in Darboven's practice, given the way in which they both serve to represent time and temporality. Such a conceptually oriented approach, executed with the simplest of formal means, marks Darboven's work out as being quite radically different from many of the serial strategies that had emerged prior. For example, in imagining ourselves to behold all 1,008 pages which compose *Wunschkonzert* as it is installed within Regen Projects means we are encouraged to think of the four walls' worth of drawings which this work presents as a series of sensual qualities which convey the unity of the sensual object we perceive. In beholding this unified entity, we realize that the total spatial arrangement of these 1,008 works is as much a means of comprehending the vast temporal understanding which this artwork suggests as are the hand-drawn checksum calculations which appear within the space of each individual page.

In short, what we seem to have here is a doubled sense of time which is presented courtesy of a doubled sense of space. The relational understanding of



Figure 14 Hanne Darboven, *Wunschkonzert* [detail], 1984 (ink on paper, collaged greeting cards, 1,008 pages and 1 index sheet), © Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

space is found in the drawn marks that signify both the score and the checksum that runs quietly alongside it, signalling to the viewer that this serially discursive process is (apparently) free of errors. Both of these formal elements then point, however obliquely, to a larger theme within the work: the topic of time itself. Indeed, given how difficult the concept of time is to properly grasp in either figurative or literal terms, we might suggest that time is the missing real object in Darboven's work, unable to be reached in any direct sense, only indirectly intuited. In this hypothesis we may be correct, although given the conditions of our argument it is impossible to say.

For OOS the real object is and remains fundamentally withdrawn, even though we accept its existence is hinted at via the alluring sensual qualities we see before us. The non-relational understanding of space joins this understanding, given the way in which it appears courtesy of the sheer number of physical pages we see repeated across the four walls. But just as we could no more exhaust the withdrawn reality of Darboven's serial artwork by reducing it to being synonymous with the sum total of these serially arranged pages, we equally cannot just discount the sheer volume of pages from the sense of time which this work represents. To do so would be to undermine the work, reducing it to being

no more than a conceptual idea about time in the mind of the beholder, rather than the concrete artwork which it is. Given as the withdrawn real object, the topic of time obliquely appears. We perceive it indirectly when we appreciate just how long it must have taken Darboven to draw by hand the inordinately large number of lines which appear across all 1,008 pages. We also conceive time when we recognize that an entire century is counted out through the numerical computations which this series of works present. Taken together, these two conceptions of time present a third: the span of duration which is encountered by those beholders who pause a while to look out across the serried array of lines which this vast work displays, or who sit cross-legged on the gallery floor and listen to Peter's play them out on his cello, one bar at a time.

And this brings us to the last of our three tensions to consider: the fissile tension we have labelled seriality. As we recall, seriality is that which holds between the sensual object, meaning the serial artwork as it appears as a unified understanding, and the real serial qualities which must belong to it, appreciated in a submerged manner. We have linked the idea of real qualities with the concept(s) of series which are held to underpin the serial artwork, and which are theoretically deduced on the basis of how the whole artwork appears in ordered, structural terms. As with the intermix which is seen to be occurring in our consideration of the previous two tensions, time and space, it seems that the tension we have named seriality is now also being increasingly discussed as a part of our examination of the other two, almost as if the effort to hold all three apart for discussion is perhaps destined to cease. Nevertheless, we must still give a brief sketch of how the quality of seriality is appreciated here, achieved by reflecting on what or which concept of series might be thought to underpin the work based on the form in which it appears.

To undertake this task, we really ought to return to Bochner's conception of seriality, as espoused in *The Serial Attitude*. Not only was this canonical text written when the kind of self-exhausting seriality associated with minimalist artworks was on the rise, but it was also directly influenced by Darboven's 'complicated drawings,' and the novel interpretations of art which this kind of conceptual approach seemed then to signify.⁴² For example, in looking at *Card Index: Filing Cabinet, Part 2*, we ask: What kind of underlying order appears to be in operation here? While not presuming to exhaust the withdrawn reality of this artwork by explaining it away on the basis of such, we can say that what we seem to have here is an example of Bochner's serial method, wherein elements of repetition, permutation, rotation, reversal and progression are all apparent, albeit to differing degrees. Given as an extended series of numerical sequences,

wherein an entire century is counted out courtesy of Darboven's particular mathematical method, the underlying serial order of this work presents the sensual object as a unified entity wherein the idea of time is expressed in a variety of ways. As we earlier identified, each of the ten panels of this artwork presents an identical sequence of numbers, but where the first and last days have been crossed out in diary fashion, thus offsetting the numbering from one panel to the next. But there is arguably one understanding which lies deeper than the mathematical procedure seen upon the surface, given it is responsible for the overall arrangement of panels that we see; namely the ideas of German jurist Johann Jakob Moser, upon whose filing system this work is based. Deprived of their usefulness as cataloguing references, the consistent internal order which the rules of Moser's filing system generate is subverted slightly by Darboven's rather unique mathematical procedure. This is the location where a certain degree of slippage occurs vis-à-vis applying Bochner's definition of seriality to this piece, or indeed any definition of series, as we shall see.

To clarify, although Darboven presents the viewer with an ongoing and clearly visible checksum tally across the various panels of this serial work, it is rather less clear what exactly this checksum process is checking *for*, especially in view of the cumulative disturbances which are revealed when the work is inspected more closely. As we earlier noted, because of the repetitive, permutational process in place, the numbers seen in this work are found to be slightly offset from one panel to the next. Although this small systematic difference sounds innocuous enough, it entails a set of much larger repercussions when the work is seen as a unified whole, wherein some of the more cumulatively derived issues begin to emerge. To help identify these, we can turn to the review of the original two exhibitions held at Leo Castelli and Sperone Westwater Fischer which Edit deAk compiled, whereupon Parts 1 and 2 of this work were observed on display across both sites:

What I am certain of is that the panels include 'X'-ed-out index cards which increase in number per panel at Castelli, and decrease at Sperone. If I am right, the number of 'X'-ed-out cards determines a particular shift of the permutation throughout the panel it belongs to, thus the overall arithmetic progression is distorted in varying degrees, making each local area slightly out of sync, until in a relay-loop-like manner, it catches up with itself, or rather with the new order it defines and dictates.⁴³

The interesting thing to note in this complicated description is the phrase 'if I am right'. For although Darboven's work seems to neatly align with Bochner's description of seriality, in that this work closely aligns with the three points that Bochner puts forward to define serially ordered works, including the proviso that

such works be systematically self-exhausting, it is rather less clear that Darboven's work sticks dutifully to the script, as it were. Observations like those by deAk and Fer serve to place a question mark over whether such a parsimonious, self-exhausting type of order as that which Bochner emphasizes can really be explicitly deduced within the viewers' appreciation of Darboven's artwork when the sense of seriality it evokes is perceived. Granted, deAk's concerns are rather specific, and likely took some time and effort to deduce, but nevertheless they point to the manner in which the precise conceptual underpinning to this work withdraws from direct apprehension, in a manner not dissimilar to how Harman's real qualities also retreat from all direct forms of access, yet without ceasing to exist. In short, while we can know for sure the original method of ordering which nominally underpins this piece, namely the eighteenth-century filing system of one Johann Jakob Moser, we do not know with anything like the same degree of surety what exactly Darboven has done with it. It has been modified in various ways and so results in some surprising permutations – all of which are perceived slightly differently by each commentator/beholder that encounters them. These findings accumulate to rupture the clean, dully repetitive order which the aesthetics of the work might otherwise indicate, meaning all attempts at reverse-engineering this piece to seek the underlying framework will likely result in a surprising range of interpretations, rather than just the one.

Jill Baroff

Working in an aesthetic and conceptual vein not wholly dissimilar to that of Darboven, Jill Baroff's work is engaged with themes connected to the processing of raw data through drawing, the eschewing of figure/ground relationships and maintaining a committed focus to emphasizing order, repetition, permutation, limitation and clarity. Because of this, Baroff's serially developed drawings have long been collected by those with a taste for minimalist-themed work, and who maintain an appreciation for those artists who are capable of tackling otherwise-weighty topics like time and space with the simplest of aesthetic means. Baroff lived in Japan for a long time, and maintains a number of strong links with the country, not least in her continued use of Japanese gampi paper mounted upon rag as the means to produce the majority of her drawings. While not all of Baroff's drawings are serial in scope and form, the percentage of her output that fits this description is high enough that her practice stands out for those of us who take an active interest in the contemporary manifestation of

this phenomenon. By encouraging a process of subtle perceptual development on the part of the viewer, wherein the task is to perceive the fine gradations of materiality and meaning between one iteration and the next within a given series, Baroff's work offers the chance to 'experience the mediation between the physical form of the objects and their transient appearance'.⁴⁴

As Claire Barliant notes, Baroff's work has long been influenced by the extensive travelling she has done, of which the time spent in Japan is but a part. In a 2002 interview with the artist for *Art on Paper*, Barliant discusses Baroff's working methods vis-à-vis the modified Epson printer which Baroff was using in her studio at the time. Of particular interest here is the question of what exactly Baroff was hoping to represent through the use of a such modified tool, namely a series of skies. Over time, Baroff had become intrigued by the way in which, no matter where she was, the sky always seemed to change dramatically. As Barliant notes:

