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Made Perfect

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John McCracken is now more visible than ever, more so even than in Minimalism's heyday in the 1960s. In 2001 James Meyer gave McCracken the final entry in his anthology of key texts on Minimalism in Phaidon's large publication on the movement. That an artist from the West Coast should have the last word after sixty texts overwhelmingly focused on work and ideas issuing from Manhattan might come as a surprise. It's certainly suggestive.

Despite its radical formal reductiveness and supposed purging of symbolic allusion, Minimalism, as Meyer notes, generated a prodigious volume of discourse, not least by the artists themselves: Donald Judd, Robert Morris and Robert Smithson, most outstandingly. Arguably much of that writing is the equal of the work itself. For all the apparent neutrality and muteness of the art, the writing Minimalism generated, then as now, is often marked by provocation and dispute. After the long storm of claim and counter-claim that precedes it, McCracken's pithy, sanguine, upbeat and inclusive artist's statement arrives with the serenity of a new dawn. He begins the statement saying art is "constructive activity that involves and has positive consideration for everything", and ends saying it can provide glimpses "of the colossal, amazing 'symphony' that our existence actually touches on and can evolve – adventurously – towards becoming."[1]

Why would McCracken, an artist born in Berkeley in 1934, now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, who speaks of the higher purpose of art in elegiac, even cosmic terms, occupy this symbolic position at this time? What is it about his work and his words that have resonance for the present-day reception of Minimalism, a movement whose dominant critical positions were resolutely materialist, uncompromisingly earthed? If Meyer was alone in giving McCracken this prominence, out of some idiosyncratic affection or misguided revisionist impulse, these questions would not need raising, but the artist's recent exhibition history supports this art historian's editorial gesture: besides solo exhibitions at leading contemporary galleries and museums in America and Europe, McCracken's work has appeared of late in multifarious innovative exhibition frameworks whose contents tend more towards much younger artists. As well as the last documenta, which featured a large number of McCracken sculptures and paintings throughout the exhibition as a kind of punctuation, his works have found themselves in group exhibitions addressing altered states of mind, Roland Barthes' notion of intense neutrality, Martian anthropology, a 1960s musician and other topics well beyond Minimalism's usual purview. It is hard to imagine another Minimalist whose body of work would lend itself to such disparate contexts, while retaining its essential character. How might this œuvre, notable for its geometric austerity, speak to such disparate facets of knowledge and experience?

At first sight John McCracken is a good Minimalist. Of all the work associated with the so-called L.A. Look – which encompasses the minimal Pop of Ed Ruscha, Billy Al Bengston and Joe Goode,

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[1] J. McCracken, "Artist's Statement' [1999]", in *Minimalism*, James Meyer ed. (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2000), 291.

the “Finish Fetish” minimal sculpture of Craig Kauffman, Peter Alexander and DeWain Valentine, and the “Light and Space” environments of Robert Irwin, Doug Wheeler and James Turrell – McCracken’s sculptures, alongside perhaps Larry Bell’s, appear to conform most closely to the “specific objects” (Donald Judd, 1965) and “primary structures” (Kynaston McShine, 1966) of the better known New York protagonists of “Minimal Art” (Richard Wollheim, 1965), or, as it became universally known, Minimalism.

By 1966, the year of his first exhibition at Robert Elkon Gallery in New York, McCracken was making simple regular polyhedrons in one colour, the kind of unitary three dimensional work Judd and Morris advocated in their respective essays *Specific Objects* and *Notes on Sculpture: Part I*[2]; essays that quickly attained canonical status, offering competing blueprints for this new kind of art. McCracken had by then arrived at making “blocks, slabs, columns, planks”, as he plainly described them, “single-things” (a term found in his notebooks and in Judd’s *Specific Objects*), that were “basic”, “neutral”, but also “beautiful”[3] (not a word in either Judd’s or Morris’s lexicon). With his celebrated *Planks* – slim eight feet tall rectangles of a single colour that lean directly against the wall – Meyer wrote that McCracken had attained a “final ‘minimum’... [that] may be counted among the boldest examples of Minimalist ‘reduction’ of the 1960s”.[4] As single-things they were without the part-by-part internal compositional, or ‘relational’, hierarchies that implied the illusionistic space that Judd regarded as the tired legacy of the European tradition. Instead, as Morris theorised, and as McCracken has also articulated, they took relations out of the work itself and established a direct and triangular relationship in real space and real time between object, space and viewer, the latter conceived by Morris in phenomenological terms as an “embodied spectator”, after Merleau-Ponty.

