Beyond the Grid / Into the Sublime
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A new view of Minimalism

Agnes Martin
Sol LeWitt
John McCracken
Fred Sandback
Scott Ingram
Marietta Hoferer
Susan York
Thomas Pihl

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Columbus State University
The Norman Shannon and Emmy Lou P. Illges Gallery

The Columbus Museum

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Introduction

Hannah Israel

“If you look long enough into the void, the void begins to look back through you.”

Nietzsche

Beyond the Grid / Into the Sublime investigates the influence of Minimalism, not as a monolithic movement, but as a set of strategies or practices adopted by a range of artists over the past four decades, crossing over into post-minimalist concepts and aesthetics. The title of the exhibition alludes to how we access these ideas and how we can experience meaning beyond the imaginable. Our attempt to convey the influence of these movements will cross disciplines within the visual arts, music and literature over a span of a month in October and in multiple spaces within Columbus State University, The Columbus Museum and the community.

The term Minimalism in the visual arts emerged from the article by art critic Barbara Rose titled, “ABC Art,” in the October 1965 issue of Art in America. By the late 1960s Minimalism was commonly used. It aptly describes the movement’s modernist goal of reducing painting and sculpture to essentials, in this case the bare-bones essentials of geometric abstraction. Primarily descended from early-twentieth-century constructivism, Minimalism was heavily influenced by the clarity and severity of works by the postwar artists Barnett Newman, Ad Reinhardt and David Smith.

The term Post-Minimalism was first used in 1971 by the art critic Robert Pincus-Witton, who distinguished between the prefabricated looking Minimalist works and those works that, while honoring the purity and simplicity of form in Minimalism, revealed the presence of the human hand in the subtle manipulation of materials. Furthermore, the Post-Minimalist artworks contained a sense of metaphor and pointed to meaning beyond themselves. For a number of artists, the meaning involved an experience of transcendence or spiritual feeling.

The exhibition at the Norman Shannon and Emmy Lou P. Illges Gallery at Columbus State University’s Corn Center for the Visual Arts and the satellite exhibition at The Columbus Museum explores the scope of ideas that influenced artists from the past four decades. Each artist in Beyond the Grid / Into the Sublime reflects and challenges the ideologies of Minimalism and Post-Minimalism.

Although often grouped with Minimalism, Agnes Martin insisted that she was an Abstract Expressionist painter. Martin affirmed that her paintings carried emotional content rather than ideas. She strived for her work to be inspired by inner truth, beauty and perfection. She constructed her paintings via a rational grid system, using a network of lines and stained colored bands on fine-grained canvas. Martin regarded her use of grids as a development from the ‘all-over’ compositional methods of Abstract Expressionism. The influence of the Abstract Expressionists from the 40’s to the 60’s led to new artworks, reducing meaning to its purest form.

Influenced by Martin’s grid, Sol LeWitt stressed the idea behind his work over its execution. Widely regarded as one of the leading proponents of Minimalism and Conceptual art, he is known primarily for his deceptively simple geometric structures and architecturally scaled wall drawings. The wall drawings were considered radical, in part because this new form of ephemeral drawing was often executed, not just by LeWitt, but also by other artists and students.

The wall installations are based on a set of instructions or a simple diagram to be followed in executing the work. The drawings range from layers of straight lines meticulously drawn in black graphite pencil to lines that are more geometric in form. Forms may appear to be flat, to recede in space, or to project into the viewer’s space, while others meld to the structure of the wall itself. The drawings evoke a presence of both rigor and beauty.
Considered a pioneering figure of West Coast Minimalism in the 1960s, John McCracken developed what became his signature sculptural forms: tall, leaning planks made of wood, coated in fiberglass, and then painted with a highly finished lacquer. Striking in their monolithic simplicity and characterized by pure, monochromatic surfaces, McCracken’s handcrafted “planks” successfully blur the boundary between painting and sculpture. McCracken began his career as a painter and then moved toward a more object-based aesthetic, making abstract works in the form of basic geometric shapes such as cubes or quadratic volumes.

Fred Sandback filled rooms with volumetric forms using the most minimal of means. By stretching single strands of yarn point-to-point to create geometric shapes, Sandback’s intangible objects drew precise and subtle delineations of pictorial planes and architectural volumes. Despite this relationship to the built environment and to the practice of drawing, he became known primarily as a Minimalist sculptor, alongside such contemporaries as Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt and Carl Andre. In describing his work he stated, “It's a consequence of wanting the volume of sculpture without the opaque mass that I have the lines,” and, “I did have a strong gut feeling from the beginning though, and that was wanting to be able to make sculpture that didn’t have an inside.” From the beginning of his career, Fred Sandback formulated his ideas of sculptural volume in his drawings. In his installations Sandback explored space by drawing his famous horizontal, vertical and diagonal lines in colored pencil. He expanded his drawing repertoire in the 80’s to include acrylic and pastel. Sandback elaborated on the experience of space, mass, and volume through drawing in ways impossible in a coherent space. The drawings in the exhibition are ideas Sandback specifically designed for the Lannan Foundation in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Scott Ingram’s architectural and modernist influenced sculptures, drawings, and paintings carry content beyond their forms. Recently, his practice has been influenced by a realization that his community in Atlanta is becoming increasingly devoid of its history as it reaches for a future of hopeful prosperity, constantly destroying to build again. His concerns about the social and political climate today have brought Ingram to make work that comments on art and architecture in human environments.