In her work, Baroff investigates the ways light and shadow cause the appearance of various surfaces to shift, so she found herself intrigued. She wanted to capture this ephemeral experience, she says, to somehow 'fix' it in space and time.⁴⁵

In taking photographs of various skies in order to create digital pigment prints of the seemingly infinite permutations of the heavens above, Baroff's artistic practice revealed itself to be engaged in recording a naturally occurring ephemeral experience via a serially structured means. These interests remain core concerns for Baroff, for they have continued to emerge within her practice courtesy of the careful process of drawing we find utilized in the extensive *Tide Drawings* body of works. *Tide Drawings* is the name which Baroff has given to a group of works she has created since 2002. Composed of numerous stand-alone works plus a number of serially developed pieces, works within the *Tide Drawings* pantheon are intimately concerned with themes of repetition, rhythm and cyclical occurrences, and with the representation of time, understood in both synchronous and diachronous terms. As such, this body of work appears emblematic of many of the serially developed concerns we are interested in unpacking here. Described in formal terms, each of the individual *Tide Drawings* is either circular or square format work that serves to translate a volume of incredibly dense tidal measurement data into a clean and spartan aesthetic object. Baroff produces these works by sourcing tidal data on the internet, using it to depict the variability of water levels recorded at various locations by drawing concentric circles, using either a compass or a ruler, coupled with different shades of ink. Markus Weckesser explains how to read the circular format *Tide Drawings* as follows:

The smallest circle in the middle represents the water level at midnight. Further circles are added at six-minute intervals. For this the artist uses red, blue or black ink, which she applies with a compass to Japanese gampi. The painstaking accuracy is so impressive that, from a distance, you could mistake them for computer print-outs, among other things. When looking closer, however, small dots are discernible that indicate the moments when the artist had to re-engage the compass and it is clear that the images are drawings.⁴⁶

In contemplating this extensive group of works, we realize there are a number of common denominators which stand out across them all. Each of the *Tide Drawings* pieces, be it serial or stand-alone in form, serves to make tangible how even the most minimal of changes gradually lead to increased shifts, wherein small disruptions within what appear to be mere repetitions of the same thing announce themselves in a number of vibrant and novel ways. For the discerning viewer who elects to take their time in looking, gazing upon any one of these works reveals the manner in which the gaps which manifest themselves between the drawn lines is never fixed. Although minimally divergent, the distance between each hand-drawn line is nevertheless variable, although this finding only makes itself known when the work is inspected closely. As Jens Peter Koerver describes, we can add to this realization another element: namely the hand-drawn factor, whereupon the materiality of the Japanese gampi paper and the 'unpredictability of the manual workmanship involved' lead to the beholder becoming aware of further small irregularities in the surface of the work.⁴⁷ What we see in Baroff's drawings are chance movements that momentarily disrupt the path of the compass, the occasional bleeding of the ink into other areas of the paper, or even observance of the damage which can be done by the compass point itself.

Two works: *New York Harbor March 31 – April 30, 2005*
(2005–6) and *Series of Six Drawings: Gustav Landing*
(*Gulf Coast East, Nome, Savannah, Chesapeake,*
Gulf Coast West, Honolulu), (2009)

Two series in particular stand out from amongst the numerous works which populate the *Tide Drawings* as a pantheon of works, both of them serial in form. While each series is different in dimension, format and numerical size, both are considered to be unified within themselves given the fact they each relate conceptually to a specific set of ideas. The series *New York Harbor, March 31 – April 30, 2005* is a paradigmatic example of Baroff's square format tide drawings.



Figure 15 Jill Baroff, *New York Harbor March 31 – April 30, 2005* [installation view], 2005–6 (31 drawings), © Photograph by Helmut Claus/Kunstverein Grafschaft Bentheim.

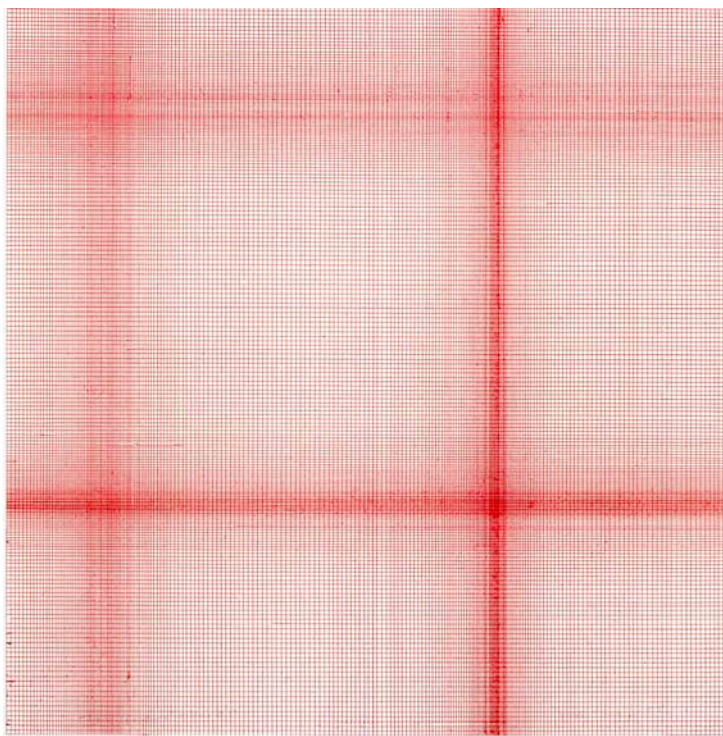


Figure 16 Jill Baroff, *New York Harbor March 31 – April 30, 2005* [detail], 2005–6 (pigmented ink on Japanese gampi mounted on rag), © Photograph by Helmut Claus/Kunstverein Grafschaft Bentheim.

Baroff's square format drawings are composed of an irregular grid or lattice of vertical and horizontal lines. Within each lattice, rising and falling water levels are distinguished by different directions of drawn line: the vertical lines represent falling tide levels while the horizontal lines represent the rising tide levels. Drawn using red pigmented ink on Japanese gampi mounted on rag, cognizance of both the location and the duration which is represented in this particular serial artwork are indicated by the title. As Koerver describes, unlike the concentric format drawings, the individual square format drawings 'are usually based on shorter time periods – an hour or a day'.⁴⁸ However, as we can see from the title, *New York Harbor, March 31 – April 30, 2005*, this particular square format work would appear to represent a somewhat longer time frame than that: thirty-one days long to be precise. This finding maps onto the fact that there are thirty-one individual drawings which make up this series, meaning each individual drawing charts the rising and falling of tides across a period of just one day, while the artwork as a whole charts their movement across a month.

Acquiring sets of specific tidal data prior to embarking on the act of drawing also constitutes a vital element within Baroff's working process. Access to highly accurate tidal information charting the rise and fall of tides at certain locations over a given time period means that the act of representing such through the medium of drawing can be similarly detailed. Indeed, without a wealth of such data to begin with, the finely wrought translation which Baroff generates through the act of drawing could appear superfluous, if not entirely misplaced. For Koerver, drawing is understood by Baroff in an extremely broad sense, given it includes activities that go beyond traditional ideas of draughtsmanship, as evidenced by the detailed tide tables which form the basis for her work. To that end, the title *New York Harbor, March 31 – April 30, 2005* indicates the specific time and the place to which the process of drawing refers, while the titles of other works note special circumstances, like hurricanes, which are similarly included within the data on which the drawing is based. According to Koerver, while Baroff once used tide tables that predicted only the expected course of the tides via various complex calculations, she now uses versions that record the water levels as they are actually measured. For Koerver, such a process of research is itself part and parcel of drawing, in the sense that it represents the ways and means in which Baroff's practice of drawing operates.

On the other hand, the serial artwork named *Series of Six Drawings: Gustav Landing, (Gulf Coast East, Nome, Savannah, Chesapeake, Gulf Coast West, Honolulu)* stands as an example of Baroff's concentric or circular format tide drawings, wherein the series of six works that make up the series are unified as

a group slightly differently. The circular format is the one used by Weckesser in the earlier quote to describe the entirety of the *Tide Drawings* as a body of works, perhaps because there seem to be more examples of the circular format *Tide Drawings* having been produced by Baroff than the square. Certainly, the manner in which these drawings are produced mirrors the process used across all the *Tide Drawings* works. Once the tidal data is gathered Baroff uses a computer spreadsheet program to convert the numerical data into a sequence of precise intervals. This interpretation serves to function as a set of 'binding specifications' for the drawing, detailing the specific distance from line to line and circle to circle. While the system is applied consistently both within each drawing and across each series of drawings, it does not stem from a constant set of rules established once and for all, somewhat unlike Darboven's 'K' computation. Instead, as Koerver identifies, 'Baroff adapts her visualization of the initial data to changing concerns, her current interest and, last but not least, her visual curiosity.'⁴⁹