While the surface qualities of McCracken’s sculptures, lustrous, immaculate and hard-won, are typical of L.A. art’s attention to finish – a pursuit shared by the city’s car and surf subcultures of the time – the names he consistently evoked as influences then were Barnett Newman, the key New York Minimalists (he regularly mentions Judd, Flavin, Andre and the early Morris) and the architecture of ancient Egypt. He knew the work of his New York contemporaries via the art magazines, through writing and photographic reproduction. Paradoxically, then, McCracken experienced the emerging Minimal art as mental image, not physical form. He remarked that back then *Artforum* would have been his ideal venue for an exhibition of his work, an observation that anticipates the use of magazine pages as a primary artistic site by Smithson, Mel Bochner and Dan Graham. The remark is as revealing of McCracken’s unusual outlook on materiality and immateriality as it is of the conceptual and discursive underpinnings of Minimalist art. And it was a recommendation by *Artforum*’s John Coplans that probably got McCracken his first gallery exhibition with the newly opened Nicholas Wilder Gallery in L.A. in 1965, the year he postgraduated from CCAC in Oakland, California. The exhibition prompted him to relocate from the Bay Area to Los Angeles, which had recently become the West Coast’s more vibrant art centre. By that time Ferus Gallery, home of the L.A. Look, had been going for seven years; it would close the following year. McCracken, by then in his early thirties, was entering an already established small and tightly knit scene of artists, some a little older, some younger, many of whom had two or three solo exhibitions behind them. Prior to the move south McCracken had already arrived, more or less independently, at an artistic position now considered characteristically L.A.

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[2] Published in *Arts Yearbook* no. 8, 1965, 94 and in *Artforum*, vol. 4, no. 6 (New York, February 1966), 42-44, respectively.

[3] T. Kellein, “Interview with John McCracken August 1995,” in *McCracken,* (Basel: Kunsthalle Basel, 1995), 22.

[4] J. Meyer, “Survey” in *Minimalism*, op. cit., 29.

Reading them now, the foundational texts on Minimalism, notably those by Judd and Morris, are remarkable for the extent to which their arguments are framed in negative terms: Judd's "specific objects" are "neither painting nor sculpture"[5] while Morris's 'gestalt' sculpture stresses its essential physical properties by not being coloured, not being geometrically complex nor irregular, not being too small (like an "ornament") nor too large (like a "monument"[6]). Judd and Morris were, in a sense, out-Greenberging Clement Greenberg, taking his negative dialectic to its logical conclusions with regards the third dimension. That dialectic was premised on medium-specific autonomy, and Morris, for one, demonstrated how the art theorist's own analysis of sculpture was compromised by values particular to painting: optical values, traces of anthropomorphism, etc. (Judd's "specific objects", on the other hand, being "neither painting nor sculpture" point to what Rosalind Krauss would later call the 'post-medium condition). Minimalism (a label Judd, Morris and others most associated with it rejected) arrived at what it was to a large extent through what it claimed it wasn't. With a chauvinism that sometimes exceeded Greenberg's own, it opened up a formal and conceptual space for itself by consigning a long list of values, deemed "European", to the cemetery of tradition: relational composition, illusion, allusion, skill, the personal. Minimalism quickly came to be defined by its prohibitions.