Luminosity and an almost metaphysical purity strike the viewer when first encountering the white-on-white, pristine drawings of Marietta Hoferer. Weightless and evanescent, the faint pencil lines and clear tape that she uses to create her works on paper are imperceptible at first glance and require the observer to quietly adjust his or her perception to their subtlety. One must closely examine them; walk up to them and around the room to experience how they respond to the light. It is then that one marvels at the vast variety of systems and patterns and the voluptuous qualities of her elementary materials.

Repetition and the sheer physical effort that is required to make Susan York’s work is the core of her process. She states that,

“In this practice there is a release from thinking and a falling into breath that I am pulled into like the tides of the ocean. My hope is that the viewer can taste the calm and sink into the emptiness. At the same time, the works force one into a sublime tension between the beauty of the present moment in the space and the underlying tension of the geometry and material.

In developing her graphite forms, York works on 50-100 drawings before she gets a shape that is symmetrical but slightly skewed, with a subtle tension that is sometimes felt more than it is seen. Her intention is for you to feel the tension but not necessarily see it. The graphite sculptures are cast, formed and then highly polished.

The central focus of Thomas Pihl’s work is his critical dialogue with the phenomena and the implications of mass production and mass consumption of imagery in contemporary visual culture. He has observed, “how every bit of New York City is culturally and aesthetically manipulated and controlled.” Since 2000, Pihl has been working on the “Prearticulations” series. These works are paintings whose many layers are composed of semi-transparent acrylic poured onto the canvas. With their smooth surfaces and their oscillating colors, the special material and multi-layered process of production of his monochromatic paintings demand a long, precise
and concentrated contemplation from the viewer, who only very slowly comes to an understanding of the complex colors and the subtle differences and imperfections of the works. In this way, the act of viewing is summoned to the viewer's consciousness as a critical and differentiated instrument of experiencing art, and thus the world.

The investigation and presence of the artists' works in the exhibition only touches on the complex dialogue about Minimalism and Post-Minimalism. But the variation of language between the artists represented in the exhibition invites an intriguing dialogue about the history of Minimalism and its contribution to our world today. The artists have not changed how they respond to their world but rather challenge the moments they are in. They contribute new ways of looking at our presence in our world beyond the grid and suggest that we can enter the possibility of experiencing the sublime.
Minimalism: The Grid and Beyond
Michele McCrillis

In 1976 an artwork displayed at the Tate Gallery in London seemed to exemplify all that infuriated the public about contemporary art. It was not sexually explicit or racially charged. It made no political statement, committed no blasphemy and contained no scatological references. In fact it imparted no message whatsoever. Yet it was as divisive as any notorious art shock before or since. What roused such widespread hostility and outrage from visitors and Britain’s popular press was an arrangement of bricks neatly placed in a rectangular configuration directly on the floor of the gallery. The controversy was sparked by an article in *The Sunday Times* on February 15, 1976, “The Tate Drops a Costly Brick.” Journalist Colin Simpson asked why the gallery had bought a set of 120 firebricks for £2,297. The rest of the press quickly followed, producing more than 1,000 articles pointing out that anyone with access to bricks could have made it themselves and accusing the Tate of allowing itself to be “conned.”

The offending work was *Equivalent VIII* (1966) by American artist Carl Andre and acquired by the Tate three-and-a-half years earlier. It represented an important example of the movement that had come to be known as Minimalism in the late 1960s and reflected many of the movement’s characteristics, the very characteristics that provoked the British press in 1976. Minimalism challenged conventional definitions of art and pared it down to the cube, the monolith, the repetitive module and the grid, embodying a sensibility in the 1960s and 70s that was to influence much of late twentieth-century art, including earthworks and conceptual art. But perhaps Minimalism’s simplicity was not so simple. Could something so seemingly mute, so radically reductive, so literal, which scarcely looked like art, ever be viewed as transcendent or even sublime?¹

When I sliced into the plywood with my skilsaw, I could hear beneath the ear-damaging whine, a stark and refreshing “no” reverberate off the four walls: no to transcendence and spiritual values, heroic scale, anguished decisions, historicizing narrative, valuable artifact, intelligent structure, interesting visual experience.²