The gampi paper which Baroff uses is a thin, semi-transparent but extremely tough and robust type of paper, traditionally made in Japan. Once the individual drawing is finished, Baroff cuts it down to size and then mounts it on cardboard. To complete this task, the drawing itself is submerged in water. As Koerver explains, this is a 'risky act that concludes the working process while temporarily exposing the work to the element whose ceaseless coastal rise and fall the *Tide Drawings* reflect.'⁵⁰ The lines as they are drawn upon the sheets of gampi follow the computer-generated data which underpins the work. Every line in either the square or the circular format is drawn according to the template produced by the tidal data. These lines are drawn with pigmented inks, where over time blue ink has been gradually replaced with red and black ink, occasionally green or yellow, on the basis that blue was seemingly too obvious in its connection with water. Aside from the directional difference concerning how the individual lines are drawn, there is an additional difference between the square and circular formats noted by Koerver. Unlike the gridded latticework of lines, the concentric circles of the *Circle Drawings* are:

Oriented only on the constant change of the water level, visualizing only the difference between the measurements taken at six-minute intervals – whether falling or rising – by means of the distance in space from one circle to the next, developing from the centre outward.⁵¹

This means that, while the square format works are concerned with using ruler-drawn straight lines to divide rising from falling water levels, the circular format used in the *Gustav Landing* series presents us with an image of duration. The span

of time which is represented as sitting between two compass drawn lines in each of these works is a six-minute interval, wherein the lines fan out from the point of midnight represented by the physical compass point right at the centre of each drawing. In strictly informational terms, the titling for *Gustav Landing* appears slightly opaquer than the dative/locative title which is given to the *New York Harbor* series. Although each of the six works in this series is individually titled according to what we presume is a geographical location (*Gulf Coast East, Nome, Savannah, Chesapeake, Gulf Coast West, Honolulu*) the phrase used to frontend the title for the series as a whole, *Gustav Landing*, is rather more ambiguous in its meaning. Indeed, aside from the identical format used to produce the six works that compose this series, we are directed towards this rather enigmatic title when we search for other ways in which to unify them as a group.

Although pondering the effect of titling might seem to some to be a rather minor point, in the context of considering the unified nature of a serial artwork we realize the important role which the title has to play. For example, while the square format work *New York Harbor, March 31 – April 30, 2005* is conceptually unified due to the fact that its title clearly suggests the thirty-one drawings present tidal data recorded on thirty-one successive days at the same location,



Figure 17 Jill Baroff, *Series of Six Drawings: Gustav Landing*, (*Gulf Coast East, Nome, Savannah, Chesapeake, Gulf Coast West, Honolulu*), 2009, © Jill Baroff, Courtesy of Bartha Contemporary Ltd.

the full title of the circular format work, *Series of Six Drawings: Gustav Landing, (Gulf Coast East, Nome, Savannah, Chesapeake, Gulf Coast West, Honolulu)* offers us something else. Instead of suggesting that only one geographical location is represented across multiple works, we intuit from the titling that these six works each represent data drawn from six different locations. Rather than a shared location therefore, we find that what links them together as a series is the rather gnomonic title *Gustav Landing*, coupled with the shared aesthetic format of the works. While we have no way of knowing from the work itself what sort of landing this alludes to – whether it be real or imagined, present at each of the six sites or at none – what we do know is that the phrase *Gustav Landing* is appended not only to the series as a whole, but to each of the individual titles given to each of the six works which compose it (e.g. *Gustav Landing: Gulf Coast East, Gustav Landing: Nome*) and so unifies them accordingly.

Three tensions: time, space, seriality

Considering Baroff's work in relation to our first tension, time, we begin by inquiring into the fissile nature of the relationship between a series of drawings (sensual qualities) and the unified serial artwork (sensual object) which they present. In presenting such, the series of drawings is given as the individual elements which compose this larger unit. As we recall, within the context of OOO, time is articulated as a sense of ongoing confrontation between the sensual object and its sensual qualities, between an object-pole and a quality-pole, respectively. Our use of Harman's term 'confrontation' indicates a recognition or acknowledgement on the part of the viewer that an object is not entirely synonymous with whatever profile it happens to present at any given moment. In other words, as Harman eruditely describes it, 'Dogs and tree's display an excess of carnal detail that shifts in each moment without our viewing them as different objects.'⁵²

Taking this idea into the context of serial drawing means we appreciate that a serial artwork only appears courtesy of a series of profiles – a number of individual drawings – that work together to progressively reveal the unity of this work, in and over time. More to the point, the serial drawing is not entirely synonymous with any one of the individual works which compose it, although it needs them all in order to be what it is. Hence, although we may think it possible to grasp the unity of a serial artwork by looking at the entire series all in one go, it remains the case that the unity of this work is found distributed across a number of individual elements, each of which, as artworks in their own right, also takes time to view.

Indeed, the confrontation between what we hope to gain from a single glance at the whole series, and the fuller understanding which is revealed when we pay closer attention to the way in which the individual works which compose it are formed and interrelate, is precisely what we mean by time described as a fissile tension. Furthermore, when this object-oriented idea is considered in the case of serial art, we realize that the array of individual works which compose a series can also serve to actively try and represent time in some manner, either conceptually or pictorially. This doubled sense of time, highly relevant within the context of OOS, means our understanding of the serial artwork is constantly being split up into a recognition of the smaller elements which compose it: a process which cumulatively points back to our awareness of the unified larger unit to which they each belong, albeit in new and interesting ways.

Thinking of this intriguing tension in relation to Baroff's work, we imagine ourselves confronted with the full series of thirty-one drawings which compose the work *New York Harbor, March 31 – April 30, 2005* as they were once arranged within the Kunstverein Grafschaft Bentham, Neuenhaus. Positioning ourselves standing within the exhibition space, we see that all thirty-one framed drawings are hung together as a single unit, all appearing along the same wall. As this serial artwork is comprised of a series of square format *Tide Drawings*, what we encounter upon our initial glance is a series of thirty-one gridded forms: lattice-like structures drawn in red pigmented ink which sit brightly upon the bare white ground of the Japanese gampi support. However, with no real figure/ground relationship to speak of, we are forced to look for other aesthetic relationships, both within each individual work and across the series as whole. For example, as we imagine ourselves positioned facing the wall upon which this work is hung, we realize we are standing to one end of the group, the left-hand side, looking right along the length of the series as the thirty-one drawings proceed away from us. From this stance we realize that this serial artwork is hung in a very particular format: taking it as a unified sensual object composed of thirty-one individual drawings, we see that it is arranged in a 3 x 6, then 2 x 4, then 1 x 4 format. That is to say, looking from left to right along its length, the series appears as a group of drawings which is three high by six wide, then a group of drawings which is two high by four wide, before finally proceeding in a single line of four drawings. Whatever the curatorial rationale behind this decision, the manner in which the series tapers as it progresses provides a definite sense of overall shape to this series. The tapered form provides an extra layer of unity to the work, in addition to the grid structure which is provided by the drawn red lines, and which extends across the series as a whole.

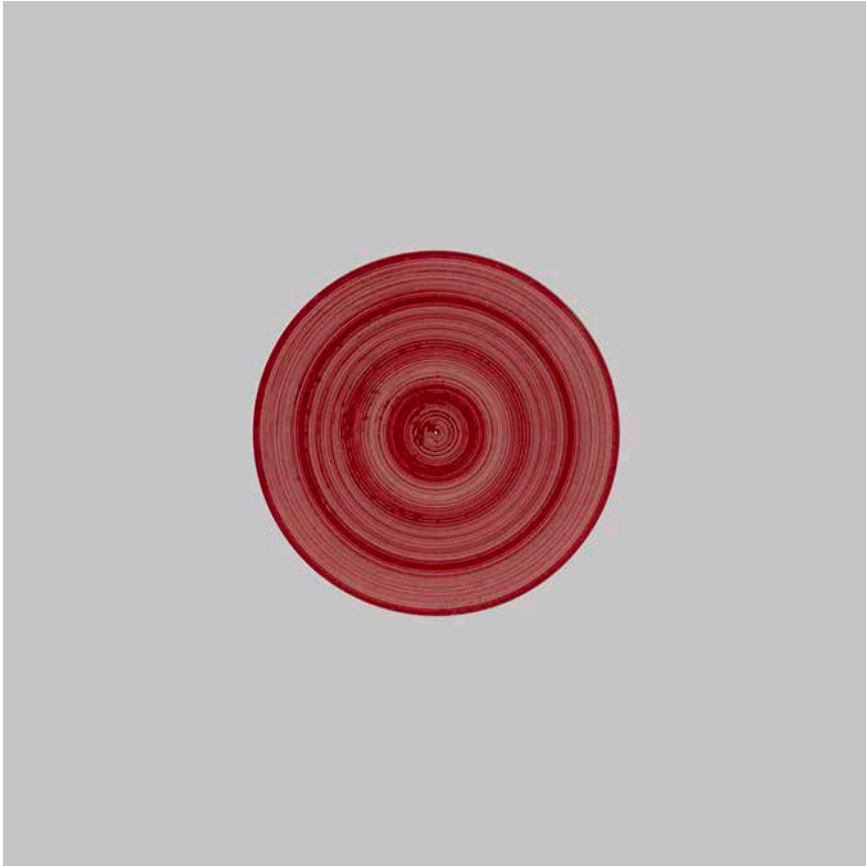


Figure 18 Jill Baroff, *1 of 6 – Gustav Landing, Gulf Coast East*, 2009 (ink on Japanese gampi mounted on rag), © Jill Baroff, Courtesy of Bartha Contemporary Ltd.