McCracken's works conform to the Minimalist rubric in as far as they are single, simple forms that have a direct relationship to spaces and viewers. Connecting the space of sculpture (the floor), with that of painting (the wall), being both three dimensional, but made of paint and a concealed support, the *Planks* in particular "are neither painting nor sculpture", in one sense, or else they are painting *and* sculpture, in another. McCracken calls them sculptures, perhaps for the sake of convenience, and perhaps because he has intermittently also made series of paintings. His sculptures' origin, via a series of reliefs, was in the simple, unitary, "symbol paintings", he made in the early 60s, using mathematical or directional motifs such as crosses, zigzags, circles and arrows. Judd wrote that "specific objects" had more in common with issues addressed by contemporaneous painting than sculpture and that their three-dimensionality arose from the relative exhaustion of these issues as explored in two dimensions, an assertion perhaps confirmed by McCracken's early formal trajectory. McCracken's works – the *Planks* in particular – push this paradox further than Judd probably intended: the sculptures, he remarked in 1995, "are in a way paintings of sculptures. If you look at them formally they are paint, or coloured material, on canvas or cloth, on wood supports. So they use traditional painting elements to make a 3-D form".[7]

In other respects, too, McCracken's work, and how he has consistently communicated it, deviates from the determinations of Judd's and Morris's foundational texts, while at the same time satisfying its basic conditions. Finding that he "can't examine [his] sculptures from a dualistic point of view, which sees everything in terms of opposites" he regards his works as "quite simple and clear, but also very complex and mysterious".[8] Simplicity, via the path of formal reduction, becomes, for McCracken, the pursuit of a holistic all-inclusiveness. For McCracken, a "single-thing" is "everything" at one and the same time, a looping manoeuvre corresponding to English poet William Blake's belief that the universe can be found in a single grain of sand. "My tendency is to reduce everything to single-things; things which refer to nothing outside themselves, but which at the same

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[5] D. Judd, "Specific Objects (1965)" reprinted in *Minimalism*, op. cit., 207.

[6] R. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture: Part II (1966)," reprinted in *Minimalism*, op. cit., 219.

[7] J. McCracken, "Artist's Statement' [1999]", in *Minimalism*, op. cit., 28.

[8] *John McCracken: Sketchbook*, (Santa Fe: Radius Books, 2008) unpaginated.

time refer or relate to everything,"[9] he wrote in his sketchbook in the 1960s. Being without parts there is nothing to innumerate and, as such, nothing to discount. As with Gaia ecology, which regards Earth as a single organism, or monadic theology, a single-thing is both one and all. For Newman, too, the singular stood for the whole, as expressed by his use of the title *Onement* for a series of works.

For Morris, colour is "essentially optical, immaterial". It is "inconsistent with the nature of sculpture" whose "qualities of scale, proportion, shape, mass, are physical". He advocated using "more natural hues which do not call attention to themselves, allow[ing] for the maximum focus on those essential physical decisions that inform sculptural works".[10] Morris's Minimalist works were often grey, Sol LeWitt's white, Andre's the found colour of wood and metal plain and simple. "Colour is additive,"[11] Morris said, meaning as a value with respect to sculpture, even when colour is inherent to the material used, as is the case with Judd and Flavin.

In McCracken's sculpture colour is indeed additive: there is always a block or plank of wood concealed beneath the many layers of automobile paint, resin and polish. But it doesn't seem that way. It looks instead as if we are presented with three-dimensional colour: colour that has materialized somehow. The surfaces are so immaculate and smooth that they dispel all thought of an underlying structure. Though we know the objects to be solid, their glossy surfaces lend them a liquescent quality, as if they might melt into a pool of paint were the temperature to climb. McCracken treats colour as if it is material, since it is all we are able to see. His motivation for doing so is that colour, in itself, is more abstract than any identifiable material. The perfection of the polished surfaces denies colour its materiality as paint: it has no grain or patina and shows no signs of how it has been applied. "Colour is the main 'material' I use. Since it's really a quality and not a material, it has – besides being emotionally evocative – an abstract character at the outset".[12] His sculptures seem made of colour, not a coloured paint substance. They have materialized, in that they occupy actual space, and yet they appear without material identity. So, while the simple forms of McCracken's single-things assert their physicality in one sense – in relation to the spaces they are seen in and the spectators that circumnavigate them – their colours and surface values, indeed "subvert the physical", as Morris claimed colour did with sculpture.