The “no” that artist Robert Morris referred to, as he looked back on the 1960s twenty years later, was directed against Abstract Expressionism and was shared by others, including artists Donald Judd, Walter De Maria, Tony Smith, Robert Smithson, Sol LeWitt, Dan Flavin, Anne Truitt, Robert Morris and Carl Andre. No one knew what to call the new reductive sensibility that emerged in the mid-1960s, including the artists who created it. Donald Judd used the term “Specific Objects” to describe his work, Robert Morris suggested “Unitary Forms,” while in 1966 curator Kynaston McShine called his groundbreaking exhibition featuring this new sensibility at New York’s Jewish Museum, *Primary Structures*. These “structures” replaced the quasi-figurative work in wood and bronze of the 1950s with smooth shiny surfaces made of fiberglass, plywood, Plexiglas or sheet metal in simplified geometries. They were placed directly on the floor, or mounted to the wall without pedestals, stripped of the customary framing that clearly states, “This is Art.”

The work in the 1966 exhibition often employed a repetitive, symmetrical, serial scheme, with no single part given precedence over another, and the use of systematic or serial repetition became a key characteristic of Minimalism, as the movement had come
to be known by 1968. This approach denied the originality of the work of art and was reinforced by the manufacture of many of the pieces, as the artists used standardized materials often fabricated by others and produced in multiples. This further depersonalized the work, seemingly removing the artist’s touch. Dan Flavin bought fluorescent tubes and placed them in two’s, three’s or four’s to form “monuments,” Judd had identical units of galvanized iron or aluminum fabricated to his specifications and cantilevered to the wall, and Andre placed sheets of steel, aluminum, or firebricks, on the floor.

Although Minimalism came to be primarily sculptural, the 1959 black paintings of Frank Stella were early two-dimensional examples of this systematic composition. His black stripes painted with housepainters’ brushes were regular and symmetrical, executed as impersonally as possible, like sign painting. As Sol LeWitt put it, “all of the planning and decisions [were] made beforehand and the execution [was] a perfunctory affair.” It was a relatively short step from this to the concept that the work could consist of instructions to be carried out by others in the absence of the artist. Sol LeWitt’s “wall drawings” from 1968 onwards reflect Minimalism’s predilection for impersonality. Designed for specific locations, the drawings were often carried out by others on the basis of succinct instructions from the artist. Drawing was traditionally regarded as a particularly private activity for artists, a rehearsal for big ideas and preparation for “finished” work. In contrast LeWitt both removed himself from its production and turned it into a kind of participatory or public art.

Absence of external or symbolic meaning was central to Minimalism. The work of art did not refer to its maker or to anything other than itself. Instead of the expressive, unique gestures of Abstract Expressionism that revealed the artists’ intentions or feelings, here the viewer had only to experience the surface of the object, which was constantly changed by the space it occupied, the shifting light and the viewer’s field of vision. There was no ideal vantage point from which this work should be viewed. The art object extended into the environment, eliciting the physical and perceptual participation of the viewer. Sculpture, as Carl Andre put it, becomes place.

From the beginning Minimalism was attacked for its lack of complexity, lack of expression, and sheer coldness. Its use of hard, clean, geometric simplicity associated it with the materialist, secular realms of the industrial or technological. Yet early 20th century artists had associated their development of non-representational geometry with a spiritual and even utopian impulse. Piet Mondrian’s pursuit of pure “plastic” expression in the 1920s, through his severely geometric paintings, grew out of his exposure, among other things, to the spiritualist ideas of Theosophy and Eastern philosophies. During the same period Russian Suprematist Kazimir Malevich believed that purity of form removed the excesses of bourgeois taste and class distinctions. Both believed that compositions reduced to the intersections of horizontal and vertical line, in perfect balance, expressed universal ideas far better than the representation of recognizable things like still-lives or nudes. Later in the 1940s and 50s, the immense scale of Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko’s Color Field canvases invited viewers to be totally engulfed by veils of color and to sense “the sublime.” Edmund Burke, whose writings were particularly influential for late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century landscape painters such as Benjamin West, J.M.W. Turner and John Martin, described “the sublime” in 1775 as an experience in which, “the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other.” As Yve-Alain Bois points out, in Newman’s case the sublime was something that gave the feeling of the here and now, of standing alone in front of chaos, and Newman’s aim was to give the viewer a sense of place, a sense of his or her own scale. Donald Judd particularly admired Newman, and this sense of place and scale became a key component of Minimalism.

Malevich, Mondrian, and many twentieth-century artists including the Minimalists, employed the grid as another compelling and shared means for rejecting illusion and narrative. As Rosalind Krause writes in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, the grid resists our desire for hierarchy or a center, emphasis, nature or language. She suggests that artist after artist was drawn to the grid because of its purity as a kind of “ground zero.” In a way, artists like the Minimalists withdrew into the grid or monochrome from the distractions of subjectivity, expressive gesture or spontaneity. *Equivalent VIII* is an example of how the Minimalists incorporated
the grid into the third dimension. Carl Andre utilized standardized units, such as bricks, in his sculptures, arranging them in self evident, numerically determined structures.