However, standing here in this particular spot, we notice something else; namely the manner in which the line of four individual drawings furthest from us are partially hidden behind the sunlight which reflects gently off the glass which frames them, obscuring the detail of the drawing underneath. We cannot properly see these drawings until we walk up to them, moving along the full length of the series from left to right, by which point the drawings we initially stood opposite are now also caught by the reflecting sunlight which silently fills the gallery space, and so withdraw accordingly. While we might like to think of this surface incident as a minor technical detail, something for a curator, the framer or even Baroff herself to contend with, it actually points towards what we implicitly knew all along: that we cannot properly

appreciate the entirety of this serial work in one go, and that, as a serial artwork composed of differentiated parts, it only properly reveals itself in and over time.

Furthermore, as with the other serial artworks we have considered, there is an additional manner in which the tension named time is manifest within this particular work. We intuit this tension when we pay attention to how that which is pictured across a number of different drawings remains unified to some degree. We are speaking here of the fact that these thirty-one drawings all represent tidal data that indicates a different day of the same month, observed at the same location. As the title clearly indicates, *New York Harbor, March 31 – April 30, 2005*, the tidal data from which these drawings are produced covers an entire month, with data for each of the thirty-one days represented within each of the thirty-one drawings, one drawing per day, respectively. But although each drawing represents a different day, when seen together they link up as a unified whole courtesy of the square format in which they have been drawn, and the way this format reaches across the otherwise empty wall space between each drawing. We are referring here to the red ink lines that depict the tidal data, and the way in which a slightly thicker red line in one drawing appears in more or less the same position in the drawing next to it, almost as if there were an invisible latticework of drawn lines that extended across the expanse of the gallery wall.

In short, the absolutely concrete, temporal unity of the calendar month is reflected in the unity of this series, wherein each day is connected to the next day in an unerring manner by virtue of our lived temporal experience. This temporal connection is not represented in any mimetic sense but alluded to in the most potent way possible given it is not something which can be directly perceived. Just as we cannot fully see the details of these drawings when we stand at one end of the series and literally look along its length, so we cannot in our waking lives fully apprehend the entirety of time which the series metaphorically represents, although we get a very strong sense of both. Whether it be the month that is to come, or the month which has just passed, our line of sight upon the days that we behold is always veiled to some degree. At the very least, when considered as a sensual object that presents itself courtesy of a number of sensual qualities seen in and over time, we come away with the realization that this serial drawing is somewhat deeper than initial appearances might suggest.

This idea brings us to consider our second tension, space. As we recall, space names the fusion which occurs between the array of sensual qualities and the

withdrawn real object they allude to: absent from surface appearances, yet alluring despite its very non-attendance. In the context of OOS, we don't need to dwell too long on the puzzling metaphysics of this idea. Instead, we look to focus our efforts on appreciating the practical interplay of space as Harman describes it, wherein both a relational and non-relational understanding work together to deliver the sense of this tension to those who elect to consider it within the context of serial art. In the case of Baroff's work, we can refer to the second of our two serial pieces, *Series of Six Drawings: Gustav Landing*, to see how it can be understood according to this rather unique conception of space. Comprised of six circular format drawings, this serial work also presents itself as a very aesthetically restrained examination of the idea of time. Baroff's act of repetitively drawing lines with the aid of a compass results in a series of singular-looking circles being manifest across these six different works, with each individual drawing being composed of many such lines. Displaying a range of differing diameters, and drawn in differing colours of ink, we can safely assume that all this variation maps onto the tidal data which provides the underlying framework of this serial piece, observed to be different for each of the six individual works within it, presumably on the basis it relates to six different locations.

To assess this work in relation to our doubled idea of space we can start by reflecting on the relational understanding as we see it manifest. As before, the type of relation we are posing here is between the beholder and the withdrawn real object, alluded to via the set of six serially arrayed drawings which present the unity of the serial artwork. We cannot know with any certainty what the withdrawn real object is in the case of *Series of Six Drawings: Gustav Landing*. Like all the other artworks we have discussed, this OOO-inspired idea remains thoroughly absent from the experiential scene. Instead, its existence is intuited by virtue of the fact that we agree with Harman in saying an artwork is that which remains essentially unparaphrasable in terms of its qualities, meaning it cannot be exhausted via either undermining or overmining strategies. In thinking how we might begin to consider that which is fundamentally withdrawn within this particular work, we refer back to the manner in which Harman feels the title of an artwork can potentially act as a guide, obliquely indicating the nature of the missing real object. While we cannot know in precise terms how such a signpost ought to operate, we can accept that an inability to point directly means it must work in conjunction with the physical, conceptual and formal appearance of the piece to deliver forth a sense of what lies withdrawn.

In the case of *Series of Six Drawings: Gustav Landing*, we note the set of rather alluring titles given to each of the individual works, with evocative sounding names like *Savannah*, *Gulf Coast West* or *Honolulu*. Each of these titles indirectly conjures up an image of exotic, far-flung locations: places where the ocean tides come in and go out with fearsome regularity. Rather than supply the viewer with a sense of pinpoint accuracy; however, these titles appear intended to support a general feel of the place which is presumably pictured within each. For example, in *Gustav Landing, Nome*, the black concentric circles drawn by Baroff's compass appear clearly against the Japanese gampi ground. What we see thanks to their accumulation is a circular form which sits squarely in the middle of the paper, and where the individual lines blend and blur with one another to form clusters of closely packed rings. Looking more closely, we see that the outer set of rings appear much more densely packed than the others, for reasons that must relate in some way to the tidal data which underpins this work. Thinking of this element, we reflect on the title of this individual work: *Gustav Landing, Nome*. Without knowing for sure, it seems possible that Nome refers to the city of Nome on the Seward Peninsula coast in Alaska. Judging from its rather forlorn-looking location on Google maps, this place represents a site that sits quite alone in geographical terms, bleakly facing out towards the arctic wastes of the Bering Sea. Without conducting further background research we have no way of knowing that this is indeed the same location as that which is alluded to by the title, but in many ways the point of this work might be missed if we did. That is to say, it seems as though the purpose of titling the work in this somewhat gnomonic fashion is simply to indicate the idea that there are larger forces at work here: ones which cannot be directly expressed either by a conglomeration of carefully drawn ink lines, or by a reference point marked on the map.

Described in spatial terms according to the framework of OOS, what we appreciate instead is a sense in which the relational and the non-relational understanding of space combine to lure us into an indirect communion within the absent real object which lies withdrawn within this artwork. Taken on its own, the non-relational understanding of space is that which concerns the physical dimensions of this particular piece: as a physical object, one of six within a series, *Gustav Landing, Nome* measures 37 cm x 37 cm. As we recall, the term 'non-relational' is used to express the fact that, even if we were permitted to literally pick up this drawing with the aim of inspecting the delicate surface of the gampi as closely as possible, we would get no closer to exhausting the withdrawn



Figure 19 Jill Baroff, *2 of 6 – Gustav Landing, Nome*, 2009 (ink on Japanese gampi mounted on rag), © Jill Baroff, Courtesy of Bartha Contemporary Ltd.

reality of the artwork *Gustav Landing, Nome* than if we removed ourselves back from it by several feet in order to better appreciate the sensitive way in which the circular rings are nestled inside one another. In both cases we are dealing with space as a non-relational container, one that contains both us and the physical sheet of paper, no more, no less. Yet according to Harman, this non-relational understanding of space does not cancel out the relational understanding. In the context of OOS, this is given as our relationship to what the work concerns, and which remains withdrawn beyond the limits imposed by mere physical distance.

With this in mind, we move towards appreciating how both understandings of space work together to deliver this individual artwork to us, and also the series to which it belongs. If we know that the ink lines we see within each drawing are



Figure 20 Jill Baroff, *4 of 6 – Gustav Landing, Chesapeake*, 2009 (ink on Japanese gampi mounted on rag), © Jill Baroff, Courtesy of Bartha Contemporary Ltd.

drawn at six-minute intervals, then we can intuit that the space between each line speaks of six minutes of time which elapsed elsewhere, and otherwise. If we, like Weckesser, know that the centre circle of each of drawing records the tide level at midnight, then we can combine this knowledge with what the title of this particular work implies, and imagine a long, freezing, yet at times quite beautiful night spent recording the gradual swell of the Bering straits, while countless stars looked down on us from the crystal clear heavens above. Of course, we have no need to actually believe that Baroff journeyed to undertake this arduous task herself, assuming the tidal data to have been sensibly acquired via a suitable source on the internet whilst Baroff sat amidst the comforts of a studio in New York. But regardless of the means by which it was assembled, the reality of this

serial artwork is that it remains unable to be exhausted by whatever ideas are alluded to within it, while at the same time, as an artwork, its aesthetic purpose lies precisely in its ability to invite us towards considering the withdrawal of such ideas, whatever they may be.