But in subverting the physical McCracken's works assert much else. Though their geometry is austere, the colour and surfaces of the sculptures evoke a sense of experiential plenitude absent from the work of many of his peers in New York, even those who did exploit colour: "Judd's work is very severe by comparison, very serious"[13], McCracken remarked in 1997. While Judd and others consistently called their works 'Untitled', McCracken took his titles from sources as disparate as astronomy, astrology, Shakespeare characters, Egyptian and Hindu deities, precious minerals, natural forces and onomatopoeiac expressions for movement ("whoosh", etc). That inclusivity could include the ephemeral and close at hand: a number of sculptures from 1967 are named after articles in fashion magazines 'Think Pink', 'Live it up in Lilac', 'Case for Fakery in Beauty', even 'The Absolutely Naked Fragrance' references that evoke a cosmetic, consumerist and feminine set of aesthetic associations at odds with the sober and masculinist world of much Minimalist art,

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[9] Ibid.

[10] R. Morris, "Notes on Sculpture: Part 1 (1965)"; idem.

[11] Ibid.

[12] J. McCracken, "Artist's Statement' [1999]", in *Minimalism*, op. cit., 291.

[13] P. Bickers, "UFO Technology. John McCracken interviewed by Patricia Bickers," *Art Monthly*, no. 204 (London, March 1997), 3.

whose industrial correlatives were the lumber yard, the mechanic's garage and the factory assembly line. "Just gorgeous" is a phrase McCracken will use on occasions.[14]

At the time, McCracken, like most of L.A.'s art scene, lived in Venice, a small bohemian beach community south of Santa Monica. Rubbing shoulders with artists, writers and musicians were the young people involved in the booming surf and custom car scenes who shared with the "Finish Fetish" artists a devotion to new materials, sensuous colour, streamlined form and immaculate surface. McCracken's techniques and finishes resemble aspects of both surfboard production and car customization: the many layers of lacquer, the use of resin, and the labour-intensive sanding and buffing. And in some senses, like much L.A. art of the period, they achieve the same sensual objective: surfaces so shiny and smooth that they give rise to complex, choreographic plays of light as the viewer's angle to the object changes, multiplying the phenomenological effects of Minimalism through surface qualities alone; effects not dissimilar to the images made by the play of clear, intense Californian light on the surfaces of ocean waves or glossy automobile bodywork in motion. McCracken concedes there is a correlation:

> "California culture did of itself offer some inspiration for art, too. The style of the place was sort of willy-nilly creativity. And the cars, with their sometimes attractive finishes, was one thing I looked at. The car-finish materials were what I was using and learning to use for my work. I wasn't into surfboards – despite what some people have thought – as much as cars. Not that many of them had great finishes – but the light in Los Angeles does something, too, and anyway, there were some 'inspiring' glints of things here and there in Los Angeles that I was able to bounce off of in my track toward making what I felt in my intuitions was possible."[15]

Edward Allington, in an essay on the relationship between the L.A. Look and L.A.'s car culture, referred to "a conversation with John McCracken when he talked of cars as moving paint chips, suggestions for colour on wheels,"[16] which reveals the extremely abstracted way that McCracken absorbed immediate cultural phenomena, in contrast with other L.A. artists who wore their involvement in these subcultures as a badge of pride: Kenneth Price and Bengston, for example, appeared, respectively, surfing and dirt-track motorcycle riding on their exhibition announcements. Robert Irwin was more specifically and explicitly engaged with the aesthetics of car customization. He recounted the particulars of the "go-and-show" category of Hot Rod subculture, "the class with the tightest and most stringently controlled aesthetic, in which detail and finish counted most".[17]