The grid, with its repeating units, is also a tool of organization or mapping. Yet its quiet simplicity can create a calming, even mesmerizing, effect. Agnes Martin, for example, in 1963 penciled a fine linear, edge-to-edge grid onto six-foot-square canvases treated with a thin layer of gesso. Later she used simple graphite over washes of color. Although these images were monochrome, viewers were often surprised by their extraordinary visual variety and the way her almost invisible grids evoked the immaterial while generating an indefinable luminescence.

Minimalism’s use of uniformity and repetition, together with expansive scale, finds echoes in John Baillie’s 1747 Essay on the Sublime, in which he writes, “where an object is vast, and at the same time uniform, there is to the imagination no limits of its vastness, and the mind runs out into infinity, continually creating as it were from the pattern.” Limitlessness is an attribute of the sublime, and the grid, while seemingly mechanical, industrial and modular, is also potentially limitless, endlessly repeatable, even metaphysical. Work by Martin, Andre, Judd, De Maria and others with a minimalist sensibility can perhaps be described as at once spiritual and material, mechanical and sublime. Even Robert Morris, who in 1989 insisted on Minimalism’s great “no” to transcendence and spiritual values, in 2000 acknowledged its relationship to the “American tradition of the Puritanical, the transcendent and the pragmatic.”

When placed into an environment, especially a remote and vast landscape, the grid takes on a particularly transcendent sensibility. Lightning Field (1971-77) by Walter De Maria, consists of 400 stainless-steel poles forming a one-mile-by-one-kilometer grid in the middle of the desert near Quemado, New Mexico, a location noted for its high incidence of electric storms. The number of poles on the mile side equals the square of five; the number of poles on the kilometer side is the square of four; altogether the poles amount to the square of twenty (400). The geometries and mathematical relationships within these works have sacred overtones. These are only amplified by the experience of visiting remote works like Lightning Field, or Donald Judd’s 100 shimmering mill aluminum “boxes” permanently installed in a pair of immense artillery sheds in Marfa, Texas. Indeed from the first, several critics perceived Lightning Field as a contemporary reformulation of the sublime.

Funding after the late 1960s by Minimalism’s foremost patrons, such as Count Guiseppe Panza di Biumo and the founders of the Dia Art Foundation, Heiner Friedrich and Philippa Pellizzi (née de Menil and later changed to Fariha Friedrich), allowed Minimalist and
earthworks artists to create site specific projects such as Lightning Field on an epic scale, especially in America’s expansive West. The Dia Art Foundation’s purchase of a disused military installation in the tiny Texas town of Marfa in 1979 enabled Judd to assemble discrete bodies of work by himself and other artists. Visits to these locations, often described by critics as “pilgrimages,” require effort and a physical immersion in the experience of the artwork. The artist Ilya Kabakov, who was given a large space at Marfa and whose own work is not minimalist, described seeing Judd’s aluminum boxes there as “an enormous sense of an almost cosmic order,” liberating the viewer, “from all that is chaotic,” while Chinati (as the site later came to be called) as a whole impressed him as being, “similar to a holy place . . . like some sort of Tibetan monastery.”

The sublime, when it exists simple and unmixed, by filling the mind with one vast and uniform idea, affects it with a solemn sedateness; by this means the soul itself becomes, as it were, one simple grand sensation. Thus the sublime not hurrying us from object to object, rather composes than agitates, whilst the very essence of the pathetic consists in an agitation of the passions, which is ever effected by crowding into the thoughts a thousand different objects, and hurrying the mind into various scenes.11

Minimalist art is above all simple and silent. It does not “hurry the mind” or “crowd into our thoughts.” When it emerged, artists like Judd attempted, as Richard Shiff put it, “to provide the viewer with an object of attention devoid of elements that might set the imagination wandering beyond immediate physical facts.”12 There is a spiritual aspect to simplicity found in the Zen monastery, in Shaker design and the Quaker meetinghouse, all of which exerted an influence on a general minimalist sensibility in the 1960s.13 Furthermore, for many artists and their patrons, silence is the ideal state for an encounter with a Minimalist work of art, whether in the desert or on a gallery floor.

In the 1966 exhibition catalogue for Primary Structures, McShine described physical concreteness and unity of the artworks as elegant and monumental. “Simplicity in structure,” he wrote, “allows for maximum concentration and intensity, and does not necessarily imply vacuity; it usually, in fact, connotes a rich complexity of formal relationship and of experience.”14 In Judd’s aluminum boxes, Martin’s delicate graphite lattices, LeWitt’s wall drawings, Flavin’s fluorescent light installations, Sandback’s taut black yarn and Andre’s ordering of bricks, some would see a moment of transfiguration and others a radical materialism. Susan Sontag has proposed that in the post-psychological era the activity of the mystic and artist must end in a negative, an absence, “a craving for the cloud of unknowingness beyond knowledge and for the silence beyond speech.”15 So art eliminates “subject,” imagery, symbolism and content. To paraphrase Sontag, Minimalism is ultimately about what isn’t being said.