And so we come to reflect on the last of our three tensions, seriality. Given as a theoretically intuited fissile tendency, one which serves to link the visible sensual object with its withdrawn real qualities, seriality is found when we appreciate the manner in which the concept(s) of series structurally underpins a serial artwork in a continuous, albeit fractured fashion. In the case of Baroff's work, we find ourselves in a not dissimilar situation to that which was encountered in our earlier consideration of Darboven. In both cases we appear faced with an aesthetically stringent series of drawings that both allude to, and depart from, various complex sets of data which underpin them. These data sources are held to not only facilitate the aesthetic form of the work, but also structure the serial order in which the work appears, at least to some extent. What this means for our ability to appreciate the veiled understanding of series which the sensation of seriality alludes to is a thorny issue. By veiled we mean that one or other conceptual ideas about series are considered to be present within serial artworks of this kind, although they remain withdrawn. These concepts are active, and have a real role to play in directing the sense of seriality which is intuited by the beholder, but we have agreed we cannot hope to clarify them by referring in advance to one or another definition of series. To do so is to run the risk of undermining the serial artwork by seeking to explain it away according to such, which means to forget that a part of them remains fundamentally withdrawn. However, consideration of this tension does force us to consider the underlying serial structure of Baroff's work, quite apart from reflecting on the topic of whatever is pictured therein. This fact alone sets it slightly apart from the previous two tensions, although as we have seen, all three tensions continuously interrelate to varying degrees.

With this in mind, we are moved to inquire how we may theoretically reverse-engineer certain aspects of Baroff's serially developed drawing, in order to better appreciate the kind of seriality which emerges from it as an understanding. While we are free to choose from among the array of serial definitions we covered in Chapter 1, given that all the authors covered offer a range of useful points, we ought instead to try and pinpoint our search based on the way Baroff's minimalist-inspired work actually appears. In looking across both examples we have discussed, *New York Harbor, March 31 – April 30, 2005* and *Series of Six Drawings: Gustav Landing, (Gulf Coast East, Nome, Savannah,*

Chesapeake, Gulf Coast West, Honolulu), one detail in particular stands out: the kind of serially iterative differentiation which manifests itself between each minimally different individual work that composes each series. In short, we are talking about Baroff's mistakes, and the way in which the small, rather mundane differences seen between each of the circular format *Tide Drawings*, or between each of the square format ones, points to a hand-drawn process. By mistakes we are referring to the myriad small surface imperfections which are produced via the process of hand drawing hundreds of repetitive lines in a mechanical manner with either compass or ruler. In structural terms, these differences stand out precisely because of what is being pictured within these works – the erstwhile blankness of endlessly repetitive tidal data – and the manner in which they are pictured, that is, as a series of similar images that link up to present a larger entity. For although they can be accurately recorded in a host of different ways, and across a wide variety of far-flung and varied locations, the fact remains that tides are defined by their patterned regularity across the planet as a whole. As a unified, global phenomenon which is characterized by an endless rhythm of similarity and difference perceived across a host of locations, the underlying structure of the tide appears reflected in both the square and the circular formats of the *Tide Drawings* pantheon, while the drawn mistakes seen upon the surface provide us with the rooted sense of place which we as beholders demand.

In short, the sense of iterative differentiation which Baroff's individual drawings announce in relation to one another appears when both unity and discontinuity are registered across the drawn appearance of each series. Such differentiation can be gleaned on either a predominantly temporal basis, the different days of the month observed at the same location, or on a predominantly spatial basis, wherein we see six different geographical locations represented without any explicit mention of either date or time. The idea of serial differentiation as forming an underlying yet eidetic structural quality to Baroff's work finds expression in Dyer's conception of serial iteration, wherein the activity of actualization which Dyer celebrates can be understood through the lens of works which appear, like Baroff's, to be examples of 'serially iterative and spontaneously free differentiation'.⁵³ While Dyer makes the case for this particular interpretation of seriality via the iterative silkscreens of Andy Warhol, we can equally apply it here. Rather than anything which is directly visible in itself, this conception of seriality needs to be inferred by appreciating the kind of differentiation which makes itself known as a set of differences that occur between a unity of works that belong to the same series. Dyer uses Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* as a canonical example of this understanding, wherein



Figure 21 Jill Baroff, *5 of 6 – Gustav Landing, Gulf Coast West*, 2009 (ink on Japanese gampi mounted on rag), © Jill Baroff, Courtesy of Bartha Contemporary Ltd.

the ‘serial structure in his work manifests the activity of actualization as the activity of differentiation.’⁵⁴ Given the manner in which Harman indicates real qualities can only be inferred in the most general terms, it is not necessary to expand further on this topic here. Suffice to say that Baroff’s approach stands out as an example of how seriality can emerge as a concrete understanding from the visibility of what is presented, especially when such visibility is itself based upon the kind of underlying serially iterative differentiation that only a unified serial art object could portray.

Conclusion: Seeing serially

We come now to consider the idea which in many ways the book as a whole has been working towards elucidating: the concept of seeing serially. This is given as the performative way in which the quadruple nature of serial art objects is actively encountered by the beholder. In being drawn in – invited – by the open array of drawings which appear before them, the viewer is called upon to actively participate in unifying this array, whereupon they are enabled to see the manner in which the serial art object lies both present and withdrawn. In positing seeing serially as an object-oriented way to appreciate the unified serial artwork which emerges from the array of individual artworks which compose it, while simultaneously allowing that same understanding to remain partly veiled due to the indirect manner of its appearance, we are put in mind of Harman's description of what constitutes an object; namely that which '*emerges* as something distinct from its own components and also *withdraws* behind all its external effects'.¹ As we recall, Harman's fourfold or quadruple object is composed of two axes that overlap, where the first axis concerns the relationship between the veiled and the unveiled, the withdrawn and the visible, while the second axis concerns the relationship between the singular and the plural, the one and the many. Serial artworks reveal themselves to be objects which work across both of these axes. Comprised of a visible array of individual artworks (sensual qualities) which operate together in different ways at different times to present the unified artwork (sensual object) which we see, serial artworks are also objects which withdraw somewhat from direct access. By this we mean they allude to the various conceptions of series which must really underpin them in order for them be considered as examples of serial art (real qualities), alongside hinting at the existence of an utterly withdrawn core (real object) that enables them to remain discrete artworks.

In naming our object-oriented appreciation of the serial artwork as seeing serially, we are in effect reconfiguring Harman's claim regarding the nature of objects for our own ends. Treated as a particular way to approach the

phenomenon of serial art, seeing serially involves appreciating the performative manner in which serial art objects simultaneously emerge and withdraw when they are beheld by an interested viewer. This means that the idea of seeing serially also requires us to emphasize the active role of the beholder and to take seriously the critical role which drawing plays in guiding them to 'see' serial art works in this unified way. The manner in which a serial artwork is not only perceived to constitute a unified whole courtesy of the array of connected works which visibly appear, but where such serial unity is registered in a somewhat oblique manner on the basis it lies partly withdrawn from direct apprehension is not something which happens by accident. Rather, it requires the interested viewer to participate fully in appreciating the withdrawn reality of the work and so become an active beholder rather than an inactive bystander. As beholders they are called upon to invest a period of time in digesting the precise manner in which the serial artwork appears manifest before them within or around a space, meaning they are required to actively orient themselves towards it in both bodily and conceptual terms.

Given as a performative understanding involving drawing, the beholder is effectively encouraged to take interest in the serial artwork based on the formal choices which the artist presents, subsequent to being invited to appreciate the sense of unity it emits as a partially withdrawn or withheld object. From the beholder's perspective this sense of serial unity manifests itself as an added layer of serial depth. Rather than describe anything which is literally perceived, serial depth names that which is indirectly intuited due to the manner in which the visible, formal iteration of drawn lines, marks, patterns and shapes initially direct the beholder's attention towards appreciating whatever underlying concept(s) of series are felt to underpin and unite the work as a whole. In short, it is only once a viewer has been actively engaged by the aesthetic choices which the artist has made that they are enabled to see beyond such choices and behold how the underlying unity of the serial artwork *emerges* from the array of individual forms which compose it. Yet at the same time, these same aesthetic choices are what they as beholders are obliged to return to consider once this same artwork has *withdrawn* from them behind its external effects. Given the guiding role that drawing maintains in directing the viewer's gaze towards the performative manner in which the serial art object both emerges and withdraws, we need to describe how this process of seeing operates in relation to the minimalist-themed variety of drawing we have been focused upon examining.

In aesthetic terms, it is via the abstracted language of repeated line and varied shape utilized in the serial drawings produced by the likes of McClure,

Baroff, Kelly and Darboven that the viewer is invited to consider what lies beyond the serried surface of the picture plane. With very little presented for them to grasp in pictorial or literal terms, the viewer of such works is invited instead to metaphorically step forward and seize hold of the unified artwork in other ways. It is within the act of seeing serially described as a particular kind of beholding – an act whereby the viewer steps forward into a sort of active communion with the serial art object – that topics like infinity, timelessness and the sublime rise to the surface for consideration, whilst simultaneously withdrawing from any sort of direct view. These are topics which are not themselves directly visible or even materially tangible. Instead, they are thoughts about which both the concept and the structure of series inevitably give rise to, meaning they can become embodied within the beholders rendezvous with the serial drawing once the proper conditions have been framed. The act of stepping forward to greet the artwork in this manner describes the metaphysical site of seeing serially which the beholder physically and conceptually engages with, and as such it is not easy to describe. Despite this, we are clear in saying that it remains the place in which the viewer and the serial artwork *meet*, and wherein the fundamentally object-oriented nature of their relationship is revealed. With this outline in place, we will use the remainder of this conclusion to sketch out how the idea of seeing serially can be more fully understood in relation to some of the serial drawings we have thus far considered, beginning with a longer look at the idea of serial depth.