The values Allington, after Irwin, attributes to go-and-show hinge on a process of abstraction, through elimination of detail and attention to surface finish, from a familiar readymade – i.e. a production line automobile to something that begins evoking McCracken's "moving paint chip":

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[14] "At the time, I was leafing through women's fashion magazines because, as a matter of fact, there were even articles on art in them, one, for instance by John Coplans, called 'Art Bloom', appeared in an issue of *Vogue* magazine. (It mentioned my work among others)... It seemed then that those magazines were almost like art magazines. I drew colour and title ideas from them". Ibid.

[15] "Interview / John McCracken and Matthew Higgs" in *Early Sculpture. John McCracken* (New York: Zwirner & Wirth, 2005), 8.

[16] E. Allington, "Buddha Built My Hot Rod. Edward Allington on Cars, Art and the Perfect Finish," *Frieze*, no. 38 (London, January-February 1998), 54-59.

[17] Ibid.

> "It is possible for the uninitiated to look at such cars and not really be able to see the difference between the custom car and the stock model. But on a second glance it becomes apparent that all the external chrome work has been removed, door handles included, the number plates are actually set into the body, even the fittings around the lights have gone, or been 'frenched'. Finally there will be the paint job, layer upon layer of polished lacquer you could drown in. Inside and out, the whole car has been subtly modified, and it was this aesthetic that informed the 'fetish finish' [*sic*] school of Minimalism."[18]

Paradoxically, in Los Angeles art of the 1960s, Pop is primarily abstract. Even in the work of the L.A. artists most associated with Pop art Bengston, Joe Goode and Ruscha – more space is usually given over to abstract zones of colour than to iconography. One senses in L.A. that explicit Pop references would be redundant in what was the epicentre of youth culture and the entertainment industry because of their sheer ubiquity. In L.A. art from the 1960s there is the sense that Pop culture has been absorbed as an all-pervasive atmosphere; a kind of second nature in both meanings of that phrase. It is perhaps for that reason that that culture often seems echoed by the abstract qualities of colour, surface and materials in L.A. art rather than through symbolic references that might suggest more of a sociological divide between artist and the wider culture.

Still, for all the manmade colour and permission of McCracken's work, his sculptures seem at a further remove from the quotidian here-and-now than the abstract work of most other artists associated with "Finish Fetish". In 1968 Joe Goode made a calendar for the year 1969 from photographs he took of his peer group seated in their cars, having noted the variety of cars his friends drove. He assigned each artist to a month and called the unlimited edition *L.A. artists in their cars*. The multiple is a kind of school yearbook of the L.A. Look artists as they appeared at the end of the 1960s (there is a preponderance of facial hair), the car, being L.A., taking the place of the home or studio. McCracken is seen in what looks like a small maroon van of some sort. The other artists acknowledge Goode's camera, often playing up to it. McCracken, in this context, appears more detached from the situation. His gaze is fixed on the middle distance, his mood good but abstracted.

McCracken does indeed think of his sculptures as vehicles of some sort, but instead of the earthand ocean-bound cars and surfboards to which they are sometimes compared, his look more designed for space travel (he once referred to L.A.'s freeway**s** as "intergalactic", as if they lead to other celestial bodies rather than other American cities). Titles like *Lift off* (2008), *Spaceway* (1991) and *Flight* (2007) bear this out. The fact that the *Planks* barely touch the floor and wall suggests they are almost self-supporting, as does the triangular volume of space beneath them. Wall-based works like *Spaceway*, a long, horizontal, faceted bar of red, installed high up on the wall, suggest something far off in mid flight. The fictitious extra-terrestrial anthropologists who alledgedly curated *Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art* (2008) at Barbican Art Gallery, London were only pushing analogies when they wrote of a similar work:

> "This geometric form bears a resemblance to mysterious prehistoric monuments such as Stonehenge as well as the slick metallic surfaces of spacecraft. The visionary terrestrial who made this object intended for it to exist in multiple dimensions of time and space and perhaps planned to send it into orbit."[19]

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[18] Ibid.