1 A concept dating back to the eighteenth century, “the sublime” can most simply be described as the singular response elicited by phenomena that move the viewer by transcending and even overwhelming them. Artists aspire to address the sublime in their art but, in addition, through their art they aim to create works that will have a sublime effect on the spectator.
2 Robert Morris, “Three Folds in the Fabric and Four Autobiographical Asides as Allegories (or Interruptions),” Art in America 77, no. 11 (November 1989): 144.
9 Both the ancient Greeks and medieval monks considered squares and square roots to be magical numbers.
13 Quakerism came to unusual prominence in the 1960s due to its emphasis on pacifism during the Vietnam era.
A Light Touch: Minimalism in the Lannan Collection
Christie Mazuera Davis

Minimalism and its legacy are deeply entwined with the history of Lannan Foundation. Founded in Chicago in 1960, contemporary art or “art of our time” was a priority in the budding collection. Though she considered herself an Abstract Expressionist, perhaps the first Minimalist work to join the collection was a painting by Agnes Martin. *The Beach*, 1964, was purchased by the foundation’s founder, J. Patrick Lannan, Sr. at the Robert Elkon Gallery in New York in 1965. This sublime example of Martin’s early grid paintings, made with oil and pencil on canvas, rejects some of the Minimalist’s hard-edge characteristics in favor of a touch of the human hand as exemplified in the ever so slightly imperfectly drawn lines that cover the entire canvas like a ledger. When viewing the painting one gets a sense of rhythm in its creation, like an echo of the inhalation and exhalation of its maker.

Martin’s early identification as an Abstract Expressionist meant that her work was a welcome addition to the Lannan Collection, which included others in the movement such as Clifford Still, Mark Rothko, Ad Reinhardt and Barnett Newman. However, as the 1940s and 50s receded, the more and more reductive aspects of artists working in the 1960s and 1970s appealed. Another grid was added to the collection that same year, this time in the form of a stacked aluminum sculpture by Carl Andre. *100 Aluminum Solid*, 1964 (gifted to the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles in 1997) is a square block comprised of 100 pieces of stacked aluminum in four tiers of 25 units. This piece more than any other in the collection to date distanced itself from emotion and perceivable meaning. Lannan’s collection of minimal art was rounded out in 1965 with the addition of a dynamic and dynamic painting by a young artist named Frank Stella. Just 28 at the time, Stella’s *Nunca Pasa Nada*, 1964, set in motion a unique style that has been identified with the artist throughout his career. Measuring 110 by 220 ½ inches, this massive zigzagging arrangement of canvas covered in metallic powder in polymer emulsion has thin lines throughout that call to mind the same pencil lines in Martin’s *The Beach*.

Mr. Lannan continued to follow the career of Stella and on February 22, 1983 wrote the artist this note:

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Dear Frank:

For years and years you broke with the tradition of painting flat surfaces completely. And, now again, you have altered the painting of a flat surface completely. It is now filled with youth and music. It runs in every which way...its (sic) endless.

I pulled up a chair at Paula Cooper’s and looked at nothing else for an hour.
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In 1968 Lannan purchased two pivotal minimalist works: Peter Alexander’s cast polyester resin sculpture *Untitled*, 1966-1968, and Donald Judd’s green Plexiglass and stainless steel box *Untitled* (DSS 134), 1968. Purchased from famed Los Angeles art dealer Irving Blum the year it was made, Judd’s box takes sculpture off of a pedestal and places it directly on the floor. In a typed memo with the invoice dated June 4, 1968, Mr. Lannan wrote his assistant, “Just purchased for The Lannan Foundation a Donald Judd sculpture...the most beautiful he ever did.” While the precise nature of its execution makes it a perfect example of the standards of Minimalism, light captured through its emerald green plastic gives the piece a uniquely luscious feel.
A branch of the Minimalist movement was formed in Southern California in the 1960s called Light and Space, maintaining the minimal visual characteristics of the larger movement while tackling issues of perceptual phenomena using materials like light, glass, acrylic and neon. Several works were added to the Lannan Collection by artists in this group including John McLaughlin, Robert Irwin, Larry Bell, James Turrell and Peter Alexander. Peter Alexander trained and worked with famed Minimalist architects Louis Kahn and Richard Neutra before pursuing a graduate degree in art in the 1960s. It was during this time that Alexander first began experimenting with cast resin, initially using it to repair his surfboard. This relatively new material, developed by the aerospace industry, provided Alexander with a medium to make rational, minimalist sculptures in a time of radical social and political change. From 1965 to 1972 the artist fabricated dozens of formal cubes, squares, wedges and pyramids in hues that reflected the smoggy skies of Los Angeles at that time.