Serial depth

As we noted in the Introduction, de Warren's notion of serial depth is integral to the understanding of seeing serially, given as the performative act of looking which enables the beholder to 'see' the integral, albeit partially withdrawn unity of a serial art object. Serial drawing presents itself as a highly suitable vehicle for understanding this particular type of performative encounter, over and above the more general idea of serial art which can otherwise come to dominate the discussion. This is due to the way in which sequences of minimally divergent line or other kinds of aesthetically stringent drawn form are employed to point towards the underlying structure of the serial artwork rather than picture anything in mimetic terms. It is from within the beholder's aesthetic appreciation of this underlying structure that the idea of the partly withdrawn serial art object first emerges.

Serial depth of this kind is not perceived or seen in any sort of direct manner. On the contrary, it is simply alluded to courtesy of the alluring manner in which serial drawings are constructed in both aesthetic and conceptual terms. In the artist examples we have examined, certain structural understandings based on repetition, reversal, rotation and permutation are combined with a minimalist aesthetic to deliberately draw the viewers' attention towards the manner in which seriality is found manifest within the work. Instead of the kind of jolly and colourful landscape view which we see repeated in the early examples by Jawlensky, minimalist works by McClure, Kelly, Darboven and Baroff rely upon using more sombre formal units like the superimposed drawn line, or the calm and deliberate interplay of shape, to create a serially developed abstract drawing. In deploying drawing in this sober, abstract manner these artists forgo the opportunity to clearly imagine for the viewer a displaced scene. Instead of complicating the situation by offering the earthly semblance of figures and landscapes, they provide the beholder with a diagrammatic route towards appreciating the serial artwork as a partially veiled object: one through which larger ideas about time and infinity can begin to appear.

This reference to time within the context of serial depth is also the point at which the topic of space re-enters the discussion. As indicated by de Warren, serial drawings of the minimalist kind are able to neutralize pictorial space through the reduction of figure/ground relationships as they are perceived within each individual element of a series. This in turn permits an additional layer of serial depth to be opened up, due in no small part to the way in which the lack of pictorial space causes structurally differential relationships across the series to emerge.² The terms of de Warren's argument are laid out as part of a broader examination of the topics of boredom and the play of the imagination as they appear within the context of appreciating serial drawings similar to those we have been examining.³ To that end we find included in de Warren's lucid reflection works by not only Kelly but also Baroff. It is via an assessment of them both that de Warren is enabled to unpack the notion of serial depth via the seeming indifference which such works present to the viewer, generated by the visually restrained aesthetic they both utilize.

For example, the formal delicacy which is evident in Baroff's *Wax/Wane Series* (1995) indicates to de Warren that such serial works ought to be inspected and seen up close. Indeed, the painstaking, hand-drawn quality which exemplifies such works suggests a strong sense of immediacy, one which renders them 'images to look *at*, not to look *into*'.⁴ In aesthetic terms, we can appreciate where de Warren is coming from. Although it is not explicitly a part

of the *Tide Drawings* pantheon, the particularly fine and delicate draftsmanship in evidence within Baroff's *Wax/Wane Series* generates a very similar aesthetic to her later works. In speaking of the sense of formal indifference which such works create, de Warren notes that, due to certain formal restrictions which appear courtesy of Baroff's aesthetic choices, the viewer does not seem to be able to readily enter into the frame of these drawings in the same way that they could with more deliberately pictorial work. We are not guided or invited by the composition to look within a scene in the way in which we are when gazing upon Jawlensky's *Variations*. Hence it is the minimalist aesthetic which creates this sense of indifference, in the sense that 'we are held everywhere at the surface, yet paradoxically held everywhere at a distance'.⁵ The result is that our gaze can only move across the surface, meaning that to look at these images is akin to reading them. However, in making this observation, de Warren cautions that such images seem to be as equally indifferent to the act of being read as they are to being looked at, suggesting the viewer might very easily waver when tasked with deciding whether we ought to look or ought to read.

Rather than close things off, de Warren finds that it is precisely within this 'indifference of immediacy' that an uncanny form of openness begins to emerge, given in the sense that everything in such types of serial drawing appears 'there and present'.⁶ Unlike the effect of the contour line, which, in going round itself, serves to indicate the very presence of that which it hides from view, de Warren finds no play between what is shown and not shown here: no 'play between surface and depth, which are the distinctive effects of contour in drawing'.⁷ Unlike our earlier efforts, no form of guidance is sought via the titling of Baroff's work for how to indirectly appreciate either the idea of depth or what might be withdrawn within the work, at least not in the manner that Harman suggests. Instead, de Warren's preference is for a more formal type of aesthetic judgement, with the result that such serial works appear to promise nothing more than what is 'simply given'. This idea of openness, of a series of works that are simply given in terms of how they flatly appear, brings de Warren to an assessment of the impact which a certain kind of seemingly blank, austere aesthetic has upon the act of looking at this type of serial drawing, wherein the unified openness of the series is complicated by the very seriality this engenders. As he says:

The sense in which everything is *open*, there from the beginning and given at the surface, defines the intrinsic quality of serial imagery. The measure of austerity that pervades these drawings must, however, be understood in relation to the forms in which images are brought together in a series as a whole.⁸

It is this that brings de Warren to consider Kelly's *The Mallarmé Suite* more closely. Given as a series of eleven monochrome drawings, produced in pencil and collage on paper, this work appears remarkably similar to the *Romanesque Series* we examined in the third chapter. In the first instance, de Warren notes that the distinction between figure and ground is effectively neutralized within the black and white relationship that appears within each panel of this serial work. Even though the paired arrangement of black and white forms provides us with a sense of overall shape, de Warren finds that the viewer is prevented from attributing to either form the role of negative or positive space. The neutralization of pictorial space which de Warren notes is revealed to be a form of deactivation. Although the aesthetic flatness of each image suggests a kind of openness, there is nevertheless an absence of internal structure present within each individual panel. Yet rather than this loss of internal structure causing any sort of deficit to the art work in terms of its serial appreciation, de Warren finds that seriality is produced as the 'successful abandonment of the limitations of the individual object to function exclusively and singularly as the space in which aesthetic form is located and made manifest'.⁹ In other words, by appreciating the alluring complexity of a particular aesthetic form, the viewer's gaze is directed beyond the individual panels towards the underlying structural unity of the work. Indeed, the formal insight that de Warren draws from this realization is perhaps the clearest indication of how the openness of the minimalist aesthetic draws the viewer towards the act of beholding the underlying unity of the work, and so again, we offer the quote in full:

The flatness of the image encourages our gaze to move *across* the surface and, moreover, across the panel as a whole, as if any attempt by our gaze to enter into the panel is effectively deflected. We must look across and see all panels simultaneously, but at the same time in succession, compelling us, therefore, to attend to the structural unity of the work as a whole series.¹⁰

De Warren's last sentence is worth taking a moment to consider, for it points to both a diachronic and a synchronic understanding of time evident within the beholders encounter with the work. This doubled sense of time is activated courtesy of the doubled sense of space which serial drawings can generate when they are seen in this manner, wherein the 'singular plurality' articulates a series of unified images, each perceived in relation to themselves and to each other. By combining the idea of looking across the full spatial distribution of panels simultaneously with the idea of looking at them each in succession, de Warren

provides us with a rather singular way to appreciate structural unity in object-oriented terms. By this we mean that de Warren's notion of the singular plurality speaks of a unified entity: one both which emerges as something distinct from the array of individual drawings which comprise *The Mallarmé Suite* and which simultaneously withdraws behind the same effects of that array. Although de Warren does not elect to describe this unified singularity in such terms, nor does he choose to ponder on the putative objecthood which is created by the sense of depth it opens up, his consideration of how the viewer is compelled to step forward and actively attend to the structural unity of the work paves the way for considering the idea of seeing serially in a manner which is more closely related to Harman's object-oriented approach: one in which both the artwork and the beholder are compelled to meet each other in quite a particular way.

The performative encounter

Although we have until now been without a need to explicitly refer to it, we can in this closing section utilize perhaps the most compelling insight of Harman's recent foray into the discussion of art. We do so partly to help us extend our thinking on de Warren's notion of serial depth described in relation to drawing, but also because it enables us to better appreciate the notion of seeing serially in object-oriented terms. We are speaking of the central idea put forward by Harman in *Art and Objects*, detailing the manner in which 'beholder and artwork fuse jointly into a third and higher object, with the corollary that this third term is the key to shedding new light on the ontology of art'.¹¹ While this notion is admittedly rather strange sounding in a number of respects, it does provide the useful function of allowing us to combine de Warren's idea of serial depth with our earlier note concerning the object-oriented manner in which a serial artwork appears to an interested viewer: namely as that which both emerges as something distinct from the array of elements which compose it simultaneous to withdrawing behind all its external effects. While this particular configuration enables an erstwhile array of individual works to be considered as a unified artwork within the context of OOS, it also leaves open the question of how exactly to interpret the *site* in which this interaction occurs.