[19] *Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art*, F. Manacorda, L. Yee and C. Gardner eds., (London: Barbican Art Gallery & Merrell Publishers Limited, 2008), 160.

Egyptian pyramids are spaceships to transport pharaohs from real space-time life on earth to the infinite time-space of after-life in the heavens. (One of McCracken's first monochrome sculptures is *Yellow Pyramid*). There has also been speculation that some Mesoamerican landscape architecture functioned as landing strips for extra-terrestrial "ancient astronauts". The belief in ancient astronauts developed around ancient structures that are thought to have been beyond the technical means of the culture from which they arose; structures such as Stonehenge (a major influence on Andre), Mayan temples (the tangential backdrop to Smithson's *Hotel Palenque*, 1969) and of course the pyramids in Egypt. The theory goes that these structures were made by technologically advanced species from other planets; visitors from the future, so to speak, to our ancient past, resulting in a peculiar looping of extremities of time. "This sense of extreme past and future has its origin with the Museum of Natural History", wrote Robert Smithson in *Entropy and the New Monuments*. "There the 'cave-man' and the 'space-man' may be seen under one roof."[20]

When Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* appeared in 1968 many art observers speculated that it was McCracken who designed the eleven feet high shiny black monolith, which looks identical with, if slightly taller than, his black "slabs". (He didn't, though he might just have influenced it). In the original novel by Arthur C. Clarke there are reputedly thousands of monoliths in the solar system left by an advanced race of extra-terrestrials. In the opening scene of the movie, we see a black monolith on earth surrounded by our primate ancestors, like the visitation of a futuristic technological enigma to our ancient past.

McCracken is often asked about it, and is happy to elaborate on, the analogical significance that follows from the formal resemblance. He has consistently remarked he aspires to make objects that look like they could have been left by a UFO,[21] which evokes the idea of ancient astronauts and alien visitations; he's "always tried to make things that are both in the world and out of the world" (adding, "again, humans are both").[22] For McCracken the existence of a "multiplicity of worlds", UFOs, "interplanatory communication" and teleportetian are matters-of-fact. Whether or not one shares these convictions, they are useful as ways of thinking through the uncanny experience of viewing the work: the strange sense that what we are looking at is both material and immaterial, physically before us but not really there; the distinct impression that while these objects share our space they also belong elsewhere; the sense that we are having an embodied as well as an out-of-the body, out-of-this-world experience (again, "humans are both").

Recent works in polished steel and polished bronze, functioning as solid mirrors, take the dematerialising and displacing effects of his sculpture to their logical extreme. Of the painted sculptures, McCracken observed that "Images reflected in the surfaces become part of, and tend to de-materialise, the sculptures... At times, certain sculptures seem to almost disappear and become illusions, so rather than describing these things as objects, it might be better to describe them as complexes of energies".[23] For Michel Foucault mirrors are quite literally utopian (as well as heterotopian), in the original Greek sense of "not-space": "The mirror is a utopia after all, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up virtually behind the surface; I am over there where I am not, a kind of shadow that gives me my

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[20] Originally published in *Artforum*, (June 1966). Reprinted in *Minimalism*, op. cit., 224.

[21] "Interesting idea: these are beings of another world transmitting themselves here through me. Don't ask me why they're here," in *John McCracken: Sketchbook,* op. cit., unpaginated.

[22] Interview with Neville Wakefield, idem.

[23] Ibid.

own visibility, that enables me to look at myself there where I am absent – a mirror utopia."[24] McCracken's mirror finish steel works act as teleporters. In the bronze ones viewers appear golden, as if lit by a different star.