In the 1980s the foundation’s leadership transferred from its founder J. Patrick Lannan, Sr. to his son, Patrick Lannan. Under his guidance the Lannan Collection continued to grow, adding works by artists not necessary considered Minimalists but with a purest style and rational execution such as Bruce Nauman, Vija Celmins, Brice Marden and Richard Artschwager. Artists like Donald Judd and Dan Flavin continued to work using the same tenets they established at the start of the Movement and Lannan maintained its support for such work by acquiring more recent pieces. In fact, a good portion of Minimalist work was added to the Lannan Foundation in an agreement with the Dia Art Foundation for its long-term loan. Important works by Judd, Martin, Flavin and others were included in a gift sale to the Dia Art Foundation in 2013 for permanent installation at its Dia:Beacon galleries in Beacon, New York.
By the late 1990s a new generation of work was being created, loosely classified as Post-Minimalist. Lannan collected aesthetically pure works by artists such as Florence Pierce, Uta Barth, Kate Shepherd and Fred Sandback. Considered a conceptual-based sculptor, Sandback made drawings, prints and installations using the motif of a simple string of yarn to create space. In 1999 Sandback completed a residency at Lannan’s headquarters in Santa Fe, New Mexico. There he made several drawings of the foundation’s gallery, bisecting, crisscrossing and cutting diagonally the space with lines representing the string he would use for a final installation.

After several renditions Sandback finally settled on one solitary line of cardinal red yarn that dissects the gallery from wall to floor preceded by one red line at its entrance.

A more recent addition to the Lannan Collection in the Minimalist vein is work by Santa Fe-based sculptor Susan York. Working in solid graphite with corresponding drawings, York’s creations are powerfully controlled while echoing the Zen Buddhist principals she has studied for over 30 years. In 2008 Lannan commissioned York to make an installation in its gallery. York described the resulting piece, 3 Columns, as, “...a study in repetition of identical forms and their relationship to space and gravity.” Susan York took inspiration from another work in Lannan’s collection (later gifted to Dia Art Foundation), Dan Flavin’s, the nominal three (to William of Ockham), 1963, which is comprised of three vertical fluorescent light fixtures. Ockham, a 14th century theologian, wrote, “entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily.” Following that sentiment, Lannan continues to collect artwork inspired by the legacy of that great movement know as Minimalism.
JOHN MCCracken
FRED SANDBACK
THOMAS PIHL
IMAGE CAPTIONS


AGNES MARTIN

Born in 1912, Agnes Martin grew up in Vancouver and moved to the United States in 1932, taking American citizenship in 1940. She began making art in the early 1940s, while living in New York. She studied at Columbia University and briefly at the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque where she taught painting from 1947 to 1948.

She returned to New York in 1957 and held her first one-woman exhibition at the Betty Parsons Gallery in New York in 1958. She created taut but delicate graphite grids on lightly painted monochrome fields, and later began to superimpose colored bands on fine-grained canvases stained with washes of color. These paintings influenced the development of Minimalism, especially Sol LeWitt’s “wall drawings” executed in colored pencil. Martin has been the subject of more than 80 solo exhibitions including two retrospectives in the 1990s organized by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Holland, and by the Whitney Museum of Art, New York, NY. After 1967, Martin settled in New Mexico and worked most of her life there until her death in 2004.

SOL LEWITT

Sol LeWitt was born in Hartford, Connecticut to Eastern European immigrants in 1928. He received a BFA from Syracuse University in 1949 and then was drafted during the Korean War in 1951. In 1953 he moved to New York, NY, where he studied at the Cartoonists and Illustrators School (now the School of Visual Arts). He was hired as a graphic designer in I.M. Pei’s architecture firm. In 1960 he took an entry-level job at the Museum of Modern Art, where he met Dan Flavin, Robert Ryman, and Robert Mangold. As he began reducing art to its essentials, the cube became the basic modular unit for his artistic inquiry. He achieved a major breakthrough in 1968 when he began executing large-scale drawings directly on the wall. These “wall drawings,” over 1,100 of which have been executed, were considered radical, in part because this new form of drawing was purposely temporary and often executed not just by LeWitt but by other artists and students according to his written instructions.

LeWitt, who stressed the importance of the idea behind his work over its execution, is widely regarded as one of the leading exponents of Minimalism and Conceptual art, and has been the subject of hundreds of solo exhibitions worldwide since 1965. His work can be found in major museum collections including Tate Modern, London, England; Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Dia:Beacon, Beacon, NY; Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. LeWitt died in 2007 in New York, NY.