In brief, what Harman is describing in speaking of a 'third and higher object' is connected to something he calls weird formalism, outlined in the final section of *Art and Objects*. Considered in the case of artworks and their viewers, Harman's particular (and rather radical) re-interpretation of both Greenbergian and

Kantian formalism focuses on the way in which, for OOO, it is neither subject nor object which is considered to be autonomous, but rather their union.¹² The most important medium for OOO is not the Heideggerian background which is hidden beneath surface properties, but the one which is 'located *above* beholder and work, which contains them like an unseen atmosphere'.¹³ In describing this site, it is Harman's interpretation of metaphor that reveals why a theatrical enactment of the art object is required for an aesthetic experience to occur, and why such an engagement inevitably means the union of beholder and artwork, and the implied existence of a third object within whose interior they meet. The insight itself is phenomenological in origin, derived from Husserl's observation that intentionality constitutes both a one and two. In other words, my own mind is clearly something separate from the various things I perceive, contemplate, judge or appreciate, but conversely, my relationship with such things can also be considered as a unified object in its own right. Yet as Harman points out, 'once we view intentionality as a unit, it follows that I and the things meet as separate entities in the interior of that larger unit'.¹⁴

Clearly, this is not the place to dwell long on the wider ontological implications of this rather remarkable idea, nor to dive deeply into the problems of art from which Harman's re-interpretation of it springs. That being said, we can use it to describe the site of seeing serially as the site within which a performative encounter takes place uniting beholder and the serial drawing. More specifically, we will argue that seeing serially is a required site for the beholder to enter in order to properly encounter the serial artwork as a unified whole, wherein the simultaneous emergence and withdrawal of the art object they only partly perceive arrayed before them comes into its own. The fact that the beholder enters this site to begin with is due in no small part to the medium of serial drawing, and the formal manner in which the minimalist variety operates. As we have been discussing throughout this book, it is the aesthetically stringent, abstract form of such drawings which is fundamentally responsible for drawing the beholder into their encounter with the unified serial art object, rather than the kind of drawing which might elect to send them elsewhere by picturing the semblance of a displaced scene.

To make things a little less dense, we will unpack our understanding of this novel site by describing it in relation to a specific serial drawing, itself the most recent example we have considered so far: Stefana McClure's *Sleeper* (2016–17). Like the earlier example of McClure's which we referred to in the Introduction (*The Simpsons: The Complete First Season*), *Sleeper* appears as a work that sits within McClure's *Films on Paper* canon. Given as a serial drawing composed

of eight individual drawings, the work as whole relates to a single film (*Sleeper*, 1973) by Woody Allen, albeit where each iteration contributes to the unity of the whole by operating slightly differently from the others. By this we mean that each of the eight individual drawings presents a set of superimposed subtitles/captions taken from Allen's film, but where each drawing presents the same transcribed dialogue from the film in a different language from the others. What the viewer beholds when they look upon this series of bright yellow drawings is a set of eight works that all look remarkably similar, with only varying degrees of physical size difference to initially account for. But what they perceive when the unified seriality of the piece begins to emerge is another matter entirely.

Like McClure's Simpson's piece, each drawing presents a set of superimposed subtitles as a double row of barely perceptible hand-drawn lines situated along the bottom of a bright yellow monochrome field. This provides the series with both a flatness and an openness similar to that which de Warren commented upon. And yet, when we look at the individual titles which are accorded to each of the individual works, we realize the kind of serial permutation which McClure has introduced, and so begin to intimate the type of serial depth we might distil. For while the title of the largest drawing openly declares it as presenting the entire closed captions of Allen's English language film (*Sleeper: Closed Captions to a Film by Woody Allen*), a feat which is repeated in one of the smaller works, we observe that each of the remaining six works offers us superimposed subtitles of this same film in various other languages: Brazilian Portuguese, Italian, French, Finnish, Spanish and Danish, respectively. For us, *Sleeper* serves as a useful way to appreciate how the mode of minimalist-inspired drawing which McClure deploys invites the beholder to step forward into a union with the serial artwork, given as the site within which both the unity and the depth of the serial artwork are encountered ('seen') in object-oriented terms. While the discussion of tension in Chapter 3 used time, space and seriality as ways in which to describe how serial drawings could be appreciated by those who came across them in a gallery space, Harman's idea of a metaphysical unit which encloses beholder and artwork speaks of the fundamentally performative manner of their meeting, whereupon the unity of one cannot be conceived without the active participation of the other.

In order to think through this work in terms of seeing serially, we are encouraged to pay attention to the set of five implications which Harman lists in describing the concept of weird formalism, given as part of the formalist approach to art which OOO maintains. Although there are undoubtedly other ways to interpret them, we find they present themselves quite easily for use

within our context, given the focus of our efforts is the formal consideration of a certain style of drawing. As a set of contemporary philosophical implications for understanding the possible future directions of art, they provide us with a broader space to realize the idea of seeing serially within, coupled with a different way to consider our encounter with McClure's artwork than the method of phenomenological description deployed in Chapter 3. To that end we will reflect upon *Sleeper* by referring briefly to each of the five implications which Harman lists, using them to engage with the work in a manner which extends the OOS approach we have so far outlined.

In the first instance, Harman tells us that the union with which OOO is most concerned means that '*hybrid art forms can still attain closure*.'¹⁵ This point is related to the formalist approach which OOO wholeheartedly embraces, and the autonomy of art which it seeks to defend. Rather than seek to preserve such autonomy by locating it in the artwork (in the manner of Fried or Greenberg) or in the beholder (in the manner of Kant), the autonomy of art which Harman defends is the one that unites beholder and artwork within the interior of another object, higher than them both. More relevant is the practical implication of this ontological assessment, given the way in which it dramatically broadens the range of artistic genres which can be treated as self-contained. While Harman provides the example of being able to include the output of Joseph Beuys in the list of works which achieve autonomous closure, we find it also reflects upon our idea of serial drawing in quite positive terms. For example, while we may have no difficulty in accepting that the eight individual drawings which constitute McClure's *Sleeper* belong together as a group, there remain those who might question how such a grouping can constitute a stand-alone artwork. Indeed, even those of us who have signed up to the idea of serial art in object-oriented terms might still find ourselves asking *where* precisely the serial art object begins and ends. This is all the more the case once we include ourselves in the constitution of its unity, and if we accept that parts of such an object will forever remain withdrawn. Yet for OOS seeing serially is the very acceptance of the hybridity which Harman speaks, where hybrid means the particular interaction of space, time, object and beholder which the site of seeing serially entails. In the case of *Sleeper*, closure is not found within the array of eight bright yellow drawings which the viewer perceives hung in a row before them on the wall, nor in themselves as the beholder of the same. Rather, it is located in the union of themselves plus the eight individual works. Both are slowly drawn towards one other within the frame of a higher enclosing unit, whereupon the unity of the group prevails.

The second implication for Harman is that '*critical theory is not the path forward*'.¹⁶ In some respects this point encapsulates Harman's rebuff to those anti-formalist's who would claim that neither artwork nor beholder can remain cut off from the wider biographical, socio-political, psychological or linguistic context which ultimately frames the work. In opposition to the idea that we can remain in primary contact with our aesthetic experience, the anti-autonomous position which Harman takes issue with is one that would seek to transcend any subjective attachment to the artwork itself in favour of passing some form of prior judgement based on the application of a suitable critical theory. For Harman the issue is problematic precisely because it reinforces the idea that the beholder can remain separable from their various genuine relations with objects 'as if the object had no say in whether it was succeeding or failing'.¹⁷ We can already see the relevance of this point in relation to the kind of drawing we have been examining, even if we are reluctant to rebuff the relevance of their wider context in such terms. For although McClure's *Sleeper* presents us with a unified artwork that obliquely reinterprets a classic film by Woody Allen, it does so first and foremost by relying on the painstakingly precise manner in which a series of panels have been drawn. Despite the bright yellow appearance of the transfer paper, this series of sombre looking drawings manages to give almost nothing away at the same time they remain open and willing to engage. Indeed, what McClure's restricted palette really means is that there are any number of valid and viable ways to interpret *Sleeper* according to its wider context – if we so choose, these works permit us to take into account McClure's gender, her location within the (art) world, the linguistically oriented choice of subject matter, the political context which encapsulates both the galleries in which the work appears and the collectors who acquire it, and even the problematic character that is Woody Allen himself. None of these are precluded by the form in which the work appears: on the contrary, the flatly open style of minimalist drawing encourages any number of readings to be attached to the work, some more firmly than others.