Though we experience them in the present, McCracken aspires to make work that arrives in the present from the future. His aim is to make objects that have their own "primary being", an amplification, rather than a refutation, of the sense of presence Minimalist sculpture so often palpably achieves. McCracken's sculptures appear immaculately conceived. The perfection of their surfaces eliminates all traces of their formation by an artist's hand. The sculptures look self-incarnated, unauthored. As pure three-dimensional colour they appear immaterial, or built of something that cannot be found in the world. Amongst us, yet radically autonomous, these enigmatic objects acquire quasi-subjectivity. "They're like aliens in a way"[25], separate beings.

To varying extents all Minimalist works are science fictional, alien presences in our here-and-now. Smithson observed that "The first time I saw Don Judd's pink-plexiglas box, it suggested a giant crystal from another planet"[26]. In *Notes on Sculpture II*, Morris suggests at one point that the next problem for Minimal art would be how it might be sited outdoors. Soon artists would move their work from arctic white cubes in Manhattan to the deserts of the South-West. Judd, from the late 1960s on, obsessed over the question of how to ideally install his work and the work of others he admired. The white cube became perfected around this time as a kind perception machine for abstract art. It allowed for the sort of phenomenological reception of objects that Morris spelt out in *Notes on Sculpture II.* But in abstracting the experience of time and space from social flux, the white cube also appeared to extend the dimensions of space and time infinitely. Barnett Newman and Tony Smith re-modelled the Betty Parsons Gallery, ridding the room of its discernable corners by subtly curving them. Brian O'Doherty begins *Inside the White Cube* with an image of the perfect exhibition space as a space capsule floating adrift of the Earth's atmosphere.When artists of the Minimalist generation went outdoors, they sought out vast, virtually empty landscapes; scorching, almost lifeless, otherworldly landscapes somehow nearer the sun. Mystics have gone to the desert to have visions since Biblical times; the Minimalists and Post-Minimalists built visions, shaping craters and carving out rectilinear canyons, making celestial observatories and building spiral piers in crystalline lakes for unidentified landing craft. Many West Coast Minimal, or near Minimal, artists actually moved there after the 1960s: Bell, McCracken, Nauman, Price, Turrell.

Judd was one of very few New York artists to do so, moving to Marfa in remote west Texas. Taking over large, abandoned military sheds, Judd "frenched" them, eliminating the details and clarifying the structures to best accommodate permanent installations of his work and the work of artists he supported. One was the Russian installation artist, Ilya Kabakov, who in a recent interview observed admiringly that "Judd's projects are a kind of 'inhuman' art and the artist himself is a kind of antenna that receives signals not from Earth but from alien civilization... He retains only the cosmic point of view... He caught the cosmos. You can say his works are all space apparatuses, objects that are already flying in space"[27] (celestial music, one imagines, to McCracken's ears). The highlight of Marfa is Judd's installation of 100 aluminium boxes in two former artillery sheds. While each object is on a human scale, together they appear to extend to infinity in three parallel columns; an

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[24] M. Foucault, "Different Spaces", (1967), in *Michel Foucault: Essential Works of Foucault 1954 – 1984: Aesthetics*, (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 179.

[25] "Interview / John McCracken and Matthew Higgs" in *Early Sculpture. John McCracken* op. cit., 10.

[26] R. Smithson, "The Crystal Land" in *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings,* J. Flam ed., (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 7. Originally published in *Harper's Bazaar* (May 1966).

[27] Ilya & Emilia Kabakov interviewed by Christian Tomaszewski. Not yet published.

embodied experience of geometric material becomes a mental image of something galactic one can only conceive of. The aluminium sheets, the seamless edges and the diffuse reflected light they emit, are other-worldly in their perfection. Materiality is spiritualised.

McCracken's art offers a way of understanding the inherent uncanniness and alterity of Minimalism in general, not as something that denies or contradicts its radical materialism, but as something that extends the temporal-spatial coordinates this art occupies many times over, perhaps to infinity.