JOHN MCCracken

Born in 1934, John McCracken developed his early sculptural work while studying painting at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland in the late 1950s and early 1960s. A pioneering figure of West Coast Minimalism in the 1960s, McCracken began producing objects made with industrial materials, including plywood, highly finished sprayed lacquer, and pigmented resin, creating the highly reflective, smooth surfaces that he was to become known for. His geometric sculptural forms are striking in their monolithic simplicity and display a distinctly West Coast sensibility characterized by bold, highly polished color and influenced by California car culture.

Beginning in the 1960s, McCracken exhibited steadily in the United States and abroad, and his early work was included in groundbreaking exhibitions such as Primary Structures at the Jewish Museum, New York, NY (1966), and American Sculpture of the Sixties at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA (1967). McCracken’s work has been prominently featured in major group exhibitions worldwide, most recently in three shows organized as part of the 2011 region-wide initiative Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A. 1945-1980 at the Getty Center, Los Angeles, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, La Jolla, CA; and Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA. McCracken lived and worked primarily in Los Angeles, CA and Santa Fe, NM until his death in 2011.
**FRED SANDBACK**

Fred Sandback was born in Bronxville, New York, in 1943. After receiving a BA in philosophy at Yale, he studied sculpture at the Yale University School of Art and Architecture where Donald Judd became aware of his work and invited the young Sandback to exhibit in New York. Sandback’s early fascination with stringed musical instruments and archery is evident in his use, first of wire and cord, then acrylic yarn, to outline the shapes of objects. He then began to create austere yet delicate works for specific spaces by fastening yarn pulled taut diagonally, floor to ceiling or wall to wall. Sandback’s first one-person exhibitions were at the Galerie Konrad Fischer, Düsseldorf, and the Galerie Heiner Friedrich, Munich, both in 1968. Sandback’s work is represented in many public collections including the Centre George Pompidou, Paris, France; The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, NY; Museum fur Modern Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; The Art Institute of Chicago, IL; and Dia:Beacon, Beacon, NY. Sandback died in 2003 in New York, NY.

**SCOTT INGRAM**

Scott Ingram was born in Drumright, Oklahoma in 1968. Growing up in the Midwest, he was heavily influenced by Chicago’s modern architecture and developed an in-depth understanding of contemporary art within the context of architecture while working at the Des Moines Art Center. Ingram’s work reflects the intersection of art and architecture with human environments. Based in an American aesthetic, his work includes paintings, drawings, sculpture, wall constructions and photography as well as functional objects. Ingram has been exhibiting for more than 18 years and has been included in exhibitions around the United States as well as Spain and Canada, and his work has been reviewed nationally in *Art in America* and *Art Papers*. Most recently he exhibited at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Atlanta, GA; Solomon Projects, and Emily Amy Gallery, Atlanta, GA; Anna Kustera Gallery, New York City, NY; Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL; Auburn University, Auburn, AL; and the New Art Dealers Alliance Art Fair during Miami Basel, Miami Beach, FL. His work is in numerous private and corporate collections, including the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA. Ingram lives and works in Atlanta, GA.

**MARIETTA HOFERER**

Marietta Hoferer was born in Germany and studied at Hunter College in New York and at St. Martin’s School of Art and Design in London before receiving an MFA from Hochschule der Künste in Berlin. She creates grid-like formations and abstract compositions with faint pencil and lines of transparent tape, inspired by the rhythms of architecture and weaving. Although subtle, the linear bands and geometric patterning reveal a luminous surface that changes with the light and differing vantage points.

Recent solo exhibitions include Pro Arte Ulmer Kunststiftung, Ulm, Germany; Tenri Cultural Institute, New York, NY; Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco, CA; and Smack Mellon, Brooklyn, NY. Her work was recently included in *One Word: Plastics* at Sandler Hudson Gallery in Atlanta, GA and in *Material Grid* at Garvey Simon in New York, NY. Her drawings are in the collections of Harvard Art Museums, Houston Museum of Fine Arts, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Arkansas Arts Center, and Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, among others. She has been awarded grants from the New York Foundation for the Arts and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and has received numerous residencies, most recently at the MacDowell Colony. Hoferer lives and works in New York, NY.
THOMAS PIHL

Thomas Pihl was born in Bergen, Norway in 1964. After breaking off his music studies prematurely, he attended various art schools in Norway and the United States, including the National College of Arts and Design in Oslo, the School of Visual Arts in New York, NY, and Hunter College, CUNY, in New York, NY.

Pihl works in a minimalist language and his paintings call to mind the work of Mark Rothko, Jules Olitski, and Kenneth Noland. Pihl’s seemingly monochrome paintings are composed of as many as 12 layers of different colored, semi-transparent acrylic paints that have been poured onto the canvas. The multi-layered production of his “pictureless” paintings demands concentrated contemplation from the viewer, who slowly comes to an understanding of the complex colors, subtle differences and imperfections in the works.