And yet, our object-oriented encounter with this work requires us to reflect upon the manner in which this complex, compound, unified entity both emerges and withdraws from within the array of panels which compose it. This would simply fail to occur if we decided not to pay close attention to the form in which the work visibly appears. The fact that the superimposed subtitles are delicately drawn with the upmost care is not a happy accident for us as viewers to notice or not, something which we might choose to tack onto our conceptual appreciation once the press release has been read and digested. On the contrary, it is only by

paying close attention to the precise manner in which sets of faintly drawn lines effortlessly balance similarity with difference, presence with absence across a range of iterations that we are enabled to see serially in the first place, and from there to consider whatever wider topics the work may imply.

Harman's third implication continues the manifesto theme which colours this latter section of *Art and Objects*, but it still offers us something to think about in regard to describing the site in which *Sleeper* is beheld. In claiming that '*anti-formalist art is not the path forward*' Harman is concerned to refute those attempts that seek to defy the closure of artworks by allowing, 'either socio-political concerns or object formlessness to bleed through their walls'.¹⁸ While on one level this could potentially be interpreted as a rather reactionary comment by someone who doesn't wish to be presented with artwork that is difficult to look at, we can also see within it a careful framing of the site in which seeing serially takes place. In arguing that there is simply no such thing as that which has no definite form, Harman is taking issue with the idea that form doesn't matter, when, in reality, it is form that sets up the conditions under which artworks are able to operate as the aesthetic redistribution of life, in whatever manner such is conceived. We might interpret this point as claiming that a balance is necessary within the construction of all artworks: indeed, if the artist wishes to avoid creating things which can be easily paraphrased in another domain then they need to ensure that what they offer the beholder operates indirectly, at least to some extent. But if this is the case then what literally appears matters all the more, not least because of the manner in which it points to that which remains hidden within the enclosure of beholder and work. In the case of McClure's *Sleeper*, less is clearly more. What we are offered across the array of eight drawings is the reduction of form simultaneous to its expansion: the stripped-down aesthetic of blurry lines sat atop a flat ground of colour is manifest singly at the same time it is manifest serially in an array of repeated configurations. If we step forward in an effort to take firmer hold of the serial phenomenon by looking into the surface of an individual drawing, then the sense of seriality to the work as a whole immediately withdraws. To realize it again we must take a step back, and observe all eight works in one go, wherein we find we play the same game again only this time in reverse.

Moving to Harman's fourth implication, we find it is one we can readily acknowledge given the context of our discussion: '*By excluding the outside of art, we emphasise the multiplicity of its interior*'.¹⁹ For Harman, insisting on the autonomy of the artwork only seems dull if we contrast it with the supposed riches of the world surrounding it. But if this seems to be the case,

then we might choose to reconsider the reasons for compelling us to look at art in the first place. As he says:

As soon as we stop worrying so much about the surrounding context of art, and the generally futile demand that it be the salvation of that context, we are able to pay more attention to the internal diversity of whatever art we encounter.²⁰

While the broad relationship of this idea to minimalist themed serial drawing is perhaps obvious enough not to need restating, it is worth taking a moment to think through what it means in light of our effort to locate the site in which beholder and serial artwork meet. In some respects, we can think of a serial artwork like *Sleeper* to be the personification of Harman's demand to pay attention to the interior of the object – the very form of this piece is an exquisite exercise in prising the art object apart for all to see, wherein the question of what constitutes the works interior is impacted by the number of panels which could potentially constitute it. For example, how many different languages could McClure have presented subtitled versions of Allen's dialogue in? We might assume that the choice of Brazilian Portuguese, Italian, French, Finnish, Spanish and Danish represents the selection which was available, but this doesn't mean McClure couldn't have commissioned new sets of subtitles to be made available in more languages, one drawing apiece.

To that end we might imagine the conceptual scale of this work to be limited only by the number of languages which are currently spoken around the world today (a mere 7,117 according to one estimate), or perhaps simply the twenty-three which account for more than half the world's population. Putting aside for now the details of this idea, the important point to realize is that such thoughts belong to the multiplied interior of this serial object, for they serve to detail the drawings we cannot see placed amongst the visible array which we can. To see serially is to performatively step forward as the beholder and allow oneself to be confronted with this imaginary space and the metaphysical depth it implies, in tandem with appreciating the inordinate amount of time such a task would take to fulfil. But regardless of how we might choose to imagine the scene of McClure sitting hunched over her laptop screen for weeks on end drawing out an interminable series of lines, perhaps the most salient point is realizing that this aspect of seriality works by *not* being realized in the same physical manner which the eight individual drawings literally appear. The fact that the specific form of the drawn line used within *Sleeper* lends itself to being repeated in such a vast, iterative manner regardless which language it is tasked to transcribe is precisely what the enclosed site of seeing serially reveals, not the literal sight of 7,117 bright yellow drawings all hung together in an extremely large row.

And so we come to consider Harman's fifth implication, and which appears in some ways as perhaps the most interesting from our perspective. Harman describes it thus: '*Since the multiplicity of the interior is not holistic, it is "cold"*'.²¹ This point requires a little bit of unpacking in regard to what Harman means by the term holistic, followed by the term 'cold'. Holistic refers in part to the earlier point, where Harman reflects upon the multiplicity of the interior of artworks not on holistic grounds, but in terms of how the elements in any artwork engage one another in a loose interplay. Against Heidegger's and Greenberg's dualism of unified background and pluralized surface, Harman argues for:

Individualized backgrounds for every element of the work. If we consider an apple in a still life by Cézanne, the apple is an object withdrawn behind its apple-profile, and need not look to the global canvas background to find its deeper medium.²²

To explore this point, we can refer it back to the manner in which the fourfold framework of OOS modified Harman's OOO, wherein each individual drawing which composes a serial drawing was described as constituting a specific profile (sensual quality) of the larger work. In doing so, we left open slightly the question as to whether each individual drawing within a series also constitutes an object in its own right – with its own sensual profiles and withdrawn background – to which the answer is yes, as Harman's quote above verifies. All this means is that the multiplicity of the interior of a serial drawing is simply more complex in certain respects than the single image work, given that each individual drawing within a series of drawings constitutes both an object in its own right, as well as a profile of the serial art object to which it and the other drawings belong.

The site of seeing serially is the site within which this layered complexity is revealed to the beholder, but where the interplay between the elements which constitute this understanding is free in terms of how they are engaged. Unlike the fixed surface of a single image work like Cézanne's *Apples* (1878), the viewer of *Sleeper* is free to consider these eight drawings in any combination they wish, despite their temporarily fixed arrangement upon a gallery wall. Rather than the lush painterliness which Cézanne uses to depict a group of apples sat for all eternity next to one another upon the surface of the picture plane, the aesthetically stringent style of drawing which McClure deploys serves to direct the beholder of *Sleeper* towards engaging with the serial entity to which each drawing belongs. To that end the literal wall space we see between each framed drawing is part of the stage direction which *Sleeper* presents the viewer in order to draw them in – unlike the painted space which Cézanne represents, the literal

space which defines the gaps between each individual drawing are part of the performative manner in which the multiplied interior of *Sleeper* both emerges and withdraws. Although our engagement with the interior of each of the eight flat, monochrome drawings may seem a little limited compared to the work of Cézanne, it is precisely via the restricted mode they offer that we find real freedom to engage with the sense of the serial interior which *Sleeper* opens up.

Which brings us to the final question of what Harman means by the term 'cold', and the relevance this has for considering the site of seeing serially in relation to the minimalist-themed serial drawings we have been considering. In brief, the term 'cold' comes to Harman via the work of Marshall McLuhan, where it is used to refer to a medium in which there is insufficient information given. This means that a certain amount of detail must be supplied by the beholder, 'yielding an effect which is often hypnotic'. As Harman goes on to explain:

For example, even though a fireplace is 'hot' in the literal sense of temperature, it is a deeply cold medium in McLuhan's sense: for given how little information it provides, it requires that we add our own reveries to the experience of observing it.²³

The theme of the beholder being hypnotized by artwork which is 'cold' in this manner is one that Harman readily takes up, for it allows him to describe the manner in which the multiplicity of the interior operates, in not dissimilar terms to the way in which we have just described *Sleeper* based on the form in which it appears. More importantly, Harman provides the contrast with hot media on the basis that such kinds of work provide a surfeit of information and so overdetermine the relations between various elements in a manner that suppresses their autonomy. As he describes:

In comparison with Byzantine icons, the decorative patterns of Islamic art, or the misty atmospheres of Chinese landscape painting – all of them ice-cold media – Western post-Renaissance illusionist painting depicts its elements in highly defined relations with all others. Since each of these elements occupies a definite point in depicted three-dimensional space, its relational existence is completely determined with respect to all other pictorial elements. The mind may be dazzled by the beauty of such paintings, but it will never be hypnotized the way it is in front of fireplace.²⁴

As a way to describe the performative encounter between beholder and serial artwork, McLuhan's concept of cold media offers us another way to perceive the role which the abstract form of minimalist drawing specifically plays in the context of the work we have been discussing. From it we can conceive of serial drawing as a fundamentally cold medium, given the manner in which it emerges

to greet the viewer only to simultaneously withdraw, silently beckoning them into the spaces it contains. Seeing serially is no more or less than the site within which this beguiling performance takes place. One in which the beholder is not only called upon to play their active part, but where they must also allow for the possibility of being hypnotized by the multiplicity of that which they cannot quite see.

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