Pihl’s work has been exhibited in Europe and the United States, and was included in the 2011 Venice Biennale. It is also represented in the collections of the National Museum of Art, Oslo, Norway; Bergen Art Museum, Bergen, Norway; the North Norwegian Art Museum, Tromsø, Norway; the Jan Groth Collection, Rogaland Art museum, Norway; and the private collection of Her Majesty Queen Sonja of Norway. Pihl has lived and worked in New York, NY and Bergen, Norway since 1994.

SUSAN YORK

Born in Newport, Rhode Island, Susan York lives and works in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where she directs the Sculpture program at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design. York received her BFA from the University of New Mexico and an MFA from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI. Using steel, porcelain, and graphite as her materials, York is an installation artist whose pieces have been influenced by the emptiness and openness of the New Mexico landscape. Agnes Martin was her mentor and friend, and a minimalist sensibility informs her work. In developing her graphite forms, she sometimes makes 50-100 drawings before achieving a shape that is symmetrical but slightly skewed, with a subtle tension that is sometimes felt more than it is seen. Whether the graphite is applied to a drawing or sculpture, York spends hours and days layering, rubbing and polishing, and this physical repetition is an essential part of her art practice. Her work distills space and investigates the subtle tensions that exist among the various objects she places in a given location.

She exhibits internationally and her work is represented in the collections of the Lannan Foundation, Santa Fe, NM; the Panza Collection, Lugano, Switzerland; and the Museum für Konkrete Kunst, Ingolstadt, Germany. She is a 2007 recipient of a Joan Mitchell fellowship for Painters and Sculptors.
CONTRIBUTORS TO THE CATALOGUE

HANNAH ISRAEL

Hannah Israel is an artist, curator, Associate Professor and the Gallery Director for the Department of Art at Columbus State University, GA. Israel received her MA in Sculpture from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, IL, and her BA in Art History at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, PA. She received a Teaching Fellowship and was Artist in Residence at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, and received The Daedalus Art Foundation Grant and The Creative and Performing Arts Fellowship at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, IL. Israel has curated numerous exhibitions nationally and has exhibited her work at the Honolulu Museum of Contemporary Art, HI; The Vargas Museum and the Toyota GT Museum of Art, Manila, the Philippines; and the Zuckerman Museum in Atlanta, GA.

MICHELE McCRILLIS

Michele McCrillis is Associate Professor of Art History at Columbus State University, GA, specializing in 19th and 20th century art, film and popular culture. Before coming to Columbus State University, McCrillis worked at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, in the Gallery of Art and Design (renamed the Gregg Museum of Art and Design) and taught art history at Methodist College, Fayetteville, NC. Prior to this she worked at The Art Institute of Chicago, IL, receiving her MA in Art History, Theory and Criticism from The School of The Art Institute of Chicago. McCrillis grew up in London, England and received a BA in History from Leeds University in England.

CHRISTIE MAZUERA DAVIS

Christie Mazuera Davis is the Director for Art and Public Programs at Lannan Foundation, Santa Fe, NM, where she has curated many exhibitions including the group shows Desert Serenade, Again and Transparent as well as solo presentations of work by Jean-Luc Mylayne, Susan York, Victoria Sambunaris and Thomas Joshua Cooper, among others. Davis has guest curated exhibitions for the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and the Nevada Museum of Art and has contributed to several publications. She holds a BS degree in Arts Administration from Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ and an MA in Museum Studies from John F. Kennedy University, Pleasant Hill, CA.
Music and Literature

To further examine Minimalism in a broader context, the exhibition is supported by several events that invite the intersection of literature, music and visual art. Steve Reich established himself as one of the founders of the Minimalist movement in music in the late sixties, along with Philip Glass, Terry Riley and Lamont Young. His music is known for steady pulse, repetition and rigorous structures with propulsive rhythms and seductive instrumental color. Reich has pushed the boundaries of Minimalism by incorporating layers of meaning through the inclusion of written texts, found objects in pre-recorded dance movements and sampled sounds.

In literature, Minimalism is defined through specific writers and movements that are often discussed in that context. For example in lyric poetry, Minimalism has been practiced in the Western tradition at least since the haiku entered it. Ezra Pound’s famous “Imagist” poem In a Station of the Metro and William Carlos Williams’s “Objectivist” poem The Red Wheelbarrow serve as examples, not only of Minimalism, but also of High Modernist free-verse poetry in general. Currently, experiments in concrete poetry, one-word poems and erasure poetry all exhibit characteristics of Minimalism.

Beyond the Grid / Into the Sublime explores the minimalist sensibility in music and literature as well as visual art. Performances will be held in the Illges Gallery and at The Columbus Museum of several seminal percussion works by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Steve Reich, performed by Columbus State University’s Percussion Ensemble and directed by Schwob School of Music faculty artist, Paul Vaillancourt. A poetry reading by writer and poet Dr. Nick Norwood, a professor in the Department of English, will explore the literary side of Minimalism.
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Dr. Nick Norwood, Professor and poet

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